ALUMNI

YEAR IN REVIEW
April 2018 - March 2019
SIGNIFICANT GIFT ESTABLISHES NEW ARTS AND CULTURAL FACILITY

SFU received a significant gift from the Marianne and Edward Gibson Trust and family to establish the SFU Art Museum, a 12,000-square-foot dynamic new arts and cultural facility at its Burnaby campus.

The SFU Art Museum will be a teaching museum, creating interdisciplinary learning and research opportunities for SFU students as well as offering important exhibitions, community outreach and partnership with other institutions and organizations.

“This new facility will be an exciting addition to the Burnaby campus and will enrich the cultural landscape of Metro Vancouver,” says SFU president Andrew Petter. “This visionary gift from the Marianne and Edward Gibson Trust and family will enable students, scholars and the public to gain an appreciation and understanding of modern and contemporary art, while enabling SFU to extend its commitment to be Canada’s engaged university.”

The SFU Art Museum, slated for completion by 2022, will illustrate the cultural diversity of British Columbia and beyond. The museum will allow the SFU Art Collection to expand and will increase the SFU Galleries’ reach through progressive exhibitions and engaged public programming.

The late Edward Gibson joined the university as a charter faculty member in 1965 and later became director of the SFU Gallery from 1986 until his retirement in 1997. Gibson and his wife, Marianne, have been true patrons of both the arts and education. Under Gibson’s direction, collectors from across Canada donated large canvases that were installed throughout the university. Gibson authored a report that advocated developing an art museum, which planted the seed for his legacy today.

TINY SENSORS MAY HELP AVERT EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE

Could a few seconds of warning be enough to mitigate the devastation of an impending earthquake? Tiny sensors being developed in an SFU lab could help to give a pre-emptive heads-up, enough to secure critical infrastructure, such as bridges or power lines, and potentially, save lives. Researchers in the Intelligent Sensing Laboratory at SFU’s Surrey campus are creating ultra-sensitive accelerometers—tiny microsystems (less than 1 cm²) that are capable of capturing the most sensitive seismic activities.
NEW LAB TO ADVANCE TREATMENT OF BRAIN DISORDERS AND DISEASES

SFU and Fraser Health unveiled a new world-class medical imaging research facility—SFU ImageTech Lab—the first lab of its kind in Western Canada. The lab, embedded at Surrey Memorial Hospital, provides a unique combination of high-field magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) together with high-density magnetoencephalography (MEG). It offers researchers unparalleled possibilities to “watch the brain in action” by visualizing and combining a range of different powerful measures of brain function and structure. These tools will help advance the treatment of brain disorders and diseases, brain injury, brain tumours, epilepsy, autism, Down Syndrome, aging and dementia, depression, addictions and mood disorders.

SFU BREAKS GROUND ON NEW STADIUM

Construction has begun on the first-ever permanent outdoor home for Canada’s NCAA team. The new athletic stadium at the Burnaby campus is expected to transform campus life, creating a vibrant meeting place that connects students, alumni and the community. It is jointly funded by SFU and the Simon Fraser Student Society, with students voting in favour of a student levy needed to bring both the SFU Stadium and the new Student Union Building to life. Set to open in the summer of 2020, the facility will include covered seating for approximately 1,800 people, an accessible concourse and washrooms, spectacular sightlines, improved access from the Lorne Davies Centre to the Terry Fox Field and Track, and more. It will provide alumni a comfortable opportunity to support SFU student-athletes, and raise the profile of the university.

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS STUDENTS SOUTH OF THE FRASER

The university signed a ground-breaking agreement with the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee to advance educational opportunities for the region’s growing urban Indigenous peoples. The partnership sets the stage for future work to support and increase Indigenous student participation in SFU courses and programs, promote academic and research initiatives that engage and benefit the urban Indigenous community, and develop opportunities for SFU to engage with urban Indigenous peoples in Surrey.
REDUCING WASTE THROUGH AI

It happens time and again—we draw near a recycling bin with our waste-filled food tray and puzzle at what to do with the items. Alumnus Hassan Murad (BAsc ’16) is trying to spare people the confusion and help businesses optimize waste removal. Murad is developing an AI-powered visual sorting system, called Oscar, for large sites like airports, malls and universities. With Oscar, a camera and ultrasonic sensor detect a person approaching a trash can, predict what the garbage is, and direct them to the proper bin. The system is sophisticated enough to determine the component parts of each item—in the case of a coffee cup, for example, Oscar prompts an individual to throw away the sleeve, cup and lid in different openings. “More than 80 per cent of waste in developed countries can be recycled on a daily basis, but only one per cent is,” Murad told the Georgia Straight. “This is a way to change that.”

CREATING A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

A profound impact on students, commitment to inclusivity and ability to link theory with practice has earned SFU graduate Ann Travers (BA ’87) a 2018 SFU Excellence in Teaching Award, the highest award of recognition for faculty at SFU. Travers, associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, has advocated for social issues through their writing and research, and most recently published the award-winning The Trans Generation: How Trans Kids (and Their Parents) Are Creating a Gender Revolution. Travers is also the principal investigator on a project that explores the use of virtual reality to showcase the challenges faced by transgender youth. Travers has consistently created a safe and inclusive learning environment for students. The Excellence in Teaching Award is a testament to Travers’ positive influence on their students’ university experience at SFU and their personal lives. As one student puts it, “[They] changed the way I view the world, and helped me re-imagine new possibilities for myself.”

GUIDING NON-PROFIT THROUGH COMPASSION AND CORPORATE TOOLKIT

When Jenny Konkin’s (BA ’08) father was diagnosed with terminal cancer, she realized it was time to make a change in her own life. She left a successful corporate career with a major restaurant chain, and teamed up with her brother to launch the Whole Way House Society. The non-profit provides community building programs and tenant support services for more than 130 vulnerable seniors and veterans in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside living at the Veterans Manor in partnership with BC Housing. Konkin was named one of Business in Vancouver’s (BIV) Top 40 under 40 in 2018 for her leadership.

“I treat the charity like a business, but the return on investment we consider is, are we helping someone’s life, helping them move forward? And it’s more important, because it’s not my money, but the generosity of our donors. We have to be accountable for all of that,” Konkin told BIV.
SHAPING YOUNG TALENT FOR SOCCER SUCCESS

FC Cincinnati head coach Alan Koch (BGS ’00) was voted the United Soccer League’s (USL) Coach of the Year for the 2018 season. In his second year at FC Cincinnati’s helm, Koch guided a roster that integrated 21 new players during the season. Despite the significant turnover, the team finished with a 23-3-8 overall record and set USL single-season records for points (77) and wins. Cincinnati has since embarked on its inaugural season in Major League Soccer (MLS) becoming the 24th team in the top professional league in North America. Koch, originally from South Africa, attended SFU as a student-athlete. He began his coaching journey in rural Texas and Kansas before returning to B.C. to coach the SFU men’s soccer team. He then went on to coach Whitecaps 2, Vancouver’s former USL side, where he gave Alphonso Davies his professional debut. “My evolution as a coach and as a person has just [come] by being exposed to different cultures and different people,” Koch told MLSSoccer.com.

IMPROVING LIVES FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA

Nada El Masry (BGS ’15), the co-creator of RADIUS SFU’s recently established Refugee Livelihood Lab—who came to Canada as a landed immigrant—was honoured with a 2019 British Columbia Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Award for her engagement with newcomers to Canada. Her contributions to creating the lab, which engages refugee communities in Surrey to actively shape the systems that shape their lives, stem from her awareness of “the great need to support marginalized communities, and the necessity for diversity and inclusivity in society’s decision-making processes.” Her goal is to contribute to the efforts to establish greater accessibility and achieve equity for these communities. “My family and I were among the millions who were forced outside of their country and were deemed stateless,” recalls El Masry, who is currently a project manager at the RADIUS-led lab. “My experiences have helped to foster a deep passion for social justice and have shaped my life goals around values rooted in this field.”

PUTTING CHRONIC SNORING TO BED

A childhood friend with a sleep disorder inspired Rachel Chase (BBA ’18) on the path to entrepreneurship. “He didn’t find out until he was 25 that he had obstructive sleep apnea. He was always told that he was a bit slow, when in fact he was just very tired,” Chase told BC Business, which recently named her to its 30 Under 30 list. As CEO and co-founder of Zennea Technologies, she is part of a team that recently completed a stint at the SOSV HAX accelerator program in Shenzhen, China, considered the Asian Silicon Valley for those developing hardware, robotics and connected devices. They are now preparing for pre-clinical trials in the U.S. for their product—ZENS, a therapeutic device that externally opens the airway to effectively reduce snoring at its source. The device sits under the jaw and sends subtle pulses to the nerve controlling the tongue’s main dilator muscle. It can also track a patient’s general quality of sleep using a smartphone app. Chase and Oliver Luo—who graduated in October—and fourth-year MSE student Nell Du—met through SFU’s Technology Entrepreneurship@SFU program.
SFU alumnus Barry Macdonald (BA ’82) has generously contributed his time and leadership acumen for almost 25 years to help the university achieve its vision. In recognition of his dedication, SFU presented him with the 2018 SFU Chancellor’s Distinguished Service Award.

Macdonald, a Fellow Chartered Professional Accountant and recently retired partner of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP in Vancouver, has supported the SFU Board of Governors, the SFU Foundation, SFU UniverCity Community Trust (chair of the board), SFU Campaign Cabinet, and the Beedie School of Business (chair of the board). He is also a generous philanthropist, establishing an endowment fund for SFU Beedie and supporting future generations of SFU students through a generous planned gift.

“Barry has the gift of deep, authentic, purposeful engagement,” says SFU Chancellor Anne Giardini. “His wisdom and commitment to students are evident in everything he does.”

Macdonald’s career at PwC spanned 34 years, including seven years as the only North American partner at the firm’s Hong Kong office. A tax partner with expertise in transfer pricing and cross-border tax planning, he held various executive leadership roles at PwC, such as leading large client relationships, human resources and university recruitment.

Macdonald is currently chair of the Chartered Professional Accountants of B.C. and a director and strategic advisor of many corporate boards. His passion for community service is demonstrated through his service to SFU as well as by chairing the Hong Kong Canada Business Association and the Arts Umbrella Foundation.
RYAN BEEDIE, BBA ’91
President, Beedie Development Group
Outstanding Alumni Award for Service to the Community

As a business leader and philanthropist, Ryan Beedie is helping to shape Metro Vancouver’s landscape, as well as the future of its citizens and communities. As president of Beedie Development Group, he oversees one of the most successful industrial and residential property development companies in Western Canada. Over the past decade Beedie has generously donated to a variety of organizations dedicated to health care, humanitarian efforts and the arts. In 2011, he and his father Keith contributed $22 million to SFU to establish the Beedie School of Business and support students, professorships and research chairs. Last fall, he launched the Beedie Luminaries scholarship program to help shape the path of young people’s lives in British Columbia.

BETSY GIBBONS, EMBA ’87, BA ’68
Charter alumnus
Retiree, chair of the Health Employers Association of B.C., member of the Public Sector Employers’ Council of B.C. and director of the Kay Meek Centre
Outstanding Alumni Award for Professional Achievement

During her 30-year career in the human capital and executive search profession, Betsy Gibbons made a transformational contribution to her clients, employers and colleagues. In senior roles with global search firms such as Korn/Ferry and Caldwell Partners, she placed hundreds of executives and managers in diverse positions in financial services, health care, the public sector and academia, and coached and mentored emerging professionals. She played an instrumental role in establishing Korn/Ferry’s mining practice and singularly helped to create and build the leadership teams of many well-known mining companies. She has brought her passion for progress to the boards of directors of public sector, professional, community-based and charitable organizations.

STEVEN HOLDCROFT, PhD ’87
Professor, Canada Research Chair in Electrochemical Materials
Simon Fraser University
Outstanding Alumni Award for Academic Achievement

Over his 28-year career at Simon Fraser University, professor Steven Holdcroft has distinguished himself as an exceptional researcher, community leader, innovator, collaborator and educator. A world-leading research chemist working in the area of fuel cell technology and alternative energy, his expertise is highly sought after by both academic and industrial sectors. During a 12-year part-time secondment to the National Research Council of Canada, Holdcroft helped build research and development capacity in Metro Vancouver and also helped develop Canada’s emerging hydrogen economy. With former students, he recently co-founded Ionomr Innovations Inc. to commercialize one of his groundbreaking clean-energy technology inventions. He serves on numerous national and international boards that develop strategic directions for science funding.

Funds donated from alumni: $5,151,115
Total number of alumni donors: 3,385
76% of SFU donors are alumni

For the 2018-2019 fiscal year.
FUTURE ALUMNI

FAT ACTIVIST ADVOCATES FOR TOLERANCE AND ACCEPTANCE

Layla Cameron—a journalist, filmmaker, fat activist and SFU communications PhD student—received the 2018 Nora and Ted Sterling Prize in Support of Controversy for her work on issues surrounding body size and image. These include the institutional and systemic discrimination faced by fat people. “While I would like to think that my work isn’t controversial, I know it is based on the backlash I experience on a daily basis,” says Cameron. She says fat stigma and discrimination are harmful, and entrenched in all aspects of society. Fat activists and fat studies scholars point out how ‘obesity’ has been used as a negative term to characterize fatness and to medicalize it as a disease and an ‘epidemic’—despite not meeting the criteria for either. Cameron’s dissertation research analyzes the participation of fat bodies in reality television and whether fat-positive representations are possible within the genre.

AWARD-WINNING POET EXPLORES IDENTITY AND CULTURE

SFU undergraduate student Natalie Lim’s poem, “Arrhythmia”, is poignant, loving and complex. It surpassed more than 2,500 entries in the 2018 CBC Poetry Prize competition to take first place. Exploring feelings of loss, love and gratitude, the work illuminates the beautiful but challenging relationship between a granddaughter and grandmother who do not share the same mother tongue, alongside the histories and experiences of Chinese labourers on the Canadian Pacific Railway. Lim wrote the poem as a way of working through her feelings of alienation and loss in relation to the “Chinese” part of her identity. “I was born and raised in Canada, just like my parents. I barely speak Chinese, and I know almost nothing about Chinese culture,” Lim says. “I wrote “Arrhythmia” as a way of working through what it means to lose a part of yourself—or to never have known that part in the first place.”
SFU BEEDIE TAKES TOP SPOT AT LEADING CASE COMPETITION
A team of students from the Beedie School of Business captured first place at JDC West, Western Canada’s largest and most prestigious business competition, taking first place in six of the 13 categories (athletics, business strategy, debate, finance, international business, and marketing). It was the best performance ever by SFU. Based on these results, the team also won the prized School of the Year category for the second time since the competition’s inception in 2006 and Academic School of the Year. “Our students delivered an amazing team effort and we’re so proud of them for growing so much in preparing for the competition,” says Simon Ford, faculty advisor to the SFU JDC West team. SFU also played host to this year’s event, which was attended by 600 competitors from 12 business schools along with 600 faculty coaches, observers and corporate partners.

DESIGNING A DUMMY TO DECREASE THE SEVERITY OF FALL-RELATED INJURIES
Falls are the number one cause of injuries and accidental death among older adults. Karam Elabd, a master’s student in SFU’s School of Engineering Science, is researching injury biomechanics; he is part of a team that is building a dummy that allows them to realistically simulate falls and evaluate fall-injury prevention technology in a novel, safe and reliable way. But what if not every fall can be prevented? Elabd’s project tackles the challenge of minimizing the extent and severity of injury, should a fall occur. His thesis aims to design and build an instrumented falling dummy to simulate backward falls leading to head impacts and injuries in older adults. Building this tool should offer new and valuable insights into the biomechanical effects related to the severity of fall-injury. This would enable pre-screening of an individual’s risk of falling and also predict the seriousness of the injury should a fall take place. The long-term goal of this project is to develop a comprehensive mechanical testing system that allows researchers and product manufacturers to reliably evaluate fall-injury prevention products.
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION’S 50-YEAR CAMPUS IMPACT

Since its inception in 1969, the SFU Alumni Association has had a profound impact on alumni, students and the community. Here are just some of the ways the SFU Alumni Association has had an influence during the first 50 years:

- Developed **campus privileges** – Library, gym, WiFi and more – for alumni.
- Proposed a night school program which became **Continuing Studies**.
- Contributed **$500,000** towards the refurbishment of the Diamond Alumni Centre, now providing alumni who book weddings with a 50 per cent room rental discount.
- Commissioned Ray Wesley for the **Totem Pole project** in Naheeno Park. Three decades later, funded the restoration and relocation to the Office for Aboriginal Peoples.
- Donated **$20,000** towards the Terry Fox Statue on the Burnaby campus.
- Provided funds to help renovate **student study and social spaces** in the AQ.
- Introduced a funding grant program for SFU faculties and departments that allocates more than **$50,000** annually.
- Negotiated **representation of alumni** on Senate and the Board of Governors.
- Contributed more than **$800,000** to support university priority funds and campaigns.
- Assisted in finding positions for students to start **SFU’s first co-op program**.
- Created the **Alumni Scholarship & Bursary Endowment Fund**. In 2018 alone, 244 future alumni received scholarships and bursaries from this fund.

*Thank you* to all alumni - past and present - who have devoted their time to serve on the Alumni Association’s Board of Directors and who have directly contributed to this impact!
WE’RE GRATEFUL FOR THE MANY WAYS OUR MORE THAN 155,000 ALUMNI ENGAGE WITH SFU.

THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING TO:

MENTOR future alumni

HIRE STUDENTS for internships and co-op placements

ORGANIZE OR ATTEND events

❤️ our social media posts

READ our emails

PROVIDE PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT to help future alumni succeed

Act as ambassadors and HELP US build connections in our community

We’re excited to provide you with even more ways to engage! Check out our monthly e-Newsletter and social media channels for upcoming opportunities.
Images (above, left to right): SFU Archives IMC_71046_049, IMC_71047_029, IMC_71047_031.
Cover: SFU Archives IMC_73065_008