Recent Research News

Latest National and International University Rankings
Higher Education Strategy Associates (HESA) has released a new “field-normalized” ranking of Canadian universities, employing professor-level data and attempting to account for differences in publication culture across fields and disciplines. The ranking is based on two data sources: (1) each scholar’s h-index (the largest possible number n for which n of the scholar’s publications have been cited at least n times) divided by the disciplinary average, and (2) NSERC and SSHRC grant expenditures per faculty member, normalized for each department at each institution. SFU ranked within the top 10—ahead of many of the U-15 institutions—in both disciplines: #6 overall in science and engineering, and #10 overall in social sciences and humanities. In an earlier report, HESA noted that two SFU professors top the country in terms of h-index scores in their respective disciplines: Paul Brantingham (Criminology) and Andrew Feenberg (Culture and Communications).

Internationally, two new ranking systems focused on universities under 50 years of age, based on a variety of measures including citations per faculty. QS (Quacquarelli Symonds Limited) ranked SFU #25 in the world, #3 in North America and #2 in Canada. The Times Higher Education placed SFU #30 in the world, #7 in North America and #2 in Canada.

Meanwhile, the Canadian Council of Canadian Academies released their report Informing Research Choices: Indicators and Judgment on assessing research performance in the natural sciences and engineering disciplines, concluding that quantitative indicators should inform, not replace, expert judgment in science assessment for research funding allocation.

SFU Faculty Members Receive 40% of BC’s Health Research Awards
Nine SFU faculty members have received one of 23 Career Investigator awards by the Michael Smith Foundation for Health research for research projects in the areas of biomedical science (Zabrina Brumme, Carlo Menon, Ralph Pantophlet, and Tim Storr), health services (Valorie Crooks, Bohdan Nosyk), and population health (Pablo Nepomnaschy, Will Small, and Scott Venners). The award fosters the development of outstanding health researchers, allowing investigators to significantly contribute to their research fields.

CIHR Open Operating Grant competition results
SFU researchers were successful in obtaining three grants in the latest CIHR open operating grant competition: Ryan Allen for “A randomized air filter intervention study of air pollution and fetal growth in a highly polluted community” ($276K); Michel Leroux for “Functional genomics of ciliation formation and maintenance” ($622K); and David Vocadlo for “Generation of effective carbohydrate-based inhibitors of a glycosidase implicated in Alzheimer disease and their molecular mechanism of action” ($429K). In addition, Julian Guttmann is a co-investigator on a UBC-led biomedical project and Allison Kermode is a co-investigator on a biomedical project with the University of Alberta. Including these two joint applications, SFU’s success rate was 23% in this competition.
NSERC/CIHR Collaborative Health Research Projects competition results
Two SFU researchers will be leading separate Collaborative Health Research Projects funded by CIHR and NSERC: Andrew Blaber, Preventing postural hypotension, syncope and falls with smart materials and monitoring” (~$200K) and Robert Young, “Optimization of novel dual action prodrugs for treatment of osteoporosis” (~$500K).

Recent Accomplishments: Awards & Honours

Engineering Professor Wins Prestigious Award
Professor Mirza Faisal Beg will be presented with the Meritorious Achievement Award from the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia this October.

SFU Data Mining Expert Named Editor-in-Chief of Top Data Mining Journal
Engineering scientist Jian Pei has been selected as the Editor-in-Chief of IEEE Transactions on Knowledge and Data Engineering, a flagship journal in the fields of data engineering. He will oversee an editorial board comprised of leading experts and researchers from both academic and industry. Professor Pei is now an editorial board member of all ten major data mining journals, a rare accomplishment for a young Canadian researcher.

New Vanier Scholar
Doctoral student Oliver Blake is SFU’s 13th Vanier Scholarship recipient, a prestigious award from the Canadian government worth $50,000 annually for three years. The scholarship will allow Blake to focus on developing a system for measuring and analyzing the coordination of muscles, with the ultimate goal of aiding muscle rehabilitation.

Updates: Innovation Activities

SFU Spinoff Lungpacer Medical Receives BCTIA Technology Impact Award
SFU spinoff Lungpacer Medical Inc. has received the Most Promising Pre-Commercial Technology Impact Award from the BC Technology Industry Association (BCTIA). It is the company’s 5th award to date. Lungpacer is an early-stage medical device company based on the transvenous diaphragm pacing device of Biomedical Physiology professor Andy Hoffer. Lungpacer will soon start first-in-human trials of the device, which helps wean patients off of mechanical ventilators. Hoffer expects to bring the device to market in 2015 in Canada and Europe, then in the US.

SFU Spinoff Welichem Sells Rights to Psoriasis Cream to Global Pharma
In welcome news for BC’s biotech sector, SFU spinoff Welichem Biotech (co-founded by former SFU professor John Webster and his graduate student Genhui Chen in 1998) have sold the rights to its psoriasis treatment to global pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline for $35 million, with the potential for another $180 million in milestone payments.

SFU Venture Connection Helps Athlete Turn His Passion into a Business
SFU student Cliff Mander has turned a passion for inline hockey into a thriving new career. In 2010, he approached SFU Venture Connection for help to establish marketing and PR company, CKM Sports. Since his involvement with Venture Connection, his company has become the
official sports management company for the Canadian National Inline Hockey Team.