Cal Poly Women Engineers Receive National Awards

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- For the second-straight year, the Cal Poly section of the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) has been named the nation's Outstanding "large" Student Section.

The Cal Poly group, with 524 members the largest of the more-than-300 student SWE chapters nationwide, also received awards for Team Tech, Audio Visual Presentation and Membership at the society's annual conference in Birmingham, Ala., Oct. 9-11.

"It's unprecedented to win the top award in consecutive years," said Helene Finger, faculty advisor for Cal Poly's SWE chapter. "We're competing against all the best schools in the country -- schools like Stanford, MIT, Michigan, Purdue, Illinois and Georgia Tech -- so winning four awards is an especially nice honor!"

Cal Poly's winning Team Tech project was an electronic tracking system for restaurant managers to measure how much time it takes to deliver a meal to a customer after it has been cooked. The Cal Poly team received sponsorship from Hewlett-Packard and worked closely with San Luis Obispo restaurant Café Roma on the project. This year's first-place win follows a second-place finish in 2001-02.

The annual Team Tech Competition, sponsored by Boeing, enables students from all disciplines and levels of engineering to gain hands-on experience beyond the classroom and work closely within a multidisciplinary team.

The Audio-Visual Award is based on the best 10- to 20-minute program about activities of SWE student sections or SWE aids to students. Cal Poly SWE created a 16-minute career guidance video CD for high school students, "Considering a Career in Engineering," featuring female engineers and engineering students discussing issues and presenting facts and inspirational quotes about engineering. The CD has been distributed by SWE officers to high schools throughout the state.

The Membership Award recognizes successful and well-organized efforts to recruit and retain members.

"Because of the quality of our leaders and programming, not only did we surpass last year's membership of 409, but we exceeded that number by 115 more members," Finger said. "Our membership makes us the largest student SWE section in the nation by almost 200 members, even though the next-largest student section represents a school that has an engineering enrollment 65 percent greater than Cal Poly's."
Founded in 1950, SWE is the largest nonprofit educational and service organization representing both student and professional women in engineering and technical fields. The stated aim of SWE, which has more than 17,000 members, is to energize women to achieve full potential in careers as engineers and leaders.

Finger, who has advised the Cal Poly SWE section for three years, said, "By sponsoring networking opportunities with industry leaders and tours of engineering companies, through scholarships and other outreach programs, SWE helps recruit and retain women engineers. That's important because, generally, women are not exposed to all the facets and opportunities there are in engineering."

More information about SWE and Cal Poly's chapter is available at [www.esc.calpoly.edu/~swe](http://www.esc.calpoly.edu/~swe) and [www.swe.org](http://www.swe.org).

- 30 -