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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Two Cal Poly Poets to Kick Off Summer Reading Series

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Cal Poly poets Lisa Coffman and Leslie St. John will kick off the university's Summer Reading Series at 7 p.m. Thursday, July 11, in Room 215 in Science North Building (No. 53) on campus.

The poets — both Cal Poly English faculty members — are originally from the South, are known as dynamic, articulate readers of poetry, and have just published new books, which will be available for sale at the reading.

Series director and Cal Poly English Professor Kevin Clark describes Coffman's writing as lyrical and unpredictable. "Lisa's poetry traverses its own unique landscape," he said. "She writes about ordinary aspects of the human condition in such fresh ways that you feel you've entered a new reality. And you have."

Clark describes Coffman's just-published book, "Less Obvious Gods," as "remarkably powerful." He said, "Lisa's poems can be funny or elegiac, but they always invert our expectations."

Clark called St. John "a master of poetical music." Her new book, "Beauty like a Rope," appeared this winter. "St. John's verse is also full of surprises," Clark said. "Reading Leslie's poetry is like floating into a jazz ballad. At first you don't know where it's going, but the ride is so pleasurable that you are happily swept away."

Clark said St. John writes about difficult topics, such as death or physical injury, without forfeiting the deeper resonance. "Leslie makes superb music with words -- and in doing so she leads us comfortably into what could otherwise be uncomfortable considerations."

Clark speculates that the women's Southern heritage might help make them such fine performers of their work.

"I went to college in the South," he said, "and I think there can exist a rightful, down-home ease there when it comes to the spoken word. Both Lisa and Leslie are wonderfully evocative readers."

The reading is free and open to the public. It is sponsored by Cal Poly's English Department, WriterSpeak, and the Writers-at-Work series. Cal Poly's Summer Reading Series provides opportunities to hear and meet literary authors during the summer months.

Note: Science North is on North Poly View Drive (sometimes called Inner Perimeter Road) between Faculty Office Building North (No. 47) and Faculty Office Building East (No. 25).

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