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MEDIA RELEASE

International public health mathematician to join SFU as Canada 150 Research Chair

December 13, 2017

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Photo: <http://at.sfu.ca/dHEvCJ>

Mathematician Caroline Colijn, from London's Imperial College, will join Simon Fraser University as a prestigious Canada 150 Research Chair in 2018. She will hold the chair in Mathematics for Infection, Evolution and Public Health. Colijn is one of four chairs introduced in Ottawa today as part of the Canada 150 Research Chair program, created in celebration of the country's 150th anniversary.

The program is supported by a \$117.6 million investment and aims to enhance Canada's reputation as a global centre for science, research and innovation excellence. It is providing Canadian institutions with a one-time investment to attract top-tier, internationally-based scholars and researchers to Canada. The SFU chair will receive funding support of \$350,000 per year over seven years.

Colijn's work focuses on connections between mathematics and public health, using diverse data to understand how pathogens adapt and spread. She will build a team of postdoctoral researchers, and PhD and MSc students to pursue this broad research program.

Caroline Colijn

The Canada 150 funds and SFU will support a suite of activities including visitors, workshops and hackathons, bringing modeling, data science, genomics and public health together. "I'm delighted to be returning to Canada through this opportunity," she says. "Canada's atmosphere of openness and innovation, coupled with SFU's strategic commitments to data, interdisciplinary research and public health, make this an ideal time and place for this move."

As an Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) Fellow at Imperial College, she has been developing mathematical tools to connect sequence data for pathogens to pathogen ecology.

Her ongoing interest in the dynamics of diverse, interacting pathogens has led her research group to build new approaches to analyze 'phylogenetic trees' derived from pathogen sequence data. These approaches enable researchers to study 'tree' space and branching processes, and carry out ecological and epidemiological modeling.

The chairs, the first to be announced, were introduced by Minister of Science Kirsty Duncan and will also meet with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. SFU's Dean of Science Claire Cupples attended the introduction ceremony on behalf of the university.

Approximately 25 chairs will eventually be secured through the program to further knowledge in the sciences, technology, health, engineering and the social sciences and humanities.

Minister Duncan said: "I want to congratulate these talented international scientists and researchers who have accepted positions as Canada150 Research Chairs. Our government is proud to support them and will continue encouraging our country's brain gain by promoting our openness, diversity and willingness to welcome the scientists and strivers of the world."

Joy Johnson, SFU's vice-president, research and international, welcomed the announcement: "The Canada 150 Research Chairs Program's investment to enhance Canada's reputation as a global centre for science, research and innovation excellence helps SFU boost its research and innovation capacity. Today's announcement demonstrates the talent of scholars who are raising the bar for Canada's research excellence."

The program is an initiative of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The Canada Foundation for Innovation is also providing additional funding support.

LEARN MORE:

[Canada 150 Chairs website](#)

[Govt. news release](#)

ABOUT SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY:

As Canada's engaged university, SFU is defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research and far-reaching community engagement. SFU was founded 50 years ago with a mission to be a different kind of university, to bring an interdisciplinary approach to learning, embrace bold initiatives, and engage with communities near and far. Today, SFU is Canada's leading comprehensive research university and is ranked one of the top universities in the world. With campuses in British Columbia's three largest cities, Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey, SFU has eight faculties, delivers almost 150 programs to over 35,000 students, and boasts more than 150,000 alumni in 130 countries around the world.

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