

B.C. funding triples student internship program

By Morning Star Staff

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The province is providing \$10 million to triple the size of an internship program where graduate students will work with B.C. businesses to help increase the province's competitiveness.

"These new funds will allow MITACS to provide more than 650 internships over the next four years, more than tripling the size of the program," said Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell.

"The internship program will build the province's base of highly-skilled graduates while encouraging innovation and commercialization in B.C.'s knowledge-based economy. It is also leveraging another \$5 million from industry partners for the program."

MITACS is a national research network that brings together university researchers and companies in a collaborative effort to solve industry challenges.

All provincial public post-secondary institutions that offer graduate programs will be eligible to take part in ACCELERATE BC, British Columbia's Graduate Research Internship Program.

It will allow graduate students to conduct applied research in partnership with industries and other organizations whose business is relevant to their studies.

"B.C.'s graduate students are truly an untapped resource," said Dr. Arvind Gupta, scientific director of MITACS.

"The research expertise that the next generation is developing at the province's universities and colleges is going to help B.C.'s businesses to become more competitive on the national and international stage.

"This \$10 million in new funding from the provincial government will help to ensure that knowledge transfer takes place."

The program has had many successes, from helping energy companies to model the dynamics of fuel cells, to increasing the efficiency of companies' operations.

One internship is protecting B.C.'s natural resources by updating modelling techniques to predict the spread of industrial noise underwater as sea animals are vulnerable to noise.

This project is making B.C. a pioneer in noise impact assessment and may allow the expansion of underwater oil and gas exploration. It also brings together public and private sectors in minimizing B.C.'s environmental footprint.

"Graduate students bring enhanced skills to corporations and contribute to innovation in the tools used by all workers, creating an expanding cycle of productivity," said Coell.

"Since students are often hired by these organizations upon graduation, internships also increase the retention of highly qualified personnel in B.C. that are so necessary for our booming economy."

Since 2001, British Columbia has invested more than \$1.5 billion in research and leveraged more than \$900 million in added research funding from other sources.

The government is also funding the addition of 2,500 new graduate spaces over the next four years.

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