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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cal Poly's Newest CubeSat Part of Atlas V Launch

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Cal Poly's eighth small satellite or "CubeSat" designed and built by students launched into space Dec. 5 aboard a United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif.

Now in orbit, the CubeSat is carrying five low-resolution cameras that might help NASA achieve its larger vision for satellite imagery. Called IPEX (Intelligent Payload Experiment), the satellite was sponsored by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL).

The cellphone cameras have begun to acquire more than 250 images over the course of the six-month mission. The flight will help test new space imagery platforms and technology, as well as autonomous ground operations.

For NASA's JPL, the payload is expected to pay off in terms of how onboard imaging systems in CubeSats and larger satellites can provide a better understanding of planetary weather, natural disasters and changing ecosystems.

The IPEX spacecraft has solar panels on all six sides for power generation, together with a battery pack for power storage and a customized deployable antenna for communication.

Having reached low Earth orbit, the IPEX has self-stabilized, using magnets built into the spacecraft to align with the Earth's magnetic field. Students working at the ground station on campus at Cal Poly are now commanding the satellite's technologies.

The spacecraft structure, electronics and core flight software were developed by Cal Poly's PolySat program. The PolySat team includes graduate and undergraduate students from most departments in the College of Engineering.

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