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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cal Poly Philosophy Professor Receives NSF Grant for Cyberwarfare Project

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Cal Poly Philosophy Professor Patrick Lin received a grant of nearly \$500,000 from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for “Safeguarding Cyberspace with Ethical Rules for Cyberwarfare,” a collaborative project with the Naval Postgraduate School and Western Michigan University.

Through the project, Lin and his team seek to address the ethics of cyberwarfare, an issue Lin said is not directly undertaken by policymakers and defense organizations. Though there is a growing amount of literature on cyberspace technology and strategy, Lin noted there is a need to study the ethics of cyberwarfare as a way to guide law and policy.

“Cyberweapons are a technology that have advanced quickly in recent years,” Lin said. “Since much of it is covert work, there hasn’t been a lot of public discussion about how responsible nation-states should conduct cyberwar in a way that respects existing international law and ethical norms.”

Cyberwarfare challenges standard existing legal frameworks governing armed conflict, including the assumption that war must require kinetic or physical attacks. Because military assets are difficult to penetrate, cyberwarfare has great potential to be directed at civilian infrastructure.

“Clear international law and policy can help limit the impact of cyberwar on civilians and safeguard cyberspace itself,” Lin said. The project will aim to discover how cyberwarfare conforms, or can be made to conform, to war principles such as discrimination and deception.

Lin’s collaborators include Cal Poly Lecturer Keith Abney as a senior investigator. The team will release their research findings through a university-level course on cyberspace ethics, a comprehensive report, media outreach and workshops through the duration of the project.

Lin is director of the Ethics + Emerging Sciences Group at Cal Poly and is the author of books, articles and presentations on cyberspace, robotics and related topics. His professional interests include applied and theoretical ethics, social and political philosophy, and other areas as applied to science and technology.

NSF grants are awarded based on criteria of fit, design, intellectual merit of the project and its proposed broader implications. Recipients are chosen by a peer-review board that convenes in Washington, D.C.

Links

- Philosophy Department: <http://cla.calpoly.edu/phil/>
- College of Liberal Arts: <http://www.cla.calpoly.edu/>
- Ethics + Emerging Sciences Group: <http://ethics.calpoly.edu>

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The College of Liberal Arts comprises 15 departments and two interdisciplinary programs, offering highly selective programs in the arts, humanities, communications and social sciences. Providing nearly a third of the university's instruction, the college serves as an essential component of liberal arts education for all students at Cal Poly. The college fosters excellence within its cutting-edge disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses while diversifying, extending and enriching the broader polytechnic environment.

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