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Cal Poly College of Liberal Arts Launches Drive To Aid Kabul University

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Cal Poly's College of Liberal Arts has launched a fund-raising drive to aid women at Kabul University in Afghanistan by helping to pay for the construction of a campus day-care center there.

Inspired by the work of Cal Poly Ethnic Studies Professor Maliha Zulfacar, a group of faculty, students and staff from Cal Poly's College of Liberal Arts is seeking to raise $13,500 to build, equip and staff a children's center at the Afghan university. The group hopes to raise the money by the end of July 2003.

Zulfacar is a native Afghan who taught at Kabul University before fleeing the country and becoming a U.S. citizen. She has traveled to Afghanistan twice during 2002 along with other expatriates at the request of the new Afghan government, to help rebuild the country's education system after nearly a decade of repressive Taliban rule. She has also made a documentary film of a trip she took with an international women's rights delegation into the country's northern war zone in the summer of 2000.

In her trips, the Cal Poly professor found women, banned from schools by the Taliban, eager to return to schools and universities to continue their education.

"However, there is one immediate obstacle to the return of women students, faculty, and staff to such university programs as are already functioning or soon to be restored in Afghanistan," explained Susan Currier, associate dean of Cal Poly's College of Liberal Arts. "No childcare is available to the women."
"Many of the women who want to return to Kabul University to study or teach were widowed during Afghanistan's decades of conflict, Currier said. "Most of them are sole caretakers of multiple children."

The Cal Poly College of Liberal Arts goal in mounting the fund-raising drive is to enable women to study, teach and work as staff at Kabul University, and to provide good care for the children of the university's students and employees.

"Kabul University has already designated a site for the children's center, and we have already received our first contributions to the fund," Currier said.

"Our goal for 2002-2003 is $13,500 to cover approximately $10,000 for materials and construction, $3,000 in staff salaries and $500 in books, art supplies, blocks, games and other learning materials," she said.

The college has selected Give2Asia, a non-profit organization founded by The Asia Foundation and headquartered in San Francisco, to administer its Kabul University Children's Center Fund. Contributions to the fund are tax-deductible. More information about the agency can be found at www.asiafoundation.org. Give2Asia will acknowledge all contributions by check and will provide a receipt.

Donations may also be sent to the College of Liberal Arts, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA 93407, and the college will forward them to Give2Asia.

For details on the Kabul University children's center fund-raising drive, visit the College of Liberal Arts project Web site at http://kabulucc.calpoly.edu or contact Terry San Filippo, public affairs coordinator for the college, (805) 756-1216, Currier at (805) 756-2706, scurrier@calpoly.edu.

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Note to editors: For background on Professor Zulfacar, visit the Christian Science Monitor web site for a recent article about her:
http://www.christiansciencemonitor.org/2002/1113/p20s01-lign.html
Or the Cal Poly Magazine, at:
http://www.calpolynews.calpoly.edu/magazine/summer'02/zulfacar.html