



Office of Public Affairs  
Division of University Advancement

## News Release

Media Contact: **Uyen Mai**  
(909) 869-5331, [utmai@csupomona.edu](mailto:utmai@csupomona.edu)  
Release No: 0708-064

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 25, 2008

### **CAL POLY POMONA'S STATE OF THE ART GREENHOUSES PRODUCE HYDROPONIC LETTUCE FOR COMMUNITY**

POMONA, Calif. — As cities and populations continue to grow pushing farms farther away from urban areas, it can be difficult to find hearty locally grown produce. But that's not the case at the Cal Poly Pomona Farm Store where one can now buy hydroponically grown lettuce for a scant \$1 a head.

In one of eight new state-of-the-art greenhouses at the university, the College of Agriculture is cultivating hydroponic lettuce year-round and selling it a mere hundred yards away at the Farm Store at Kellogg Ranch. You don't get more locally grown than that.

“Usually by the time you buy lettuce in a grocery store it was harvested six or seven days earlier,” says Dan Hostetler, chair of the plant & soil science department. “Our lettuce at the Farm Store will be sold within two days of being cut. All you have to do is taste it to tell the difference.”

Delicious lettuce isn't the only benefit from this new venture. Continual planting of the leafy crop provides a real-world setting to teach agriculture students about hydroponics: the science of growing plants without soil. The method conserves water by cycling nutrient-rich water over the plants roots. In a region as arid as Southern California, water conservation is a vital key to sustainable farming, says Professor Terrance Fujimoto, who teaches hydroponics.

In North America, the hydroponic greenhouse farming industry is valued at more than \$2.4 billion and is growing at a rate of 10 percent per year, according to the Progressive Gardening Trade Association, which promotes earth-friendly, organic and water-wise gardening. In California, greenhouse/nursery products are the second leading agricultural commodities

— more —

behind only dairy products, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture data.

“It’s important for us to stay on top of industry trends, so we can prepare our students to pursue careers in that industry if they choose,” Fujimoto says.

Fujimoto first taught hydroponics several years ago in the Horticulture Unit greenhouses that will soon be demolished to make way for a \$41 million College of Business Administration building. In the past year, eight new greenhouses totaling about 35,000 square feet have been built at AGRIsapes, a 40-acre complex on campus that showcases sustainable farming and urban landscaping practices that are environmentally beneficial, economically viable and technologically sound.

This past fall quarter, Fujimotos taught a class on hydroponics and students improved their crop production thanks to the advanced design of the new facility. The new greenhouses feature automated shade systems, insect screening, heating units and automatically controlled ventilation.

“It’s amazing coming here from the old greenhouses. We managed to get two crops in one quarter using the new greenhouses, as opposed to one crop in the old building,” Fujimoto says. “We were really able to speed up production because we can monitor the environment so closely.”

###