

# World-class research finds its home at the University of Manitoba



**Many will have heard me talk about why I love the work I do: I consistently tell people it is because both the cause, and the company, are great.**

I can think of no better demonstration of this than the recent announcement that the University of Manitoba has been awarded a Canada Excellence Research Chair (CERC), which is an investment of such magnitude that it will dramatically increase our world-renowned capacity to contribute to an area of research of global importance.

For the most part, our endeavours can be seen as layers of achievement, building over time, and opportunities to be part of a singular, transformative event are rare. The announcement that the University of Manitoba had been awarded a CERC in Arctic Geomicrobiology marks what legitimately could be described as one of these rare occurrences.

The CERC program was announced by Canada's federal government in 2008 as part of its strategy to strengthen our country's ability to compete globally. It sought both to concentrate resources in areas of science and technology that were identified as priorities for the country and to act as a magnet for research talent. It represented a way to encourage the best and brightest home-grown researchers to choose to stay in Canada while also attracting the best from elsewhere in the world to our research institutions to pursue their work.

An ambitious goal supported by a major infusion of resources, the CERC represents a federal investment of \$10 million over seven years, a level unprecedented in Canada. It also already has prompted major funding commitments from the Province of Manitoba and our alumnus Dr. Clayton H. Riddell. In all, this initial investment is expected to leverage an additional \$25 million over its lifetime, all of which will support world-class Arctic research.

The work that will be sparked by this investment is critically important. We are learning more all the time about the importance of the Arctic ecosystem and how the changes we observe there can

represent an early warning system. Work to understand how and why our climate is changing, its anticipated impacts, and how we can adapt to them is underway all over the world. There is little dispute that these are questions to which we must have answers. Our new Chair – Dr. Søren Rysgaard – will be looking at life at the microbial level in arctic sea ice. His work will expand our knowledge about how the sea ice habitat will be altered by a changing climate, and how this affects carbon dioxide balance and carbon sequestration.

Securing the CERC required a strong commitment to growing our capability, a great deal of work from people both inside and outside of the university community, and a vision of possibility. Having been chosen recognizes these things, and more; our selection also recognizes our inherent strength as a research institution and specifically, our reputation as a preeminent Arctic climate research facility. We were selected based on the strength of the proposed research program and on the reputation of our existing Centre for Earth Observation Science team, whose contributions have attracted this investment and Dr. Rysgaard, and spurred a larger partnership with the Greenland Climate Research Centre at the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources.

Every so often, something occurs that allows us to extend our reach further than previously we had thought possible. I believe the CERC to be one of those factors for our University and I am tremendously excited for the opportunities it presents. It cements the University of Manitoba's position as one of Canada's top research-intensive universities, as one of only 13 universities in the country that were awarded CERCs. I am confident that the University of Manitoba will be known globally as the place to undertake Arctic research, and that the excitement that is building around the Chair will spread as new collaborations are born, and other world-class researchers increasingly choose to make the University of Manitoba the home for their own pursuits.

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