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Research targets the massive to the minute - glaciers to proteins

Contact Marianne Meadahl/Carol Thorbes, Media & PR, [Phone removed]

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Five new Canada Research Chair appointments at SFU will strengthen research endeavours in widely disparate fields, from glacial activity to semiconductor defects.

Prime Minister Paul Martin announced the new chairs Nov. 12 at the BC Research Institute for Children's and Women's Health. The chair program awards universities \$200,000 for each senior (tier one) appointment and \$100,000 for each entry level appointment (tier two), annually. Tier one chairs have seven-year terms and are renewable; tier two chairs are for five years and can be renewed once.

Patricia Mooney will hold a tier-one chair in semiconductor physics. She will focus on the defects and impurities in semiconductors and their effects on the electronic and optical properties of these materials.

Gwenn Flowers studies glacier processes and dynamics, and their contribution to natural hazards. As a tier-two chair holder in glaciology, Flowers will launch a new field program in western Canada to study several distinct types of glacial environments, and produce new glaciological computer models that integrate climate, ice dynamics, hydrology and landscape evolution.

Karin Romisch, who comes to SFU from the University of Cambridge in the UK, will hold a chair in protein secretion (tier-one). Her research will contribute to the improvement of the secretory capacity of cells used in the biotechnology industry, and explore diseases related to protein folding. She is also looking for answers in treating the most severe cases of a genetic disease known as Alpha-1-antitrypsin (AAT) deficiency, which leads to cell death and cirrhosis in early childhood.

As one of the world's leading scholars on communication industries and policies in China, tier-two chair holder Yuezhi Zhao is analyzing the transformations that have occurred in China in the areas of politics, economics, culture, and communication. He will compare them with similar changes in Singapore and Malaysia.

Archaeologist John Welch will hold the tier-two chair in First Nations cultural and environmental resource management. He will carry out policy research on issues related to land, sovereignty and culture. He is collaborating with First Nations communities in BC to study the correlation between cultural and natural resource management practices.

SFU now has 28 of its 43 Canada Research Chairs. The federal program has created 1,348 research positions at 73 Canadian universities since it was launched in 2000. The program helps universities attract and retain the best researchers and achieve research excellence in natural sciences and engineering, health sciences, and social sciences and humanities.