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MEDIA ADVISORY

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Challenges Faced by First-Generation College Students to be
Focus of Cal Poly Workshop April 23

SAN LUIS OBISPO - An interactive workshop exploring the challenges facing first generation college students will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, April 23, in the Christopher Cohan Performing Arts Center lobby at Cal Poly. First-generation college students are the first in their family to attend college.

University Diversity Enhancement Council (UDEEC) Chair and Vice Provost for Academic Programs David Conn said the goal of the workshop is help Cal Poly's first-generation students, giving them the skills necessary to deal with common challenges.

During the event, 10 student speakers will talk about the transition to college life. Blending personal narratives with information from national studies, the speakers will focus on first-generation college student successes and issues. First generation faculty and staff members will join the students in the dialogue.

The morning workshop will conclude with a lunch program. Lunch will also include the unveiling of Cal Poly's First-Generation College Student logo.

"The logo is the beginning of an exciting new highlight at Cal Poly," said Linda Halisky, interim dean for the College of Liberal Arts and a member of the UDEEC. Workshop attendees will be given large-format copies of the logo to mount in their offices and work areas.

"This workshop is a labor of love for me," said Susan Sparling, director of student academic services, "because my career at Cal Poly has focused on students who have had to work very hard to achieve college admission and graduation."

An additional goal of the UDEEC will be generating scholarships for first-generation students.

"So many of these students come from low- and middle-income families that can't give much financial assistance," Sparling said. "In addition, the students often feel obliged to send money home to help their families. This is often a huge obstacle for these students, who would otherwise be at home, working and contributing to family finances."

Halisky said, "It is quite gratifying and exciting to be part of this new effort. Cal Poly can now begin to recognize the challenges of first-generation college students and make plans to support their success."

The workshop is sponsored by the Cal Poly University Diversity Enhancement Council, the Office of the Provost and the College of Liberal Arts .

This event is not open to the public however reporters and photographers are invited to cover it. To make arrangements contact Terry J. San Filippo, College of Liberal Arts (805) 756-1216.

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