Cal Poly Named to President’s Honor Roll for Distinguished Community Service

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly was recently named to the first President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for distinguished community service in recognition of volunteer efforts by the school and its students to serve Gulf Coast communities devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

Cal Poly and 140 other colleges and universities were recognized for distinguished service among the nearly 500 schools honored. Schools receiving distinguished service recognition provided exceptional community service over the past year, contributing their time, resources, energy, skills – and intellect – to serve America.

“Cal Poly has set a strong example for college-level civic engagement,” said Stephen Goldsmith, Chief Executive officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency that works to foster a culture of volunteering and service in America. “Many people and communities have been improved because Cal Poly and its students identified some of society’s most pressing needs and got involved.”

The President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll is co-sponsored by the Corporation, the Department of Education, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, USA Freedom Corps, and the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. The recognition is presented in cooperation with Campus Compact, a national coalition of nearly 1,000 college and university presidents, and supported by all the major national higher education associations.

The award presentations came a day after the releases of a comprehensive study showing college student civic engagement has risen significantly in recent years. The study, which used data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, showed that student volunteering increased approximately 20 percent from 2002 to 2005, and that 3.3 million college students volunteer for their communities and nation. The study showed that college students between ages 16 to 24 are more likely to volunteer than others in that age group who are not enrolled.

Observers have attributed the growth in student service to several causes: the proliferation of high-school and college service-learning classes; an increase in the number of campus offices that link students to volunteer opportunities, and the lingering impact of the September 11 and Hurricane Katrina catastrophes.

The Corporation for National and Community Service is working with other federal agencies, higher education and student associations, and nonprofit organizations to encourage even greater levels of service and civic engagement by college students. Their goal is to increase the number of college student participating in volunteer service to 5 million college students annually by 2010.

The Honor Roll provides more new evidence that the nation is beginning to move toward that level of student civic engagement. More than 1.1 million students from Honor Roll schools participated in local community service activities, and more than 219,000 Honor Roll students provided hurricane relief.

A total of 492 institutions – including private and public schools, four-year institutions, professional schools, and community colleges – were named to the first Honor Roll. Those schools chronicled a broad variety of service programs and activities that have strengthened neighborhoods around them and in the Gulf region.

Community service programs and activities included mentorship programs for foster children, literacy tutoring for preschool children in underserved communities, medical and other professional services, homebuilding through Habitat for Humanity, and neighborhood cleanup programs. Universities reported that college students provided nearly 2.3 million service hours volunteering in Hurricane Katrina relief. As one example, tens of thousands of college students substituted work for fun during their winter and spring breaks by traveling to the Gulf to gut homes, clear debris, repair roofs, and paint buildings. The value of services provided by Honor Roll colleges and students was approximately $87 million.