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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cal Poly Names Its Women of the Year

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- A city councilwoman, a women's studies director, an English student, and two professional women active in the fight against breast cancer and sexual harassment were recognized by Cal Poly as the university's Women of the Year.

The annual awards are made by Cal Poly's Student Life and Leadership program. Those recognized at the annual event are chosen for their leadership, involvement in activities that benefit others, participation in areas in which women are underrepresented, and also mentoring and support of other women, said Maya Andlig, coordinator of sexuality and gender programs at the university.

This year's winners are financial aid coordinator Valerie Barboza and Academic Affairs coordinator Mary Whiteford, in a tie for the staff award; Cal Poly Director of Women's Studies Mary Armstrong in the faculty category; English major Melissa Commuso in the student category; and San Luis Obispo City Councilwoman Christine Mulholland in the community category.

"The Women's Center selects one community woman to recognize each year based on the same guiding qualities, and this year we selected Christine Mulholland," Andlig said.
"Christine is one of the few female political representatives we have seen on the San Luis Obispo City Council, and she has been a champion of maintaining the integrity of our environment and ensuring the safety of our citizenry. She has also been active in her PTA and been an accessible representative that fearlessly stands for her principles," Andlig said.

Student Commuso, right

Barboza, of the campus Financial Aid office, was selected for her involvement with students. Nominators noted she goes above and beyond her job duties for students, and is also active in organizing events to benefit breast cancer and AIDS research.

Whiteford, of Academic Affairs, was selected for her involvement in the initial opening of the Women's Center on campus, as well as her ongoing involvement with Women's Programs at Cal Poly. She also serves as an affirmative action facilitator and a sexual harassment prevention facilitator.

Armstrong was selected for her work in creating an inclusive and diverse curriculum for the Women's Studies minor, for her advocacy on behalf of women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, and her exceptional work in the classroom, Andlig said.

Student Woman of the Year was Commuso, who serves as student coordinator for the Pride Alliance-LGBT Center in addition to other leadership work on campus and in addition to her work in the off-campus community.

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