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Cal Poly Architecture Course Series Earns Regional 'Green' Award

SAN LUIS OBISPO — A series of environmental design courses offered as part of Cal Poly's College of Architecture & Environmental Design (CAED) curriculum has won a 2013 Special Recognition Green Award from the Central Coast Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC C4).

The Green Awards honor local projects, entities, people and groups for their efforts in furthering ecological awareness and sensitivity and advancing the causes of environmental stewardship.

The USGBC C4 recognized the series of three courses for "providing a good interdisciplinary role model as a mix of 'big picture' ecological thinking" and "being active in instituting real change in the world."

"This is a good year for recognizing sustainability efforts at Cal Poly," said Architecture Department Head Margot McDonald. "The undergraduate architecture program is ranked No. 1 nationally overall and No. 1 in the category of sustainable design practices and principles by the Design Future Council."

For more than 20 years faculty members in the CAED have designed and advanced the program in sustainable environments. The program introduces complex ideas about nature, science, culture, politics, economy and equity, and offers students the opportunity and guidance to implement real sustainable projects.

The environmental design courses have led to a number of initiatives, entities and practices at Cal Poly and in the surrounding communities. They include the creation of Empower Poly, a coalition of student-led campus clubs that share goals relating to sustainability; changes to university food service practices; increased emphasis on green certifications of campus projects; increased demand for on-campus mixed-use housing; better practices in measuring campus water consumption; proposed policies to waste management systems; analysis and consultation for "greening" local schools; creation of community gardens; physical improvement projects for the women's shelter and foster homes; improved transit planning and practices, including creation of the Cal Poly Bicycle Coalition; proposed certification program for "dry" viticulture; policy incentives for infill housing; and policy proposals and advocacy for reducing the use of plastic bags. Several of the projects have received statewide recognition and have been published nationally.

The awards will be presented at the fourth annual USGBC C4 Green Awards Gala on Friday, Dec. 6 at Oreana Winery in Santa Barbara.

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