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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cal Poly Civil Engineering Senior Takes Part in Clinton Global Initiative University

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Cal Poly civil engineering senior Chao Yang participated in the Clinton Global Initiative University (CGI U), where college students worked to turn ideas into actions. The event, led by former President Bill Clinton, was held March 21-23 at Arizona State University in Phoenix.

The CGI U Conference included approximately 1,100 students from more than 300 schools and universities around the world.

"The CGI U meeting is about taking action," said Yang, who represented the Cal Poly chapter of Engineers Without Borders (EWB). "Each attendee made a commitment to action focused on one of CGI U's five main areas: education, environment and climate change, peace and human rights, poverty alleviation, and public health."

A commitment to action is a tenet of EWB-Cal Poly. The student chapter includes almost 200 members who are working with communities in India, Thailand, Nicaragua and Malawi to implement sustainable engineering projects.

"My commitment to action as a CGI U participant was improving sanitation in Sainji, India, and branching out to nearby communities," said Yang. The EWB-India team is working with the village's subsistence farmers to build sanitation facilities that will protect the environment and safeguard the health of the villagers.

"My experience at CGI U was exponential in terms of how it broadened my horizons, connected me with resources and sparked new ideas. A session on redefining higher education — the need to increase diversity in engineering and the sciences — has inspired me to reach out and empower my own Hmong community."

Turning ideas into actions is also one of the best ways to accelerate knowledge and growth, said Yang.

"I will always want to make time to learn outside of a classroom environment and do the things I'm passionate about. Designing and constructing a wastewater treatment system and interacting with a community like Sainji creates learning opportunities like no other. You truly see how your education can positively affect another person — or, in the case of civil engineering in particular, the lives of so many.

"I am considering furthering my studies with a focus in engineering for developing communities," she said.

As a CGI U alumna, Yang is in good company. In 2008, another Cal Poly civil engineering student, Tricia Compas-Markman (B.S./M.S., Civil Engineering, 2009), received an Outstanding Commitment Award from CGI U for her now-patented invention, the DayOne Waterbag, a personal water treatment device designed to prevent waterborne diseases in developing nations. Compas-Markman was recently honored by Toyota and Women in the World as a Mother of Invention.

Related link:

2014 Clinton Global Initiative University Plenary Sessions

<http://new.livestream.com/CGI/CGIU2014>

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