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MEDIA RELEASE

New national scholarships help SFU prof cultivate global health leaders

A Simon Fraser University Faculty of Health Sciences project is one of 34 Canadian university initiatives to be awarded the first wave of prestigious Canadian Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Scholarships

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Simon Fraser University Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) professor **Mark Brockman's** project is one of 34 initiatives that have collectively secured more than 1,900 inaugural Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Scholarships for university students.

The national scholarships, distributed over four years, will help transform students into dynamic collaborative global leaders in Canada and Africa.

Thirty-two SFU graduate students and five African scholars through Brockman's *Canada-Sub Sahara Africa (CANSSA) Training Program in Global Health Leadership* will be among the first scholarship recipients.

Canadian undergraduate and graduate recipients will participate in internships or academic study, three months to a year, in another Commonwealth country. Scholarships will also allow students from Commonwealth countries to attend a Canadian university for masters or doctoral studies. Scholarship recipients are students in university-designed projects, such as Brockman's, that address pressing local, national and global issues.

The Association and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), the Rideau Hall Foundation and the Community Foundations of Canada fund these scholarships, launched last June with an initial investment of \$40 million. The federal government contributed \$10 million.

"The future leaders identified by the CANSSA program will be well-trained to address the health of Canadian and African populations through research, outreach and intervention", Brockman says. The **Canada Research Chair in Viral Pathogenesis and Immunity** hopes to develop a graduate-level training program that links SFU faculty with long-standing collaborators located in the Commonwealth nations of South Africa, Zambia, Rwanda, and Uganda.

Brockman has seen firsthand the valuable opportunities that such connections can yield. He is currently leading a highly successful project to enhance HIV prevention research and clinical trials capacity in Africa. "This CANSSA project will however extend beyond the field of HIV/AIDS to incorporate broader global health themes - such as maternal and child health, other infectious and non-communicable diseases, issues of health access and equity, and political or regulatory barriers to health care implementation," he explains.

“The CANSSA project closely aligns with the faculty’s mandate of providing timely and responsive training to the next generation of students so they will be well-equipped to meet the health challenges of today and tomorrow,” says SFU FHS Dean John O’Neil.

“Sub-Saharan African populations are among those that have the poorest health indicators in the world. This project is another step in our efforts to reduce global health disparities.”

Jon Driver, VP Academic, says: “Dr. Brockman’s innovative project is exemplary of how innovative education, engaging research and community outreach intersect at SFU. The CANSSA project will empower the 32 Queen Elizabeth Scholars to build meaningful connections integral to building research capacity and uniting efforts in advancing the health of local and global communities. As we strive to do with all our students, they will be strongly encouraged to go beyond the classroom walls and mobilize their knowledge to effect positive change.”

Backgrounder on scholarship program:

All scholars will receive personal and academic support in Canada and abroad, and the program will sponsor frequent events to promote a strong sense of community. The African sites affiliated with these scholarships have demonstrated strengths in social/behavioral, biomedical, and/or clinical research and training, and offer unique opportunities for Canadians to contribute actively to global health research, outreach, and intervention. Scholars and alumni from this program will form a nucleus for future international activities that affect the health of Canadian and African populations.

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 almost 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 a leader amongst Canada’s comprehensive research universities and is ranked one of the top universities in the world under 50 years of age. With campuses in British Columbia’s three largest cities—Vancouver, Surrey and Burnaby—SFU has eight faculties, delivers almost 150 programs to over 30,000 students, and boasts more than 130,000 alumni in 130 countries around the world.

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