SAN LUIS OBISPO – Simpson Strong-Tie, one of the largest suppliers of structural building connectors in the world, is donating $500,000 to help fund a laboratory in a new building that will house Cal Poly's Construction Management Department.

The Simpson Strong-Tie Materials Demonstration Laboratory will be the largest element in the building's Center for Construction Excellence. Students in several disciplines will be able to use the 5,000 square foot lab to design, build and test a variety of structural components. The Materials Demonstration Lab will provide vital support for activities of four adjoining labs in the center, where students will gain hands-on experience with fundamentals of construction management and with residential, commercial and heavy/civil construction.

The donation is part of the Cal Poly College of Architecture and Environmental Design’s campaign to raise $7.5 million in private gifts to help fund the new building. The college will receive $17 million in state funds for the project. Groundbreaking is scheduled for 2005, with completion in the fall of 2007.

“Simpson Strong-Tie is committed to education and advancing the construction of safe, cost-effective structures for our communities,” said Dave Bastian, branch manager of Simpson Strong-Tie’s Brea, Calif., facilities. “Cal Poly’s new construction management labs will enhance hands-on learning, which will continue to improve building practices and bring bright, skilled design and construction professionals into the work force.”

Cal Poly Construction Management Department Head Allan Hauck said, “Cal Poly and Simpson Strong-Tie share similar goals of construction excellence and improving the safety of structures. We are very pleased to have had Simpson Strong-Tie as a partner for the past two decades.”
The new demonstration laboratory is designed to provide an interactive learning environment for students that can simulate ‘real-world’ projects, from the construction of roads to structural seismic mitigation that will protect homes and buildings from the forces of nature, including earthquakes and high winds.”

Simpson’s Brea manufacturing and sales facility is involved with course instruction and training sessions for students and alumni.

“Simpson Strong-Tie’s involvement has been interdisciplinary,” Dean of Architecture and Environmental Design R. Thomas Jones said. “For nearly 20 years they’ve donated teaching tools to the Architectural Engineering Department, for the last eight years have helped to sponsor the annual student-run Structural Engineers Association of California Structural Forum, and since 1998 have supported student senior projects with supplies, equipment and crucial technical expertise.

“Students from our Construction Management, Architectural Engineering and Architecture departments have gained from scholarships and the Simpson Strong-Tie Symposium, where they learn to incorporate and specify the structural detailing of fasteners and other equipment necessary to overcome engineering challenges,” Jones said. “The firm also employs several of our graduates.”

This year's Simpson Strong-Tie Symposium, on Friday-Saturday, May 14-15, is open to students and the public. Call (805) 756-1314 for more information on the symposium.

For information on a ceremony Friday, May 14, to formalize the Simpson gift, call the College of Architecture and Environmental Design at (805) 756-1323. For more about Simpson Strong-Tie, go to www.strongtie.com.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: A signing ceremony for the gift will take place at 2 p.m. Friday, May 14, in the Gallery of the Architecture and Environmental Design Building (Room 105). A photograph of the ceremony will be available after the event via e-mail by contacting Ray Ladd at (805) 756-7432 or rladd@calpoly.edu.