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A FUTURE:

INTERNSHIPS, CO-OPS HELP STUDENTS HAMMER OUT CAREERS

BY STACIA MOMBURG

WITH TWO SYNCON HOMES INTERNSHIPS under his tool belt, Aaron Amuchastegui has something many graduates want: a job. And not just a typical, fresh-from-college job, either. Syncon Homes is holding a place for him as a mid-level project manager until he graduates in March.

Through the Construction Management Department, Amuchastegui participated in Cal Poly's co-op program. "I was involved in every aspect of the building process and used more than just my construction management knowledge," Amuchastegui said. "I witnessed firsthand how collaboration can cut the cost of a build by \$100,000 to \$200,000."

Amuchastegui realized his career path when he trained in land acquisition and discovered it was his favorite aspect of home building. "In land acquisition, I'll work with the smartest people in the company and learn from them," he said.

In land acquisition, you make an educated guess at valuing the land, the home build, and what the build will net a company. If the guess is off by as little as 10 percent, the project is scrapped, and the company loses everything, he explained.

"I love the challenge in that," he added.

Cal Poly Career Services Director Martin Shibata says Amuchastegui's experience is just one example of the success of the internship-co-op program. *U.S. News & World Report's 2006 America's Best Colleges* guidebook ranked Cal Poly's internship-co-op program, as "one of the programs to look for" and as an "outstanding example of academic programs that are believed to lead to student success."

"Aaron put himself in a better position to be competitive for jobs, and he was able to determine specific career goals," Shibata said.

Many companies rely on Cal Poly's co-op and internship programs as feeders for employee recruitment. "Employers place a high value on student participation because the work experience complements the classroom learning."

Amuchastegui claims he learned as much in one three-month internship as he did in nine months of classes.

"It was a terrific experience, and I couldn't be more excited to have a job that I love waiting for me when I graduate," he said. ■