Cal Poly College of Engineering Recognizes Outstanding Faculty and Staff Members

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Cal Poly's College of Engineering recognized outstanding faculty and staff members at its recent annual Awards Banquet, held at the Embassy Suites in San Luis Obispo.

Two outstanding staff awards and a faculty advisor award were presented, along with three industry-sponsored awards.

In addition, two professors from other colleges, one from Science and Mathematics and one from Liberal Arts, were honored.

Materials Science Associate Professor Kathy Chen of San Luis Obispo won the $2,000 Northrop Grumman Excellence in Teaching Award, Materials Engineering and General Engineering Associate Professor Lanny Griffin of Arroyo Grande received the $3,000 Northrop Grumman Electronics Systems Excellence in Research and Development Award, and Environmental Engineering Associate Professor Yarrow Nelson of Morro Bay received the $3,000 Raytheon Excellence in Teaching and Applied Research Award.

Chen joined the Materials Engineering Department in 1999. She is a well-published expert in structure-property relationships in materials, intermetallics, alloy design and development, and phase transitions. A highly regarded teacher, Chen has brought several innovations into existing materials engineering courses, such as fostering cooperative learning techniques and developing Web sites for all her courses. She has also significantly redesigned several labs, including a lab on shape memory alloys appropriate for freshmen.

Under Chen's guidance, the materials engineering student clubs have experienced exponential growth; thus, she has helped inspire students to become more involved in their major. Chen earned her doctorate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She has taught at New Mexico Tech and also served in the Material Science and Technology Division at Los Alamos National Laboratory.
Griffin earned a bachelor's degree from Cal Poly in 1992 and a doctorate from UC Davis in 1996. His teaching areas include mechanical behavior of materials, composites and biomaterials. Since joining the faculty at Cal Poly in 1997, Griffin has established an excellent record of funded research. His grants include $50,000 from Guidant to help develop the interdepartmental biomedical engineering concentration curriculum, a $17,400 Cal Poly Plan grant to develop curriculum in the Computational methods for Materials Engineering, and a $96,000 grant from the U.S. Army Surgical Institute to study human bone.

In 2000, Griffin received a four-year, $449,000 grant from the National Institute of Health—the first the university ever received—to study the interfacial properties of Haversian bone. This year, the U.S. Special Operations Command gave him $293,000 to study advanced polymeric splints. In 2000, Griffin was recognized by the American Society for Engineering Education as the Dow Outstanding New Faculty for the Pacific Section.

Since joining the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department four years ago, Nelson has provided his students with a host of opportunities to work on real environmental pollution problems around the world. During the 2002-03 academic year, for instance, Nelson supervised eight graduate students who were funded full-time through grants from Unocal in cooperation with the Environmental Biotechnology Institute at Cal Poly. The Unocal research includes diverse projects aimed at the remediation of hydrocarbon groundwater contamination at the Guadalupe site. Nelson also advised four master's students, who traveled to Ubud, Bali, in Indonesia to develop novel wastewater treatment systems applicable to developing countries.

Given his background in environmental and bioprocess engineering and environmental microbiology, Nelson has likewise pursued applied fieldwork in developing countries. For instance, he developed a model for toxic trace metal exposure to filter-feeding flamingos at a polluted alkaline lake in Kenya, and he helped the World Wildlife Fund establish a toxic release inventory for the Lake Nakuru watershed. Nelson has a bachelor's in chemical engineering from Berkeley and a doctorate in environmental engineering from Cornell.

The engineering student body selected the recipients of the Outstanding Achievement in Teaching Awards and Outstanding Faculty Advisor Award. Winners included Physics Professor and Arroyo Grande resident Ronald Zammit, a Cal Poly veteran of 17 years. Zammit is known by his students to "go above and beyond what is expected." English lecturer Joel Westwood of San Luis Obispo, is said by engineering students to "tie his class material to all sorts of real-life examples."

Donna Aiken of Los Osos won the 2003 Outstanding Club Advisor Award for her mentorship of the College of Engineering Ambassadors Program, which provides leadership training for 36 college representatives. The program also coordinates 100-plus tours annually lead by ambassadors.
for campus visitors.

The college's Outstanding Staff Awards were given to San Luis Obispo
resident Cheryl Hahn, administrative analyst for the Civil and
Environmental Engineering Department, and Computer Science Department
Equipment and Software Specialist Byron Smith of Atascadero.