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Cal Poly Students Earn First Place in Bank of America Low-Income Housing Challenge

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- A team of Cal Poly students won first place in a regional design competition for their large-scale plans to redevelop a low-income housing project in Paso Robles.

The team of four students from Cal Poly's Orfalea College of Business (OCOB) and 13 students from the university's College of Architecture and Environmental Design (CAED) took the top award in the Bank of America Low-Income Housing Challenge regional competition May 13 in San Francisco.

Cal Poly's 17-member team was comprised mainly of undergraduate students, who competed against two teams made up of graduate students from UC Berkeley and Stanford. The student team is an interdisciplinary collaboration between the OCOB and three departments in the CAED – architecture, city and regional planning, and construction management. The team dedicated two academic quarters to the challenge and was coached by City and Regional Planning Professor D. Gregg Doyle.

Cal Poly's 2005 team project featured a \$56-million public housing re-development proposal and encompassed the design, planning, relocation, demolition, construction, market study and financing for the replacement of 148 deteriorating townhouses in the Oak Park neighborhood of Paso Robles.

The new project was developed with the involvement of the current residents, city officials, housing authority representatives, and the local nonprofit group Peoples' Self-Help Housing. It

replaces the 148 units with new, larger units, adds 12 additional low-income rental units, 50 affordable home-ownership townhouses and a community center.

“Despite the urging of the judges to ‘do an easier project,’ the Cal Poly team took on this project - not just as an academic exercise, but as a serious proposal to provide a lasting opportunity for generations of Central Coast residents,” said OCOB Dean Dave Christy. “The team’s work was so thorough and professional that they were invited to present their concept to city officials and the Housing Authority.”

Paso Robles Mayor Frank Mecham formally recognized the team’s efforts at the city council meeting on Tuesday, June 7.

“There is a strong likelihood that the local agency may pursue funding to construct the proposed project,” said CAED Dean R. Thomas Jones.

The team elected to donate their \$750 cash award to the Paso Robles Housing Authority and to Peoples’ Self-Help Housing.

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***Editors:** A digital photo file of the students can be emailed upon request. Contact Cal Poly Public Affairs at (805) 756-1511.*