



Office of Public Affairs
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News Release

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Cal Poly Pomona Receives Grant to Host The Big Read in Pomona 'To Kill a Mockingbird' Topic of Events in October and November

POMONA, Calif. — July 7, 2008 — Dust off those reading glasses! Cal Poly Pomona today announced that it has received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to host The Big Read in Pomona this fall.

The Big Read gives communities the opportunity to come together to read, discuss and celebrate one of 23 selections from American and world literature. The Big Read in Pomona will focus on Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* through a series of events in October and November. Last year, The Big Read in Pomona encouraged thousands to pick up *Bless Me, Ultima*.

"We are hopeful that Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* will be a catalyst to bring people together around the broad themes of tolerance and justice that are prevalent in the book," said Jonnie Owens, director of community outreach for the College of Letters, Arts & Social Sciences, who will oversee the use of the grant. "As our community reads, we hope they will not only find pleasure in that reading but also enlightenment and the ability to understand and get along with each other."

The Big Read in Pomona will launch with a kickoff event Friday, Oct. 3, at the Cal Poly Pomona Downtown Center, 300 W. Second St. in the Pomona Arts Colony. Details about upcoming events will be released later this summer.

Cal Poly Pomona is one of 208 organizations across the country hosting The Big Read events this fall and winter. As a recipient of a \$17,000 Big Read grant, Cal Poly Pomona along with community leaders and partnering organizations will provide community-based reading programs. Activities include read-a-

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thons, book discussions, lectures, movie screenings, and performing arts events. Participating communities also receive high-quality, free-of-charge educational materials to supplement each title, including Reader's, Teacher's, and Audio Guides.

The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and Arts Midwest.

Modeled on successful city reads programs, the Big Read is meant to address the national decline in literary reading as documented in the NEA's 2004 landmark survey *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America*. The survey showed that less than half the American adult population now reads literature.

To date, the NEA has given more than 500 grants to support local Big Read projects.

"Everything the NEA does we do in partnership. I am delighted to announce our 208 new partners in The Big Read. Some are new to the program, some are returning, but all of them have answered the call to action to get our country reading again," said NEA Chairman Dana Gioia.

For more information on The Big Read in Pomona, visit <http://www.class.csupomona.edu/downtowncenter/bigread/> or www.neabigread.org.

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ABOUT CAL POLY POMONA — Striking a balance between urban excitement and rural charm, Cal Poly Pomona is nestled in 1,438 rolling acres in the heart of sunny Southern California. With 3,000 faculty and staff to serve 21,500 students, Cal Poly Pomona's mission is to advance knowledge by linking theory and practice while preparing students for leadership and careers in a multicultural world. The university seeks to place learning at the center of every program, course, and activity on campus. Students can apply their knowledge through hands-on projects, collaborate with faculty members on research, and participate in valuable internships and service learning programs. Eight colleges (agriculture; business administration; education; engineering; environmental design; hospitality management letters, arts and social sciences; and science) offer 56 undergraduate and 23 graduate degrees, as well as 8 credential programs.