NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT

Dr. Abby Goodrum, Vice President, Research
Wilfrid Laurier University
519-884-0710 ext. 3601 or agoodrum@wlu.ca

Lori Chalmers Morrison, Acting Director
Communications & Public Affairs, Wilfrid Laurier University
519-884-0710 ext. 3067 or lchalmersmorrison@wlu.ca

APRIL 14, 2014 | 056-14

Canada Foundation for Innovation supports Laurier scientists

WATERLOO – Two biology researchers and a chemistry researcher from Wilfrid Laurier University received funding from the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) to support the acquisition of infrastructure for their cutting-edge research, which ranges from developing new processes for treating pathologies like infertility at the molecular level and new techniques for assessing the health of fish, to the study of pathogenic protists that can cause significant health concerns when ingested through contaminated water or food. The awards, announced April 14, were part of CFI's John R. Evans Leaders Fund.

Michael Suits, assistant professor of Chemistry, Jonathan Wilson, associate professor of Biology, and Allison McDonald, assistant professor of Biology, received more than $200,000 in funding from CFI.

"The CFI Leaders Opportunity Fund empowers these Laurier scientists, along with their students and labs, to engage in exciting and useful research that will benefit the current and future health and well-being of Canadians," said Abby Goodrum, Laurier's vice-president: Research.

Suits records the molecular nature of carbohydrate chains, which serve as important cellular communication molecules. The investigation of these proteins has far-reaching implications for a variety of diseases ranging from infertility to metastasis, neurological degeneration, or infections by microorganisms. Suits' research will help to develop new processes for treating many pathologies at the molecular level.

Wilson uses state-of-the-art microscopic imaging processes to assess how aquatic animals balance their salt, water and pH levels in changing environments. This research will help develop new techniques for assessing the health of fish and other species, and be of particular value to Canadian fisheries as well as aquaculture and environmental monitoring.

McDonald studies pathogenic protists – which can cause significant health concerns ranging from short-term gastrointestinal disease to chronic and potentially fatal consequences in immuno-compromised individuals – to provide data toward detecting and treating them. Many of these pathogens can be transmitted by ingesting contaminated water or food. McDonald's research will allow for the development of rational drug design to target these pathogenic protists, and the development of a tool for their cheap and efficient detection in clinical and environmental samples.

– 30 –

About Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI): Created by the Government of Canada in 1997, CFI strives to build the nation's capacity to undertake world-class research and technology development to benefit Canadians. CFI invests in state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, universities, colleges, research hospitals and non-profit research institutions. The John R. Evans Leaders Fund offers institutions the opportunity to acquire infrastructure for leading research faculty to undertake cutting-edge research, and create competitive research support packages in the form of infrastructure and a portion of the operating and maintenance costs from the CFI, coupled with direct research costs from partner organizations.