



\$4-million research chairs will enhance health and care of seniors

KITCHENER, Ont. (Friday, May 9, 2008) – The University of Waterloo and Conestoga College are today announcing a \$4-million donation to establish five research chairs dedicated to enhancing the health and care of seniors in Ontario and across Canada.

The \$4-million donation comes from former UW professor Ronald Schlegel, adding to his initial \$2-million donation to found the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging (RIA). Four of the research chairs on aging will be based at UW and a program chair for enhanced seniors' care will be located at Conestoga College.

"I am pleased to provide funding to promote research in aging that will improve the quality of life and quality of care for our seniors," says Ron Schlegel, president of Winston Park and Oakwood Retirement Communities. "Research and innovation lead the way in advancing other areas in society, and we must invest with equal or higher priority in our seniors as well. They are the ones who have built our communities which we all enjoy today, and we owe it to them to maximize their life enjoyment at this time in their lives."

UW's four new Schlegel research chairs will focus on neuroscience (functional abilities), dementia, optimal medication and geriatric medicine, all key health areas in an aging population. The chairs will be based in the faculty of applied health sciences and UW's Kitchener health sciences campus.

One of the chairs has already been filled by Dr. Safa Elgamal, a physician from Egypt, who will study the impact of physical activity in slowing the progression of Alzheimer's disease in the early stages.

"This very generous gift from Dr. Schlegel will enable the University of Waterloo and Conestoga College to create a synergy that will generate timely advances in the health and care of our seniors," says UW president David Johnston.

The chair at Conestoga College is designed to improve the care of seniors in the local community. The chairholder, who will be named shortly, will take the lead in developing and setting up an innovative education and training program that will enhance the care provided for seniors by health-care and community service professionals.

The chair will play a guiding role in curriculum design and enhancement of seniors' care content across health-related disciplines at the college and will develop training programs for professionals already working in the field. The chair will also conduct applied research and develop evidence-informed practices in human health resources utilization for long-term care and home-based care for seniors.

"We need a workforce with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to meet the needs of an aging population that is growing rapidly," says John Tibbits, president of Conestoga College. "This partnership will help us meet that challenge and be leaders in the province and the country in that regard."

The RIA offers direct links to research and expertise on aging, along with access to eight seniors' residences across southwestern Ontario. These communities, housing about 3,000 seniors, provide a continuum of care, including independent living, retirement home living, assisted-living and long-term care. Research and program innovations developed here are then disseminated to all seniors' care agencies across the province, once proven in these research and learning environments.

The RIA, created in 2005, and the five new research chairs are the product of a \$6-million commitment from Schlegel. Each chair will receive approximately \$100,000 per year, with matching funds from the home institutions, for the next 10 years. A portion of the funds will also fund scholarships and other support for students.

For more information on the RIA and the chairs, download backgrounders from www.the-ria.ca.

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