Two new chairs boost UVic health research talent

Dr. Fraser Hof, a medicinal chemist at the University of Victoria, is hot on the trail of a molecule that when accidentally activated in men can lead to an aggressive form of prostate cancer. He’s looking for a way to neutralize it.

Hof is also one of UVic’s two new Canada Research Chairs, announced Oct. 12 by the federal government. The other new chair is Dr. Gautam Awatramani, a biomedical engineer who is seeking ways to combat degenerative eye disorders.

The Canada Research Chair program helps Canadian universities achieve research excellence in natural sciences and engineering, health sciences, social sciences and the humanities. UVic now has 36 filled Canada Research Chairs.

As the Canada Research Chair in Supramolecular and Medicinal Chemistry, Hof studies how molecules bind together. He designs molecules to see how they’re structured and how they bond with each other in biological settings—lessons that have the potential to improve a wide range of medical treatments, he says.

Recently, Hof and his team created compounds that interfere with a key protein molecule associated with prostate cancer. “There’s still a lot of work to do—probably eight to 10 years—before this discovery could become a drug for use on humans,” he says. “But it has promise.”

As the Canada Research Chair in Symptomatic Pharmacology, Awatramani uses advanced technologies to understand how nerve cells within the retina of the eye communicate with each other.

“Thousands of Canadians and more than 1.5 million people worldwide suffer some form of irreversible vision loss associated with degenerative disorders of the retina,” he
Students uncover fossils in ‘Cradle of humankind’

BY ANNE MacLAURIN

It’s not every day that an undergrad can discover a 1.5-million-year-old human fossil, but that’s just what happened to UVic anthropology students Anne Tuominen and Elizabeth Hannah.

They were among a dozen anthropology undergraduate students who participated in a unique field school led by UVic Professor April Nowell (anthropology) and Dr. Colin Menter of the University of Witwatersrand, where they spent 14 days in July in South Africa in a region known as the “Cradle of Humankind,” at a world Heritage Site called Drimolen.

For two weeks, the students worked alongside experts digging through the third-richest fossil site in South Africa, dating back 1.5 million years in hominin (early human) history. What makes the Drimolen site especially unique is the large number of infant hominin fossils. Experts believe the area was used as a sleeping site, so many of the discoveries are of very young children and infants.

“Fone screening techniques contribute to the rich discovery of neocortex fossils at the site,” says Nowell. “The technique allows us to find even the smallest deciduous (baby) teeth.”

On the second day of the dig, Tuominen and Hannah made an unbelievable discovery.

“We found a tiny hominin ulna fossil, dating back 1.5 million years,” said Hannah. “It was nerve-wracking and exciting and unbelievable—we had no idea what it was until we had uncovered most of it, and we were very thankful that we didn’t damage it.”

“Finding such a fossil was an unbelievable experience and far more exciting than I was prepared for on the second day of excavation,” says Tuominen. “It was a really incredible way to start the field school.”

“The students’ discovery was the first fossil to be uncovered for that excavation season,” said Nowell. “It was a small piece of bone, likely from an infant—a great addition to the Drimolen collection.”

After 12 days of excavation work, journals entries and lectures, the students were ready for a two-day game drive through the Pilanesberg Game Reserve (http://www.pilanesberg.game-reserve.co.za). “Starting out as the sun rose, Minter and Stephanie Baker (the field school’s TA and a zooologist) led the students through the game park pointing out giraffes, zebras, elephants, lions, hippo and other exotic animals.”

The field school also visited the world-renowned Transvaal Museum, where many of the most important fossils in the world are stored, and the University of Witwatersrand, where they were introduced to the first australopithocene fossil ever found, the Taung Child, discovered in the 1920s. “I wanted the students in the field school to have a variety of experiences,” says Nowell, “going beyond text books and learning first-hand about famous anthropological discoveries. The students were able to see fossils that 80 per cent of my colleagues have only ever seen in text books,” she adds.

Nowell hopes to continue exploring the hominin fossil site at Drimolen in July 2012 with another group of field school students. On Nov. 21, Nowell will hold an anthropological colloquium about field schools from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the MacLaurin Building, Mac 203B.
President Turpin announces priorities for 2011/12

In October, President David Turpin announced the first University Senate meeting of the academic year to report to senators the key highlights from the presentation to the Board of Governors for the 2011/12 year. He underscored the Senate's leadership role in maintaining UVic’s support for excellence in education, research and service to the community and to the university’s commitment to providing its students with an excellent educational experience.

Strategic Plan review and renewal

Part of the presentation focused on the new Draft Strategic Plan, which is now available for review and feedback following a review process of the 2007 plan. Although UVic’s mission and goals have not changed, “what has changed is how we achieve these goals,” said Turpin. He said that this reflects the changing demographics, increased competition and the economic climate that UVic faces over the next three to five years.

Turpin expressed appreciation for the high level of engagement from the planning and priorities committees, the campus community and the broader community during the plan review process and asked Senate members to review the draft to ensure it reflects their priorities for the university. The document will be accepted until Nov. 14. The new strategic plan is expected to be presented to the Senate and Board for approval in early 2012.

Integrated planning process and budget decision

The goals and objectives of the Draft Strategic Plan will be implemented through the integrated planning process, led by Vice-President Academic and Provost Frootu Frinchap, which in turn informs the budget planning process. UVic achieved a balanced budget in 2011/12 and Turpin says planning is under way for the 2012/13 fiscal year. UVic will once again strive to deliver a balanced budget that reflects a resource-constrained environment.

Student recruitment and retention and internationalization

UVic has surpassed its record enrolment of last fall—topping 20,000 students—and Turpin spoke of the need to engage those students who come from out of town (over 70 per cent) and to “build a home” for them on campus. The university is an “engaged campus” and is an expansion in and an expansion of residence capacity. Due to an increased emphasis on internationalization—a priority in the Draft Strategic Plan—more of our students will come from abroad. This priority aligns with the provost’s earlier announcement to increase international enrolment at BC’s schools and institutions.

Internationalization also encompasses research collaborations, student and faculty exchanges and more world abroad opportunities, all of which will provide opportunities for UVic to showcase its initiatives abroad. “The key to our success is internationalization,” the university is restructuring the international affairs office and searching for an associate vice-president international.

50th anniversary

Planning for next year’s 50th anniversary celebrations is well under way. At a pre-launch event in September, the anniversary website was unveiled with historical content and information about how people and units on campus can get engaged in the upcoming celebration. Senate members were encouraged to submit their stand-out memories from the past five decades via the “Great Moments in UVic’s History” link on the website for possible inclusion on the website during the celebratory period of Sept. 2012 to June 2013.

Centre for Athletics, Recreation and Special Abilities

UVic has delayed its application to Saanich Council for height and width variances for the newly proposed Centre for Athletics, Recreation and Special Abilities (CARSA) for six months. The break will allow the university to take the time for additional consultation on the project with the community and the municipality.

CARSA will provide community-accessible athletic, recreational, research and classroom space and technology development and community engagement space for CARSA—UVic’s international and national organization that develops and delivers technologies, programs and services to improve the quality of life for those living with disabilities. CARSA also includes a proposed package to provide additional parking capacity to support the centre and other campus activities.

Increased external relations activity

Increasing UVic’s profile in Ottawa, Vancouver and the broader external community is a significant priority in the coming year. The need for support from both the federal and provincial governments for research initiatives and to maintain the overall quality of post-secondary education is paramount, Turpin said, adding that the post-secondary sector is watching “with concern” how the provincial government will respond to any cuts of its budget. The university is asking for a $2.5-billion revenue shortfall as a result of the rejection of the HST.

Securing major science infrastructure (supporting) funds for Ocean Networks Canada, which operates both Neptune Canada ocean network and the VENUS coastal network, remains a priority. Turpin adds that Neptune being named one of the university’s 10 most “epic” projects by Popular Science magazine this year helps reflect the profile of the world’s largest and most advanced cabled ocean network ever built.


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says. “Before we can find ways to restore retinal function in these cases, we have not only helping out financially when I was growing up, but also visiting the villages affected by Bui Hydroelectric Dam in Ghana.

and Cowichan Bay, BC, and has made

in anthropology from the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Visit Tepleski’s website at

devinetepleski.com/

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At Beijing and Hong Kong events last month, the UVic delegation met with Chinese representatives to discuss the potential for partnerships involving CanAssist. The delegation also visited Shanghai, where UVic President David Turpin spoke at a gala evening held to celebrate the 60th anniversary of East China Normal University. He used the occasion to mark the 30th anniversary of UVic’s partnership with ECNU and to announce new visiting scholar awards to strengthen research collaborations between the two institutions, and two scholarships to assist ECNU students to attend UVic.

CanAssist: a big hit in Beijing

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Creating connections for 25 years

BY KAELA PEPPER

This year, UVic's Peer Helping Program is celebrating its 25th year of transforming lives. Both within the program and through campus outreach initiatives, volunteer peer helpers create safe spaces for their peers to share their experiences and seek support. But most importantly, the program is about making connections.

On Oct. 6, the Peer Helping Program attracted an estimated 400 students to the UVic Fountain. With snacks—donated by Food Services and Corporate Relations—to attract passersby, peer helpers promoted their services and the many benefits of becoming a volunteer.

"It's a willingness to learn about others, learn about themselves and contribute to the campus community, that makes a good peer helper," says Staff Coordinator Emma Mason.

For the 2012-13 school year there are 51 peer helpers. Wes Paylor, a fourth-year psychology student and first-year peer helper is eager to help others with their academic or emotional issues. "It's a way to connect with people on a deeper level, rather than the surface connections we have at school," says Paylor.

The program's Student Coordinator Joseph Savidge agrees and adds that he "wanted a chance to branch out and work with [his] peers." Savidge coordinates the student volunteers. In addition to their office hours in either the SUB B005 or in the McPherson Library Learning Commons office, volunteers sit on various committees and host weekly social events such as the Thursday Coffee House and Morning Munch in Clearview. Savidge also works closely with the two staff coordinators: Emma Mason and June Saracuse.

"A few students I've known have come through the program and it turned their whole UVic life around," says Mason.

This program offers emotional and academic support, information and referrals to students who are more likely to speak with other students than to seek professional help. Peer helpers benefit too. Volunteering has helped many of them build a positive community at UVic.

"It's transformative for people who choose to invest themselves in it, who are receptive to what the program can give them and what they can give the program," says Mason.

The Peer Helping Program was started in 1986 as a student initiative. The following year, a few founders realized that because of the serious nature of some of the issues they were dealing with, the group needed professional assistance. The program has been coordinated by UVic Counselling Services since 1991.

"And it's important to have peer supporting peers, you also want to have the backing of professionals who are trained in the area," says Mason.

Today, in addition to the staff coordinators, supervision is provided by practicum students in counselling psychology who facilitate weekly skill building and mentorship groups for the peer helpers. These DEAP groups—debrief, education, awareness, practice—are another way for volunteers to develop and have experiential learning opportunities that could apply to future career endeavors.

Thinking ahead to the next 25 years, Mason hopes the program will deepen its experiential learning capacity and help other campus services offer similar opportunities. Peer Helping already works closely with UVic Health Services, Student Transition Services and the English Language Centre to provide such opportunities.

Mason also hopes to build connections among student leaders across various programs on campus. But regardless of what future decades may bring, UVic Peer Helping will continue to send ripples of positive change into the campus community.

As Mason describes, "Our hope is that the program, in lots of different ways, reduces isolation on campus and increases connection and community."
Krokers address ‘Exits to the Posthuman Future’

BY SARAH MOSELLE

I am multiple and sometimes we are one.” This was the vision of the future that Dr. Arthur Kroker and his partner Marilouise Kroker described in their surreal presentation on Oct. 26 as part of the OFF LABEL festival. The lecture, entitled “Exits to the Posthuman Future,” was a cerebral prediction of what human nature will look like in the impending hi-tech age of digital ubiquity.

Arthur Kroker, Canada Research Chair in Technology, Culture and Theory in UVic’s Department of Political Science, is an internationally recognized futurist and cyber-philosopher. He leads UVic’s Pacific Centre for Technology and Culture.

Posthumanism is an intellectual movement that has been gaining traction in recent years. The term can refer both to the evolution of human nature in response to rapid technological advancement, and also to a branch of critical theory that seeks to deconstruct and subsequently re-write present understandings of the human condition.

The Krokers addressed both aspects by providing their own understanding of what lies at the core of humanity and how this core is implicitly linked with technology. As they see it, humans are distinguished by our complex brains—or, as they put it, the “minds we possess which sometimes possess us.” Technology was born out of the power of the human brain, and yet it is technology that threatens to render the brain obsolete. “The only way to maintain relevance in the digital age is to cultivate the ‘Offbrain’,” said Arthur Kroker.

“Offbrain” traditionally refers to a medical practice in which physicians prescribe for a purpose other than that which the pharmaceutical regulating authority of a given jurisdiction approves. The Krokers did not stop there in their practice, but rather to the ethos behind it: a type of lateral thinking that connects seemingly disparate phenomena, and finds or manufactures linkages between them. Thus, in their view, the human brain will no longer be characterized by its isolation from others, but rather by its capacity to connect.

After providing their reinterpretation of what it means to be “Offbrain,” they launched into the titular exits “to the posthuman future, which comprised the majority of the presentation. These ‘exits’ were offered as a series of five narratives, each embodying a different aspect of what the ‘posthuman future’ may look like.

The first ‘exit’, and the one that seems especially resonant with the large audience, was the story of Krista and Tatiana Hogan, conjoined twins born in Victoria in 2006. They are joined at the cranium in such a way that they share a balsamic bridge. This allows the sensory input of one girl to cross the brain into the other in a mere second or two.

This is the kind of connectivity the Krokers envision will characterize the posthuman future. As the Krokers explained with some trepidation in the third “exit”, recent research into “mirror neurons” has revealed a previously unimagined capacity for interpersonal human empathy.

Building off of this idea, Arthur Kroker’s contribution to their “exits”—a personal anecdote that occurred recently, in which he was able to simultaneously watch an event over the internet—was the intensely intimate activities of a Libyan activist and foot- age from a NASA space exploration in which all the details of earth were eradicated and all that remained was a blue orb gradually diminishing in the background.

This final “exit” highlighted the fundamental juxtaposition that lies at the heart of the posthuman future: the dialectic of macro and micro. On the one hand, technological advances makes the world infinitely smaller—too large to be comprehended by any one person. Yet at the same time, the internet allows someone, “as the Krokers put it, to know a man living half a world away in Libya in the midst of a revolution. When this revolution begins, the only one We are still in the midst of a revolution. When this revolution begins, the only one who was broken on the $62.9-million Advanced Rare Isotope Laboratory (ARIEL) that will be used to demonstrate new ways to solve medical and nuclear physics and create 160 permanent jobs. The BC government is providing $30.7 million for the project. ARIEL is to be operational in 2015. More: http://skily/1un7m

What are you doing for ideaFest?

As you may have heard this fall, the Office of the Vice President, International (VP-I) will be coordinating and promoting ideaFest 2012 from March 5-9 of next year. The intention behind this project is to increase UVic’s research strengths and creative endeavors across every faculty, especially as they relate to international education. In order to promote this concept, the event will include a combination of activities planned at the unit level and a number of signature events hosted by the OPIR. Each unit on campus—every department, school, research centre and faculty—is being encouraged to organize an event for inclusion in this festival. Please contact Ashley at vpir@uvic.ca for a copy of the proposal.

Celebrate international education

UVic’s first celebration of International Education Week will take place Nov. 14 to 19. Learn about UVic’s cultural, international opportunities, hear stories of international experiences and meet our experts—faculty, students and staff—from interactive workshops to speakers, open houses to information sessions, International Education Week will offer activities for people of all cultures and backgrounds. Highlights include: Centre for Global Studies Symposium, Nov. 14, from noon to 2:30 p.m. at McPherson Library; Hamelin House; Ceremonial Hall, For Our Daughters Spraying Tour, Nov. 18 from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. at DSBC C116; and the African Diaspora Solidarity Week, Nov. 19, from 9 to 5 p.m. at David Lam Auditorium (MAC A144). More information: www. uvic.ca/ieg/ideaFest 2012.

Get your flu shot

Seasonal flu is still available at Health Services, located in the Jack Petersen Health Centre. Call 250-721-8492 to book an appointment, or drop-in 9:30 to 3:30 Monday to Friday, 9:30 to 4:30 on Saturday. www.uvic.ca/healthservices/locations.html

Around the Region

UVic leads BC particle accelerator project

UVic is leading a consortium of 13 universities to design and build a new project. The new Advanced Rare Isotope Laboratory (ARIEL) that will be used to demonstrate new ways to solve medical and nuclear physics and create 160 permanent jobs. The BC government is providing $30.7 million for the project. ARIEL is to be operational in 2015. More: http://skily/1un7m

Dr. Andreas Antoniou grew up on a farm in Cyprus and went on to write the book on digital filters and invent the “Antoniou Gyrotor.” It became commonplace in North American and UK telephone systems and was a precursor of the microchip. Antoniou’s groundbreaking work in digital signal processing paved the way for the miniaturized electronic circuits that are central to modern communication systems.

Antoniou’s contributions to UVic began in 1983, when he became the founding chair of Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering—UVic’s first academic department in the new Faculty of Engineering. His leadership in establishing the department’s teaching and research programs is evident to this day.

He has received the BC Science Council’s Career Achievement Award for contributions to science and technology and the Golden Jubilee Medal from the Circuits and Systems Institute of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). In 2002, he received an honorary doctorate from the Metsovio National Technical University in Athens.

Hold the man in a tangible way. According to the Krokers, human nature will become more fragmented, but we will also become more inter-connected, as technology continues to unify us in unpredictable ways. This trend will continue until we are all in some respects like Kriska and Tatiana: conjoined beings, sharing our thoughts and sensory experiences, with no one we will never see face to face.

Sarah Moselle is a fourth-year religious studies major.
Combining scientific and technological knowledge, Dr. Andrew Bjerring has been a key factor in Canada taking its place in the international realm of "big science." Bjerring, the founding president of CANARIE (Canada's Advanced Research and Innovation Network), is largely responsible for building the country's internet support for advanced research and education.

In 15 years at the helm of the network, Bjerring advocated for the growth, development and funding of CANARIE as an essential resource. CANARIE has had an impact on UVic's participation and leadership in high-energy physics, astronomy, climate science and ocean research. The vast amounts of data generated by these projects could not have been supported and shared without the high-bandwidth capabilities of the CANARIE network.

Post-retirement, Bjerring continues to lend his expertise and experience to a number of prominent boards and councils. He is a founding director Ocean Networks Canada, the agency created by UVic to manage and develop the NEPTUNE Canada and VENUS ocean observatories.

Even before Lara Dahle graduated, prospective employers approached her, asking to be notified upon her graduation. "This might not be so surprising for this exceptional student, but it is the norm for many students in her program," she says. "She is graduating with a bachelor of science in health informatics science. The program, offered in the School of Health Information Science, is the study of computer and telecommunications technology applied towards the collection of health care data, the processing of information and how it can support effective health care decision-making by professionals."

"This is one of the few degrees that transitions very smoothly into the workforce with opportunities for outstanding job growth and attractive salaries and where graduates are considered most likely to make a major contribution to the advance in the area of health informatics professionals to the health care field."

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Their Convocation addresses will be available online at http://bit.ly/v51Uaa as soon as possible after the respective ceremonies.

A trio of honorary degrees

Fall Convocation ceremonies will include three honorary degree presentations. The university's highest award—based on exceptional achievements in scholarship, research, teaching, the creative arts or public service—will be bestowed upon an internet architect, a computer science pioneer and a leading advocate for arts in education.

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10 a.m., Nov. 10

Dr. Calvin C. "Kelly" Gotlieb
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Fall Convocation ceremonies will include three honorary degree presentations. The university's highest award—based on exceptional achievements in scholarship, research, teaching, the creative arts or public service—will be bestowed upon an internet architect, a computer science pioneer and a leading advocate for arts in education.

Congratulations, graduates!

The University of Victoria will award 1,246 degrees, 60 diplomas, 14 professional specialization certificates and 81 certificates to 1,401 students at Fall Convocation in four ceremonies Nov. 9 and 10. At the 10 a.m. ceremony on Nov. 10, the first cohort of 30 students will receive the Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization. All four ceremonies will be webcast live at www.uvic.ca/convocation and each ceremony will also be available in a video-on-demand format on this website for eight weeks thereafter.

Page 6 The Ring November 2011
Grad student explores the mysteries of the deep sea

BY SHANNON McCALLUM

When you ask Katleen ‘Kat’ Robert, a scuba diving enthusiast, what brought her to U Vic to pursue her MSc degree, she says it was the irresistible pull of the ocean and the chance to study marine biology up close and personal. Little did she know that her diving experience at U Vic was to involve a full day, 200-metre trip to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

Robert is the first graduate student in VENUS coastal network.

She says that the ecological processes occurring in deep-sea habitats and the keystone and buffering behaviour of bottom-feeding organisms in response to daily, tidal and seasonal cycles.

To capture these processes and behaviours, Robert pioneered the use of remote-controlled video cameras, Kat tuned in to her first modeling results to me. “Kat’s research is hinted at by her being first author or co-author on six journal articles that have been accepted or submitted for publication. She has also received several awards while at U Vic, including NSERC and Canada’s government MSc scholarships and the Bob Wright Graduate Scholarship. Robert has registered with the CA School of Business board of advisers. He also has a lot of praise for John Oldale, associate director of the MGB program who was tasked with anticipating and solving the challenges associated with running a new program. “John was always there for me,” says Robert.

Robert attributes Robert’s success not only to his academic ability but also to her level of commitment. “When internet connectivity issues prevented other team members from remotely controlling one of the VENUS cameras, Kat took it upon herself to camp out in the lab for a week and work every couple of hours to connect to the camera for a photo.”

The calibre and potential impact of Robert’s research is hinted at by him being first author or co-author on six journal articles that have been accepted or submitted for publication. She has also received several awards while at U Vic, including NSERC and Quebec government MSc scholarships and the Bob Wright Graduate Scholarship. Kat recently began her PhD at Southampton University in the UK. She plans to continue along a similar line of research in the North Atlantic, using similar techniques to compare ecosystem processes over much wider spatial areas.

“Deep-sea ecosystems are one of the largest biomes on the planet, yet in many ways they are still a mystery,” she says. “And that’s what interests me.”

Grad a master of global business

BY DIANNE GEORGE

Daniel McCombe’s family and friends are looking forward to seeing him collect his Master of Global Business degree at U Vic’s November convocation ceremony. He has been away for a year bringing his dream and working in Germany.

McCombe is part of the first graduating class of MGB students—a new one-year master’s degree— that sees students in the Sandal’s Global Graduates School at the Gustavson School of Business study international business management and leadership at three campuses around the world. They begin at U Vic, then move on to the National Sun Yat-Sen University in Taiwan and finish at the Johannes Kepler University in Austria. Upon completion of their courses and an internship in Germany, McCombe landed a job with Mazda Motor Europe.

“An international career is what I wanted when I started the MGB program— says McCombe. As a veteran of an exchange term in Portugal and an international co-op work term in Germany, McCombe says living on the road was not a new experience. He and nine other members of the team negotiated between $1.5 billion and $2 billion Euros a year in financing with numerous global banking institutes on behalf of Mazda’s more than 2,500 European dealerships that are located across the continent from northern Spain to southern Spain.

“We’re a bit like a commercial bank—we help our dealers purchase wholesale inventory with better financing rates than they can get on their own. There’s also lots of travel,” says McCombe who found himself in Romania, Ireland, Belgium and the Netherlands all within the first month on the job. Its routine for him to be away from his desk building networks and alliances anywhere in the region.”

McCombe credits both his BCom degree and subsequent MGB degree with giving him the ability to work in groups. “Yes one thing to motivate yourself, but learning how to motivate others, is something else. There is a lot of trust involved.” He also has a lot of praise for John Oldale, associate director of the MGB program who was tasked with anticipating and solving the challenges associated with running a new program. “John was always there for me,” says McCombe.

“Daniel McCombe begins his international career at Mazda’s European headquarters in Germany.

This entrepreneur loves to dance

James McAtra, this year’s Gustavson School of Business Bachelor of Commerce Program silver medalist, likes a challenge. “I heard about this medal when I was in first year,” says McAtra. “I like having something to aim for so decided I was going to try to win it.”

The medal is given each year to the BCom student with the highest GPA. McAtra considers himself lucky and says he’s a fairly good student if he pays attention in class and follows the readings. It was more than luck that helped him earn an A- or 8.33 out of 9 GPA, which put him at the top of the dean’s list. It was an attitude that allowed him to seize possibilities everywhere. One of the highlights of his BCom experience was the entrepreneur specialization.

“I look around and see business opportunities everywhere, and I wanted to have the tools to make them work.” McAtra has found himself in business success and the other not. He and a fellow classmate have another venture under way that he’s currently quiet on the topic until they’re further along. McAtra has given himself a deadline by April 1 to launch the new venture, as that’s when he starts his new position with PricewaterhouseCoopers. He completed two co-op work terms with this Vancou
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Honouring this year's top teachers

At Convocation, the University of Victoria celebrates the accomplishments of our students and the great promise that they bring as they enter on a new stage of their careers.

It is also an occasion when we recognize the outstanding talent, dedication and creativity of the faculty members and other teaching staff who provide such a high quality of education to our students.

"We are extremely proud of the recipients of this year's awards for excellence in teaching," says Vice-President Academic and Provost Reeta Tremblay. "On behalf of the university, I would like to offer our gratitude and congratulations to these inspiring teachers who contribute so much to the lives of our students and to the value of a UVic education."

This year's recipients are profiled below. See page 5 of this issue of The Ring for information about this year's recipient of the Harry Bickman Alumni Award for Excellence in Teaching, Dr. Gary MacGillivray of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics.

Dr. Panajotis Agathoklis
Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering
Faculty of Engineering

Since 1983, when Dr. Panajotis Agathoklis started teaching at the University of Victoria, he has taught a wide variety of courses in the areas of control theory, multidimensional digital filtering and video processing at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In his teaching, he places great emphasis upon the connection between theory and application and he consistently succeeds in creating an interesting and motivating learning environment for his students. Agathoklis inspires and challenges his students to explore how mathematics can be used in engineering practice and he encourages them to pursue and develop their own ideas and to evaluate them critically. With his enthusiastic approach to the subject matter in his courses, and his dedication to teaching, he has inspired many hundreds of students.

In his seven years as a senior instructor at UVic, Jason Corless has taught thousands of students in computer science courses ranging from large first-year programming courses to upper-level classes. His student evaluations are consistently strong and positive. In the classroom, Corless is known for an amusing yet passionate delivery style. He encourages students to use their minds actively during class, often demonstrating concepts by quickly coding examples "live" and on the spot. Students comment on his ability to share anecdotes from his own workplace experiences. Corless invites students to explore the world of computer science that lies beyond the classroom.

Dr. Laurence Coogan
School of Earth and Ocean Sciences
Faculty of Science

Dr. Laurence Coogan's aim is to help students "think like a scientist." Rather than cramming large amounts of material into their brains for regurgitation, Coogan engages students by placing key concepts in the context of the "big picture." An accomplished researcher, Coogan believes that learning to think like a scientist is best achieved by doing scientific research. He encourages undergraduate students to undertake honours research-based directed studies projects. Coogan has found that students learn more, and work harder, during such self-directed projects than in any classroom environment. He is an excellent example of a complete academic who has successfully integrated the core teaching and research missions of the university.

Dr. Ran Donaldson
Department of Anthropology
Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr. Ran Donaldson, sessional lecturer since 2001 and a full-time family doctor, is the 2011 recipient of the Gillian Sherwin Alumni Award for Excellence in Teaching among sessional lecturers and lab instructors. Donaldson teaches human osteology (the study of bones). Between 2007 and 2009, students gave him evaluations that averaged 95.3 per cent. His award nominators noted his knack for making dense terminology and intricate details interesting and accessible, along with his good sense of humour. An alumnus wrote, "(He) is one of a-kind teacher, doctor, mentor and human being. It is educators of this calibre that stand out in a student's mind for a lifetime."

Dr. Alphonzo Hadwin
Department of Educational Psychology
Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr. Alphonzo Hadwin informs what and how she teaches with the cutting-edge research about learning that she and her graduate students have produced. ED-D 101 Learning Strategies for University Success, which Hadwin designed, implemented and has taught for the last five years, has made a meaningful contribution to the retention of students at UVic. As a result of Hadwin's educational leadership, the teaching in universities both nationally and internationally has improved through a better understanding of how students can contribute to the effectiveness of their learning. "Alphonzo was a totally awesome teacher who really, really cared about us and how we did in our course and other courses," says one of her students. "She really helped me to figure things out and take responsibility for my learning."

Dr. Catherine Etmanski
Department of Educational Psychology
Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr. Catherine Etmanski is described by her student nominators as a "committed, knowledgeable, ... kind and generous" instructor who creates amazing learning opportunities for students and takes time to ensure that all students receive the educational support that they need. She uses technology to continue contact with students and to facilitate contact between students so that learning extends beyond the boundaries of the class periods. She helped create discussions on diversity and community-based research (CBR) which further engage her students and garner their respect for her scholarship; scholarship which is, in turn, evident in the content of her courses. Through her modeling of great teaching and scholarship, she builds capacity within her students to engage in CBR and to become thoughtful, inclusive, yet critical members of the academic community.

Jason Corless
Department of Computer Science
Faculty of Engineering

Dr. Mia Maki
Peter B. Gustavson School of Business

Mia Maki's mission is to demystify entrepreneurship and provide students with a pathway to entrepreneurial success. She is dedicated to taking their understanding of accounting and finance to a much higher and integrated level and assisting students in their venture financing. She also organizes the annual UVic Pitch and Business Plan competitions and other events to give students practical experience in planning and launching a new venture. She brings several years of teaching, facilitating and business industry experience to share with her students. Students say she’s an engaging teacher, and she gauges her success by their passion for entrepreneurship, their industry experience and their deep interest in active and experiential learning.

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Law grad reaches back in time for safety of children and families

BY TARA SHARPE

UVic law graduate Nancy Sandy, LLM, looks back to her childhood memories of the Secwepemc world for inspiration in finding and revitalizing St’exelcmc laws, values and customs. One memory of her mother, who passed away in 2003, resonates just as strongly as the echoes from any majestice landscape.

A member of the Secwepemc Nation and former chief, Sandy is a long-time advocate of Aboriginal rights and title issues, and lives and acts on her Secwepemc values as a mother and grandmother herself. Sandy says her mother understood what discrimination was “long before it was a common thing to talk about.”

“My mother would go into town to set up accounts in any store, and when she went to the restaurants in town, she’d demand service. I have had service declined to me before, but she said her money was as good as anyone else’s. To her, the word ‘can’t’ just wasn’t in her dictionary.”

“My research has led me to work on the land with many First Nations, and this is affirmation that I am on the right path to help strengthen and decolonize the St’exelcmc of the Secwepemc Nation.”

Sandy lives in the village of Tzexelc, east of Williams Lake, where she was raised with her large family in a strong matrilineal home.

Sandy’s thesis speaks to St’exelc- mcm laws, practices and customs that kept children safe in the past—well before contact and the trauma of residential schools. Trauma is nothing new in her family, but neither is tenacity and courage.

In December 2003, her son suffered a horrific head injury in a hunting accident. Sandy launched her consulting company Sugar Candy Sandy’s Consulting Ltd. while helping him recover.

Although the injury would normally have been a death sentence, her son told her he’d be “home by August 17,” and in July 2006, they were back in Tzexelc. With one arm partially paralyzed, he can now swim a lap in under one minute.

This is partly what she is alluding to when she talks about “acting on custom and values” as a matriarch: she is willing to drop everything for family and community. But why she applied to graduate school relates to her teaching and the joys of student learning.

“My son showed me that miracles can happen. So I decided to achieve my dream.”

Why she applied to UVic—situated on the territory of the Coast and Straits Salish peoples—was primarily due to the presence in the faculty at the time of Dr. John Borrows, a member of the Chippewas of the Nisswa First Nation in Ontario, and a world-renowned Indigenous legal scholar.

She completed the requirements for her master of law degree in less than two years under Borrows’ supervision, nearly 20 years after being called to the Bar in 1989 after graduating from UBC in 1977. “Just that goes to show, with determination you can do these things!”

Even with family, community, business and academic commitments, Sandy makes sure to take time for herself: she is a level-1 aromatherapist and level-2 reiki practitioner; enjoys traditional activities such as berry picking, hunting, preserving meat and making traditional medicines; and appreciates all forms of music. (For an amused anecdotte about the role of music in her life, see more details about Sandy, visit the longer version of this article at http://bit.ly/uvicbf.)

Sandy’s future plans are to publish her thesis. “And the Elders are saying, go get your PhD and write a book.” So that is exactly what she intends to do.
**BY KAYLA PEPPER**

Ian Wrohan's university experience strayed from the classroom environment and extended to the northern extremes of the Canadian Arctic. This September, Wrohan completed his master's in Earth and ocean sciences and will convolute this month.

While completing an environmental technology program at Camosun College, Wrohan participated in two co-op placements, the latter of which sparked his scientific interest in algae and inspired him to come to UVic to continue his education.

At UVic, Wrohan pursued his interests in ocean chemistry after being approached by his professor and master's supervisor, Dr. Daniela Varela, who got involved in Canada's Three Oceans (C3O) program as part of the International Polar Year Initiative. At the time, Wrohan was working as a lab technician for Varela and seized the opportunity to pursue his master's by participating in Fisheries and Oceans Canada 3C0 field studies.

"I can't give enough credit to my supervisor. She's a fantastic person to work for and work with," says Wrohan.

For two two-month periods during the summers of 2007 and 2008, Wrohan, Varela and a team of scientists ventured into the three oceans of Canada: the Pacific, the Atlantic and the Arctic.

During his first summer, he took an icebreaker from Dartmouth, NS, up to the mid-point on the Arctic Coast and into the Canada Basin above Alaska. Then in 2008, he departed from Victoria doing the same trip from the West Coast.

"The idea was to produce a snapshot of Canada's ocean conditions during those summers. It's so hard to get up there that there isn't a lot of data. It was an excellent opportunity to provide an oceanographic baseline of that data," he explains.

His and Varela's focus was on phytoplankton in those waters. The use of the data to publish multiple papers and collaborate with other groups.

Around the time of his master's defense date, Wrohan received a call from an environmental firm in Vancouver notifying him of a job. He packed everything up and within in a couple days of completing school was working for Rossan Environmental Services Ltd. where he is pursuing his interest in oceanography.

"It's funny, because a lot of the work they [Rossan Environmental Services Ltd.] do involves environmental assessment equipment that I learned a lot about during my master's work. I can't stress enough the importance of doing field work. Those are the things employers really look for."

What stands out for Wrohan among his experiences up north are the natural landscape and the bonds formed with his colleagues. "It's not a wasteland at all there's glaciers and around August everything blooms. It was beautiful in a way I've never thought it could be."

Networking and troubleshooting was accelerated by working with a small group of people in a close environment for up to 16 hours a day. "There's nowhere else you can go; you're on a ship," he laughs. He also adds that he learned to collaborate with other people in a professional setting, even if not everyone always agreed.

"I think more people, especially Canadians, should take a trip up there because it's a part of where we live and not a lot of people appreciate that—not a lot of people get to see it. Everyone knows it's an environment which is changing really quickly, so see it while you can."

Wrohan sends this message to current UVic students: "Enjoy it while you're doing it, because believe it or not, you'll miss it when you're done. You've made a wise choice going to UVic, so cherish the professional and the personal relationships you forge there."

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**CONVOCATION 2011**

Degree took grad across Canada's three oceans

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**BY JOY POLQUIN**

While many soon-to-be graduates are preparing to dive into job search mode, Jason Zapantis can rest easy.

The mechanical engineering gradu- ate has been employed by Victoria's Silian Sapphire for four years, and is happily settled into his role as process engineer.

Zapantis has always been motivated—as a student in Camosun's me-

chanical engineering bridg program, he knew that he wanted to explore career options in the high-tech industry. He approached Silian Sapphire (then called Honeywell Specialty Materials) to see if he could complete a co-op work term with the company, which supplies substrate materials for use in the production of LED lighting. After a successful work term, Zapantis transferred to UVic, but stayed con-

nected to Silian.

"When I came to UVic and entered the Engineering Co-op Program, I knew that I wanted to continue work-

ing with Silian," he says. "The company had just been acquired by China's Silian Instrumentation Group, which was opening a pilot manufacturing plant in Chongqing, a non-westernized region of 40 million people where English was rarely spoken. As the only staff member who was not yet a university graduate, he adapted quickly, helping Chinese staff set up the plant and be-

gin production. He did such a good job that he began working part-time for Silian after his return to Canada, re-

turning to China dozens of times and completing his co-op requirements along the way. In fact, he delayed his graduation date in order to extend one of his work terms and gain even more experience.

"I've had a unique journey, since I completed all of my co-op work terms with one company. But over the course of my degree, Silian Sapphire has grown so much, and with it, I've seen increased opportunity. I've become an expert in an expanding industry, and I've found a career that has such promise." His advice to students just starting out: "Find your own path—approach employers that haven't posted co-op positions and ask if they're considered a co-op student. You might be able to develop your own role, which could lead to experience in unexpected areas."
Charbonneau didn’t imagine herself attending UVic when she attended high school. Now, as the first of her family to graduate from university, she recalls that UVic “didn’t really exist for me” when she was growing up.

During her final year of high school, spent with her extended Métis family in Medicine Hat, AB, she was introduced to the work of filmmaker and UVic women’s studies professor, Christine Welsh, who inspired Charbonneau to apply.

After being one of 100 high school students from across Canada to receive a prestigious Millennium Scholarship Award in 2006, Charbonneau headed to UVic to pursue women’s studies. In her early years she remembers being surprised by the existence of the UVic Women’s Centre and the Indigenous Studies program.

“Seeing Indigenous people in positions of authority within the university was really exciting because I could see myself in the people who teach at university.”

The relationships she built with other Indigenous people on campus, and her exposure to Indigenous scholarship (Charbonneau holds a minor in Indigenous studies) helped her to “to understand and articulate the experience of being a white, Métis person at university.”

She found women’s studies both academically rigorous and emotionally challenging. “Women’s studies is challenging moments. But it also tended Esquimalt High School. Now, of the classroom, which can lead to witnessing both her graduation and working in a variety of media including video, installation, and sound. Visual Arts A144. 250-721-8295.

**NOVEMBER 11**

**Monday, November 17**

**Tuesday, November 18**

**Wednesday, November 19**

**Thursday, November 20**

**Friday, November 21**

**Saturday, November 22**

**Sunday, November 23**
PhD grad contributes to ATLAS particle detector

Lorraine Courneyea, who graduates this month with her PhD in high-energy physics, just completed the international team working to ensure the LHC experiment the highlight of her career so far.

Cournayea eventually became a shift leader in this room, coordinating each of the procedures necessary for the ATLAS experiment to signal that it was ready for collisions.

"There is, in fact, a big red button behind a glass panel in case of an emergency stop," she laughs. "But the idea that everyone is in lab coats is a myth." The LHC was built at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) to test physics predictions by more than 10,000 scientists and engineers, including Courneyea's UVic supervisors Dr. Richard Keeler and Dr. Robert McPherson (physics and astronomy).

The Toronto native credits both supervisors and a great group of fellow Canadian graduate students and post-doctoral fellows for making her experience the highlight of her career so far.

"The LHC is the biggest science project of all time who could possibly pass up the opportunity to work at CERN?"

Local organ builder Hugo Spitzer went and examined it, took it apart, arranged for transport and modified it mechanically for installation in the new UVic auditorium.

The organ was purchased and donated to UVic by Dr. Joyce Clearhuse as a memorial to her parents Joseph and Irene Clearhuse. Joseph Clearhuse served as UVic's first chancellor. The French classic organ was built in 1966 by Georges Mayer of Sarre-Union, France, for the parish of St. Mathias, Quebec. "It's a lot of fun, and it's an easy thing to do," says the retired music professor. "I get to play whatever music I please," which often includes a processional piece by French composer and pianist Cécile Chaminade and works by J.S. Bach and others.

Perched at the keyboard high above the stage, Schwandt may have attended more UVic Convocations than any other person. "It means a lot to the families to see their child get their degree," he says, and he has proudly seen many of his own students receive their degrees.

"I've also heard speeches of all kinds from honorary degree recipients through the years," and he recalls particularly enjoying the remarks by eco-forester Merv Wilkinson (Nov. 2005) and Canadian author Carol Shields (June 2001).

Schwandt was instrumental (pun intended) in UVic's acquisition of the Clearhuse organ in the late 1970s. "I saw an ad with a very vague description of an organ for sale in Québec for $20,000," he recalls.

"I went to Québec to investigate. And it was in a church where it had been subject to extreme fluctuations in temperature and had suffered damage so that it was barely playable."

"I like it very much," says Schwandt, who will once again be providing sweet strains of organ music as UVic celebrates another Fall Convocation this month.