Cal Poly Aerospace Engineering Students Win National Aircraft Design Competition

winning engineering studentsSAN LUIS OBISPO -- Ten Cal Poly College of Engineering students won first and second place awards at the 2002-2003 American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) Undergraduate Team Aircraft Design Competition.

The eight members of Cal Poly's Team Hyperion won the $2,500 first place award in the Team Aircraft Design category with their proposal for a six-engine ultra-heavy-lift aircraft capable of carrying a 1.2 million pound payload at 520 mph.

In the AIAA Individual Aircraft Design Category, Cal Poly's Francesco Giannini won the $2,500 first place award and Gene Gisin won $1,500 for second with designs for an unmanned combat air vehicle, similar to the Predator in use by the U.S. military today.

For their "Hyperion" transport plane, the winning Cal Poly team went to a WWI-era biplane design to stay within a Federal Aviation Administration wingspan limit of 262 feet.

"By going with a biplane, it allowed us to meet the ultra-heavy-lift requirement of the competition and stay within FAA rules," team member Mark Blackwood said. His fellow team members were Tom Farrell, Andy Gibson, Jon Keith, Jim Knight, Andy Rowe, Ben Schiltgen and Brian Selvy.

"We consider the AIAA competition to be the NCAA Championships for aerospace students, so we're really happy," Blackwood said.

The winning Cal Poly students, all graduated seniors, were enrolled in classes that prep students for the AIAA competition.

"The senior design sequence is where everything the students learn comes together," said faculty advisor David Hall, who credited the help and support of Boeing for his students' success. "This is the capstone for design students and this group of students carried on Cal Poly's long tradition of doing very well at the AIAA competition."

Located in Reston, Va., the AIAA has been the principal society of the aerospace engineers and scientists for
more than 70 years. The group's annual student competition attracts entrants from around the world. Ten student teams including one from Australia competed in the 2002-03 competition.

More information is available at www.aiaa.org.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Computer graphics of the winning "Hyperion" design and a photo of the team members are available from Bob Anderson in Public Affairs, (805) 756-6532 or banderso@calpoly.edu, or Amy Hewes, (805) 756-6402, ahewes@calpoly.edu