**Federal Government Strengthening Canada's S&T Advantage**

During a speech February 28 at the Creative Economy Summit, the Honourable Gary Goodyear, Minister of State for Science and Technology, delivered the message that the government will continue to make key investments in science and technology. Canada's long-term economic competitiveness, he noted, depends on promoting business-related research and development (R&D) that drives innovation and creates jobs.

The Minister of State also noted that the government is studying the recommendations of the independent expert panel whose mandate was to review federal support for R&D. The University of Manitoba prepared a submission with recommendations to the panel last year. The Minister indicated that the government doesn't necessarily subscribe to all of the panel's recommendations but does agree that changes need to be made to address the challenges faced in business-related R&D, and that the government will act soon. In his speech, the Minister outlined some of the achievements of the Government of Canada's science and technology strategy, which is aimed at attracting and retaining the world’s brightest researchers, increasing R&D investment and commercializing promising research.

**Eligibility criteria expanded from Canada-China Scholars' Exchange Program**

The federal government announced the renewal of an MOU related to the Canada-China Scholars' Exchange Program, whose eligibility criteria will be expanded in 2012 to include opportunities for Canadian undergraduate students and mid-career professionals to gain academic and professional experience in China. The program is currently only open to graduate students and faculty members. There are currently over 475 active partnership agreements between Canadian and Chinese universities, facilitating student and faculty mobility, research cooperation, and joint academic programming in a variety of fields.

**Canada-Brazil cooperation enhanced**

Back in August the Government of Canada announced it renewed funding for the International Science and Technology Partnership Program, as well as the development of a new and unique bilateral Science and Technology Action Plan focused on innovation. Originally announced in 2005, the International Science and Technology Partnership Program will receive $5 million in funding over five year for work in Brazil. This renewed investment will allow the program to build on past collaborative research and development successes, including in the areas of satellite technology, biodegradable plastics and wavelength converter technology for electrical power.

The Science and Technology Action Plan will encourage Canadian and Brazilian academic and business communities to work together to accelerate the commercialization of research and development in areas of common interest, including ocean technology, life sciences, clean energy and nanotechnology.

Brazil is a key market for Canadian Universities and one that has gained the attention of AUCC. In its pre-budget submission to Finance Minister Jim Flaherty AUCC recommends $10 million be allocated from the granting councils for greater research collaboration with Brazil. AUCC is also organizing a mission to Brazil this April, which will include 35 university presidents and the Governor-General.

**Proposals for Work in Africa**

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has issued a call for proposals for the $20 million Canada Fund for African Climate Resilience. The fund is designed to help African countries adapt to climate change and its impact on their economic growth and food security. The Canada Fund will support projects in up to 14 African countries that include protection of infrastructure, irrigation systems or ports.

The deadline for proposals is April 19, 2012 and projects must be completed by March 31, 2014. For more information on the fund or to discuss a possible submission contact Cameron Zywina with the Office of International Relations - 474-6418 or zywina@cc.umanitoba.ca.
Ottawa plans to raise debt limit for student loans
The federal government has announced plans to increase the legal limit for outstanding Canada student loans from $15 billion to $19 billion, a move that follows an actuarial report on the loans program released in 2010 that predicted the limit would be reached by January 2013. Ottawa says the regulatory amendment is necessary to respond to projected increases in PSE enrolment rates, as well as to ensure students continue to have access to federal loans for another 10 years.

BAE Systems scouting Canadian technology
The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) Regional Office in Winnipeg is working with the Canadian High Commission in London on an incoming BAE Systems technology scouting mission to Winnipeg in March 2012. BAE Systems have identified a selection of research and technology needs and the objective of the mission is to expose them to Canadian technologies that would be of relevance to their business.

BAE Systems will meet with Canadian companies, universities and research and technology organizations with a view to forming various types of relationships. In advance of the visit, the University of Manitoba has submitted 41 researcher profiles for BAE Systems to review for potential interest and collaboration.

Federal Budget Set for March 29th
Finance Minister Jim Flaherty announced he will be tabling the Federal Budget March 29th. The U of M shared its priorities for the Federal Budget to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance in August of last year.

The U of M will be looking for a commitment to provide funding to establish the Canadian Cereal Research Innovation Lab, a commitment to enhanced funding of Canada’s three federal granting agencies and the Canada Foundation for Innovation, and the creation of a global research fund that would support students and faculties in international research collaboration.

Drummond Report Released
February saw the release of the Commission on the Reform of Ontario’s Public Service final report. Chaired by Don Drummond, former federal Finance Associate Deputy Minister and senior Vice-President and Chief Economist with TD Economics, the report issued a number of recommendations for the Ontario government, including in the area of post-secondary education (PSE). Although written for the Ontario Government, the report is expected to have implications across Canada as provincial governments, including Manitoba, put the final touches on their provincial budgets.

The report finds five critical objectives for PSE: it must educate a growing share of the population; help equalize economic and social outcomes; provide an important component of lifelong learning; be an engine of innovation; and deliver quality education efficiently. To reach this goal the report makes a number of recommendations.

The first is to contain government funding increases to 1.5 per cent while also containing institutional expenses through improved efficiencies to preserve the quality of education. The second is to increase the differentiation between institutions to minimize duplication, reduce inefficiencies and realize cost savings.

The report also recommends the Province encourage and reward quality by focusing resources and rewards on institutions that prioritize teaching and by linking provincial funding to institutions that deliver on certain quality indicators such as participation rates of under-represented communities. Included in this recommendation is the need to revise the research funding structure. The report also recommends a re-evaluation of student financial assistance that is better targeted to low-income students and recommends generating cost efficiencies by integrating administrative and office functions to find cost savings.
First Nation Education Report Released
The National Panel on First Nation Elementary and Secondary Education for Students on Reserve released its report, "Nurturing the Learning Spirit of First Nation Students" in early February. While the report focuses primarily on K-12 education, several recommendations are relevant to post-secondary institutions. The panel recommends the creation of a permanent national commission to support educational reform and improvement for First Nations students and calls for a comprehensive assessment to determine elementary, high school and postsecondary education readiness of First Nations youth. It also suggests creating a national centre of excellence to coordinate research on educational approaches that best serve First Nations learners.

SERF officially opened
The Sea-ice Environmental Research Facility (SERF), the first of its kind in Canada, was officially opened February 8th. The cornerstone of the new facility is a large, outdoor, saltwater pond equipped with a suite of state-of-the-art analytical instruments that will allow researchers to "grow" sea ice under controlled conditions to gain a better understanding of how sea ice forms and melts on polar oceans.
SERF is made possible through the $1.38 million in funding from partners Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), the Manitoba Innovation and Research Fund and the University of Manitoba.

Visionary Conversations
The University of Manitoba has launched a new speaker series hosted by President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. David T. Barnard. At the next event, ‘Gender Equality: Fact or Fiction?’ join our expert panel for a discussion about what has changed for women, who has benefitted from feminism and where we are going. More information on the April 11th session is available from the website and you can rsvp at government_community@umanitoba.ca. And save the date for the next session on June 13 entitled ‘The Food We Eat’.
You can also view past conversations on the U of M YouTube channel.

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