

Alberta Math Students Receive \$150,000 Boost
From Alberta Ingenuity

Mathematics being seen as new driver of innovation in Canadian economy

Edmonton, Alberta – April 11, 2006 – Math interns are making Alberta companies smarter. That’s the view of Alberta Ingenuity, which today announced \$150,000 in funding to place 30 of Alberta’s top math graduate students within Alberta businesses in the coming year.

The funding supports the Alberta component of an internship program pioneered by Burnaby, BC-based MITACS – the Mathematics of Information Technology and Complex Systems - a national research network that brings together researchers and companies in a collaborative effort to solve industry problems.

The MITACS Internship Program, launched in 2003, provides graduate students with an opportunity to undertake research on-site at a company, to address high-level research issues using advanced mathematics. “This program gives business a new appreciation for mathematicians and the valuable contribution they are making to address and solve industry problems,” said Dr. Arvind Gupta, Scientific Director of MITACS, in making the announcement.

Alberta Ingenuity – an endowment that fuels innovative research in science and engineering throughout the province – has been a supporter of the MITACS Internship Program since its inception. This new funding commitment represents double the amount the organization has traditionally provided to the internship program.

“Mathematics is not simply about impossible, abstract equations; it can be used to solve complex problems, especially in the computerized world that we live in today,” said Peter Hackett, CEO of Alberta Ingenuity. “With our new funding commitment, we double the number of graduate students in the province and double the opportunity to stimulate research in industrial settings, while an increased number of businesses will have access to the vast academic expertise of Alberta universities.”

Other supporters of the MITACS Internship Program in Alberta are Western Economic Diversification Canada, the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta. Alberta businesses which had interns include such companies as Calgary-based Direct Energy, QUIC, ENMAX Corporation, Shell Canada Limited, WorleyParsons Komex, and Calgary Scientific Inc. and Edmonton-based Random Knowledge.

Under the MITACS Internships Program, graduate student researchers spend a minimum of 50 per cent of their time over one semester at a partner site undertaking research on a problem jointly identified by the partner, MITACS and their supervising professors. The rest of their time is spent at the university, where they further advance their research under the guidance of their supervisors.

“The MITACS internship program has been a great source of keen and talented students whose skills complement our business needs. It’s also a great way to establish relationships with potential future employees in the business,” said Janice Thomson, Senior Vice President of Human Resources, Marketing and Communications at Direct Energy, North America’s largest

competitive energy and home services retailer. Direct Energy hosted two University of Calgary masters students last year as part of the MITACS Internship Program.

“In working with Direct Energy, I have gained insight into real-world problems and how advanced mathematics can be used as a tool to solve these problems,” said Aaron Pratt, a University of Calgary graduate student, who interned at Direct Energy through the MITACS Internship Program in 2005. “Going into my Master's program, I was unsure about job and research opportunities in mathematics and, in particular, financial mathematics, but the internship actually helped me to develop a focus for graduate studies.”

To date, the MITACS Interns have worked on such projects as developing sophisticated mathematical modelling techniques to aid pharmaceutical development, creating new software to help energy and natural resource companies make better pricing and portfolio decisions, improving the security of communication networks and helping energy companies better monitor subsurface oil and gas reserves.

About MITACS

MITACS (www.mitacs.ca) is a Network of Centres of Excellence (NCE) for the mathematical sciences hosted by Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC. The only Canadian organization of its kind, it focuses on developing mathematical solutions in five of the economy's fastest growing sectors: biomedical and health, environment and natural resources, information processing, risk and finance and communication, networks and security. Each MITACS research project partners academic scientists and their graduate students from universities across the country with Canadian organizations. For more information about the MITACS Internship Program, visit www.mitacsinternships.ca.

About Alberta Ingenuity

Alberta Ingenuity operates the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research, a \$1 billion endowment established by the Government of Alberta to accelerate science and engineering research excellence and creativity in carefully chosen areas. Through funding programs that support highest caliber research, Ingenuity is building Alberta's science community in areas with significant social impact and of strategic importance to Alberta.

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