Cal Poly Mid-Year Commencement Set for Dec. 16

SAN LUIS OBISPO – On Saturday, Dec. 16, nearly 800 Cal Poly students are expected to graduate in three ceremonies at the university's annual Fall Commencement.

Students from the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences, College of Education and College of Science and Mathematics will graduate in a 9 a.m. ceremony. Students from the College of Liberal Arts and College of Architecture and Environmental Design will graduate in a 1 p.m. ceremony. And students from the Orfalea College of Business and the College of Engineering will graduate in the last ceremony of the afternoon, at 4 p.m. All ceremonies will be held in the Cal Poly ASI Recreation Center.

The keynote speaker at the 9 a.m. commencement ceremony will be Louie A. Brown, Jr., partner at Kahn, Soares & Conway, LLP. The law firm, which focuses on agriculture, is recognized as one of the leading governmental advocacy firms in California and has offices in Sacramento and Hanford, as well as affiliate offices in Fresno, Corcoran and Washington, D.C. Brown represents the firm’s diverse clients before the California State Legislature and various state administrative agencies.

Before joining the firm in 2000, Brown was director of Ag Chemicals, Food Safety, and International Trade in the National Affairs Division of the California Farm Bureau Federation. In this position he represented the organization before Congress, pursuing changes in federal regulations adversely impacting California agriculture.

A Cal Poly alumnus, Brown earned his Bachelor of Science degree in 1995. While at Cal Poly, he was elected student body executive vice president and served two years as the founding chairman of the Cal Poly Open House committee. He also received the outstanding senior award from the College of Agriculture for community service.

The keynote speaker at the 1 p.m. ceremony is Ronald Van Pelt, AIA, senior vice president of Wimberly Allison Tong & Goo, Inc. based in Irvine. Van Pelt received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from Cal Poly in 1976.

Since joining the firm in 1984, Van Pelt has served as both senior designer and principal-in-charge of a number of major hospitality, leisure, residential, mixed-use and large-scale planning projects throughout Asia, Europe, the Middle East, the Caribbean and the United States.

The many projects he has completed around the globe include Legoland, Windsor Theme Park in England, Tropicana Casino & Resort Expansion (The Quarter) in Atlantic City and the Ritz-Carlton Dubai, UAE. His current work includes several large, mixed-use urban developments in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, along with new hotel and resort projects in California, Mexico and Portugal.

The keynote speaker at the 4:00 p.m. ceremony is Michael McBreen, director of global operations at Nike.

His current role requires him to leverage skills gained in strategic planning, finance, procurement, and distribution logistics in Nike’s apparel business. He and his teams have championed numerous change initiatives that have helped enable Nike’s continued growth.

Before joining Nike in 2000, McBreen was a director in PricewaterhouseCoopers where his work focused primarily on helping global companies achieve sustainable competitive advantage. He began his career as an engineer at Exxon Chemical.

A native of northwest Iowa, McBreen was raised on a family farm. After completing a B.S. in Chemical Engineering
and an MBA he has lived and worked in Japan, France, South Africa and the United States.

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