

[Skip to Content](#) ?[my CalPoly login](#)

## News

University News & Information

[Admissions & Aid](#)[Majors & Colleges](#)[Research](#)[Alumni Community](#)[Campus Life](#)[Athletics](#)[About](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Amy Hewes  
Cal Poly Engineering  
[805-756-6402](tel:805-756-6402)  
[ahewes@calpoly.edu](mailto:ahewes@calpoly.edu)

### *Cal Poly WEP Director Helene Finger Receives National Awards for Closing Gender Gap in Engineering*

SAN LUIS OBISPO — The shortage of women engineers is alarming, but Helene Finger's hands-on efforts to close the gender gap are gaining national attention. The director of Women's Engineering Program at Cal Poly is actively expanding female engineers' academic and real-world opportunities.

Finger's research on improving recruitment of female engineering majors was recently recognized by the American Society of Engineering (ASEE). In addition, the Society of Women Engineers will honor her as Outstanding Counselor of the Year at their annual conference in October.

The paper honored by ASEE, "When, Why, How, Who – Lessons from First-year Female Engineering Students at Cal Poly," was the result of an ongoing interdisciplinary collaboration between the Women's Engineering Program in the College of Engineering and the Departments of Ethnic Studies and Women's and Gender Studies in the College of Liberal Arts. Finger, together with Jane Lehr, associate professor of ethnic studies and women's and ethnic studies, and ethnic studies student Beverly Kwang, will receive the award at the annual ASEE conference in Indianapolis next June.

"Jane and I are both passionate about promoting women in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields," said Finger. "We feel that improving recruitment can have the biggest impact on increasing the number of women in engineering, but found a dearth of information about when, why and how women choose to study engineering."

While research continues, the initial results have already influenced the approach to female engineering student recruitment and retention at Cal Poly. "Partly as a result of this research, our incoming freshmen class has the highest percent of female engineering students in the history of our program," said Finger.

Finger, who has led the Cal Poly Women's Engineering Program (WEP) for nearly 15 years, will be presented the Outstanding SWE Counselor Award at the WE13 Conference on Oct. 26 in Baltimore, Md.

In addition to serving as WEP director, Finger has taught in the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department since 1997. A Cal Poly alumna, she earned her bachelor's degree in civil engineering in 1988 and her master's in civil and environmental engineering in 1989.

**Related link:**

Cal Poly Digital Commons:  
"When, Why, How, Who – Lessons from First-year Female Engineering Students at Cal Poly for Efforts to Increase Recruitment"

<http://works.bepress.com/jlehr/8/>

**Photo:** Helene Finger was recently named Outstanding Counselor of the Year by the National Society of Women Engineers. In addition, a paper on first-year female engineering students, co-authored by Finger, has been nationally recognized by the American Society for Engineering Education.

# # #



[CP Home](#) | [Directory](#) | [Campus Maps & Directions](#) | [Bookstore](#) | [Calendar](#) | [Employment](#) | [Campus Policies](#) | [Contact Us](#)

CAL POLY

[Get Adobe Reader](#) | [Microsoft Viewers](#)

© 2012 California Polytechnic State University | San Luis Obispo, California 93407  
Phone: 805-756-1111