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\$2.5-million anonymous gift honours favourite Laurier professor

Donation represents largest gift ever to the university from a Laurier alumnus

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University has received a \$2.5-million donation to the university's Faculty of Arts to establish a research chair in environmental geography. The gift, which comes from a donor who prefers to remain anonymous, is the largest donation ever to the university from a Laurier alumnus.

The donation will establish the Dr. John McMurry Research Chair in Environmental Geography, named in honour of one of Laurier's most celebrated geography professors and former chair of the department, now retired, Dr. John McMurry. Laurier professor Dr. Scott Slocombe will be the inaugural chairholder.

"This is the largest gift Laurier has ever received from one of its alumni," said Rob Donelson, vice-president of university development and alumni relations. "For the Laurier community, this gift is important, not only because the donation itself is a milestone, but also because the gift reminds us all of Laurier's stellar educators and researchers, both past and present."

The donation and the new research chair will be celebrated at a recognition event to be held Sept. 14, 2009 from 10:30 a.m. until noon in the university's Senate and Board Chamber.

Offering one of the leading programs in Canada, Laurier's dynamic and innovative Geography & Environmental Studies department fosters leading-edge scholarship and provides high-quality programs and courses.

Dr. Slocombe, a faculty member at Laurier since 1989, is one of Canada's most prominent geographers. His academic achievements and leadership have garnered him international recognition. His research focuses on the challenge of managing diverse human activities in large regions while maintaining environmental integrity and sustainability.

"I am honoured to be named as the inaugural chairholder of the Dr. John McMurry Research Chair in Environmental Geography," Dr. Slocombe said. "This research chair will help the Geography and Environmental Studies department to continue to attract top students from across Canada and abroad, and facilitate internationally recognized research."

Members of the media are encouraged to attend the celebration event on Sept. 14, 2009. To RSVP, please contact eventsrsvp@wlu.ca or call 519-884-0710 ext. 3429.