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## MEDIA RELEASE

# Disability no obstacle to success

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**Photo:** <http://at.sfu.ca/CZdbWt>

*For a complete list of Spring 2013 B.C. graduands, listed by city, please see: <http://at.sfu.ca/CyYuwF>*

Milad Haji Hassan receives his bachelor's degree in systems engineering from Simon Fraser University next week after overcoming a variety of obstacles during his studies.

Bound to a wheelchair by a lifelong disability, he discovered that many of his lectures and labs were not easily accessible. He also found it difficult and time-consuming to travel to school from his North Vancouver home.

But with the help of his friends, family and classmates, including SFU's [Centre for Students with Disabilities](#), Haji Hassan surmounted the challenges and completed his degree in just five years while developing solutions for others living with disabilities.

In his first year, Haji Hassan was one of a group of students who designed a 12 -wheeled chair that could move over obstacles and climb stairs. Although nothing came of the project, the design demonstrated proof of the concept.

By his fourth year, Haji Hassan was applying his engineering knowledge during a co-op work term with the [Neil Squire Society](#), a not-for-profit organization that offers skill-development programs to the disabled across Canada.

As a member of the society's e-learning team, he helped develop solutions for making web content more accessible to people with mobility issues and visual impairment. These included a text-to-speech plug-in that converts online text into speech, and a video player with a modified controller that makes it easier to play videos online.

Chad Leaman, director of development at the society, supervised Haji Hassan's work and says: "His disability is not a disability for him. Being able to apply his skills and knowledge from his education at SFU to the society has made him more confident."

Now that Haji Hassan has graduated, he plans to continue developing assistive technology devices that can improve the lives of the physically disabled.

"Others have paved the way for me and I feel responsible to pay this forward," he says. "I have great self-satisfaction when I feel I am useful to the community."

Simon Fraser University is Canada's top-ranked comprehensive university and one of the top 50 universities in the world under 50 years old. With campuses in Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey, B.C., SFU engages actively with the community in its research and teaching, delivers almost 150 programs to more than 30,000 students, and has more than 120,000 alumni in 130 countries.

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