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Cal Poly Team Named One of Four Finalists In Disney's International 'Imagi-Nations' Competition

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Four Cal Poly students have been selected as one of four team finalists from universities around the world to make a presentation next month to a panel of Walt Disney Imagineering executives in the final judging of a competition to propose something new -- almost anything -- to the entertainment giant.

The students -- three majoring in architecture, one in graphic communication -- will try to wow the Disney panel with their idea for a new and "un-Disney" entertainment center on San Francisco Bay.

Their idea was chosen from those submitted by an international pool of university teams for Disney's 2003 Imagi-Nations Design Competition. In the final judging, they'll be competing against teams from the United States and Canada.

"Frequency" is what the Cal Poly designers call their proposal for a several-acre complex in the Mission Bay area of southeast San Francisco across China Basin from the Giants' Pac Bell Park. They envision "a cutting-edge entertainment center featuring the latest in video and audio technology," with large screens and speakers projecting a "lively, exciting atmosphere concentrating in the main plaza and spreading throughout the center," as team member Conrad Garner of Poway described it.

Along with a 700-foot hotel tower and convention center, extensive shopping and themed restaurants and clubs, their proposal features a "new-age roller coaster" combining the 360-degree motion of a gyroscope with the speed and path of a world-class coaster in a ride that riders could control. Major concerts would be held on a stage that would fold down out of a parking structure and hang suspended over the water of a new bay formed at the base of the hotel. Parking would be automated,
with advanced technology lifting driverless cars into stacked spaces in a high-rise structure.

"The concept was to build something for Disney that at first glance seems 'un-Disney,'" Garner said. "From the very beginning, our goal was to knock Disney off their feet. We geared everything from the architecture to the presentation around that 'shock' strategy. Our project, Frequency, is definitely a non-traditional realm for Disney, but from the comments we received, it seems the judges were intrigued.

"People will want to visit Frequency," Garner said. "As we now work to deepen and enrich the concept, the center is evolving into a state-of-the-art musical extravaganza, one that is geared to bring people together through music -- a place that allows people more musical variety, quality and entertainment than they can imagine. You will remember your experience at Frequency."

Garner and fellow fourth-year architecture students Charles Dellinger of Rialto and Brian Gallo of Fresno developed the idea during fall quarter as an independent design class. The trio were advised by Architecture Professor Joseph Amanzio.

"Being able to explore design for this urban entertainment project as independent study has helped to broaden our understanding and helped each of us grow in the architecture program," Dellinger said.

"The success of this team of students is a tribute to their hard work and demonstrates the value and importance of design collaboration," said K. Richard Zweifel, interim dean of the College of Architecture and Environmental Design. "The organization of this highly creative project was exceptional. It is a real-life learning experience, which is so important in Cal Poly's architecture program."

Graphic communication senior Matthew Kull of Poway joined the group in January to help polish up the preliminary presentation. The team presented the proposal and a three-minute video to a panel at Disney Imagineering headquarters in Burbank Jan. 31.

Final judging for Disney's 2003 Imagi-Nations Design Competition -- for which students could propose anything from a character in a story to a ride in a theme park -- will be in Burbank June 8-12.

"We're going to have to sell this idea to the executives," Garner said. "Our focus will be creating and building a story behind the project. We need to answer Disney's question of 'Why?' We have a lot of work left to do, but we look forward to the challenge."

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NOTE TO EDITORS: A graphic of the students' proposal is available by
e-mail. Please contact Bob Anderson in Public Affairs at (805) 756-1511 or banderso@calpoly.edu to request it.