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## *Cal Poly Biology Student Wins National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship*

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Cal Poly biological sciences senior George Brusch was awarded a National Science Foundation (NSF) graduate research fellowship, which will fund three years of his doctoral work at Arizona State University beginning in fall 2014. The fellowship program supports outstanding graduate students pursuing research-based degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

A first-generation college student, Brusch entered Cal Poly in 2003. Emotionally and financially unprepared, he dropped out after two years. Seven years later, he re-enrolled with new resolve and never looked back, earning a spot on the Dean's List seven of the last eight quarters.

The NSF fellowship is often awarded to students who have already completed one or two years of graduate school, but since returning to Cal Poly, Brusch has focused on research at a level that's unusual for an undergraduate.

In summer 2013, he won a competitive research experience award from the Organization for Tropical Studies. Brusch travelled to Costa Rica to study the thermal tolerance of amphibians and reptiles and how global climate change will affect them. Based on this and other research, Brusch has co-authored three scientific papers and has another coming out soon on which he is the lead author.

"The education and training I've acquired while at Cal Poly meant everything to my receiving the NSF fellowship," Brusch said. "The Learn by Doing style showed me what it takes to be a scientist. I've had the opportunity to be involved, first hand, in cutting-edge research that allowed me to demonstrate to the NSF what I might be able to do with the right resources."

Emily Taylor, biological sciences professor and Brusch's advisor said these are the most highly sought-after fellowships in the basic sciences. "These fellowships allow students to focus 100 percent on research instead of having to work to support themselves financially. It's a prestigious fellowship, and having it on his resume will open doors for further support in the future."

Brusch, who is about to become a father, appreciates the award in ways many cannot. "This fellowship means everything to my family and me. Working multiple jobs through my undergrad years was rarely easy. The award will allow me to focus on my course work and research goals."

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