New Members Named to Order of OAC

In May, the Ontario Agricultural College welcomed eight new members to the Order of OAC, an honour recognizing individual donations to the college of more than $100,000. The new members are:

Philip and Susan Gosling. Their most recent gift to OAC will add a cryopreservation facility to the Gosling Research Institute for Plant Preservation, which they established in 2011/12.

William “Bill” Harrison, BSA ’62, supported Phase 2 construction of the Bio-products Discovery and Development Centre project.

Edward Kendall, BSA ’63, supported an upgrade of the Johnston Hall boardroom to include a new state-of-the-art video conferencing system.

Norman McCollum, ADA ’66, established the Norman McCollum Dairy Scholarship in recognition of his friendship with the family who established Glenholme Jerseys and his interest in helping students plan a career in the dairy industry.

Don Pestell, a 1962 Agr.(Dip.) graduate of the Ridgetown Campus, donated to a new student service and alumni centre at his alma mater.

John Summers, BSA ’53, created the Schnellers and Summers Scholarship to honour his father and father-in-law.

Jane Webster, B.Sc. ’71, created the Webster Post-Doctoral Fellowship in Environmental Sciences in honour of the late Earle J.D. Webster.

Grads Make a Great “Pear”

When life gives you lemons, make lemonade, but what if life gives you 78,000 kilograms of pears? Brock Puddicombe, Agr.(Dip.) ’04 and B.Sc.(Agr.) ’08, decided to make cider.

Brock and his sister, Lindsay, Agr.(Dip.) ’09, are the eighth generation to operate Puddicombe Estate Farms in Winona, Ont. The family farm was established in 1797 as a cash crop and beef farm; then Puddicombe’s great-grandfather began planting fruit trees and vines. Today, the farm has 200 acres and produces a variety of fruits, including apples, pears, cherries, blueberries and grapes.

Soon after Brock graduated, the Puddicombes encountered a problem: the local fruit-canning plant closed. “We are one of the largest pear producers in Ontario, so we needed to figure out a place for our pears to go,” says Brock. “I originally thought of the idea of making cider while I was at university. At the many parties we had, cider was my drink of choice.” Brock realized this was his chance to try out his idea. With the help of Lindsay, the Puddicombe Cider Company released Sir Isaac’s Pure Pear Cider two years later.

Sir Isaac’s is now available in about 220 LCBO stores and won the Puddicombe Cider Company a Premier’s Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence in 2011. Sir Isaac’s is also the official cider of the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, who are playing their 2013 season at the University of Guelph’s Alumni Stadium while their new home venue is being constructed. It’s a perfect venue for the cider, considering the meaning behind the label’s design, says Brock. “In the middle of our logo, there is a Gryphon and three stars surrounding it, honouring the three generations that went through OAC.”
Alumni Weekend 2013 a Huge Success

The University of Guelph recently hosted more than 300 alumni, friends and family for Alumni Weekend 2013.

Many OAC alumni returned to campus to celebrate their special anniversaries, including OAC '48, OAC '49, OAC '53, OAC '63, OAC '68 and OAC '83. A special mention goes to the Class of OAC '53, who celebrated their 60th anniversary this summer, and OAC '63, who celebrated their 50th!

OAC alumni participated in many activities and festivities, such as touring Johnston Hall, partaking in the ice cream technology tour and spending a social afternoon at the Bullring. Others took part in walking tours and learned more about the other U of G colleges on campus.

We had a record attendance at the annual President’s Lunch, with more than 300 alumni celebrating the 50th-anniversary classes. Tom Kerr, BSA '63, delivered a warm speech about his time at OAC and the treasured memories he made on campus.

If you are interested in organizing a reunion for your class next year, please contact Tara Collins at 519-824-4120, Ext. 56842, or tcoll02@uoguelph.ca. More information will be available in the coming months, including news about the University of Guelph’s 50th- and OAC’s 140th-anniversary celebrations at Alumni Weekend 2014.

View photos from the weekend by visiting http://bit.ly/18krC8W and clicking on “Enter Gallery.” For more information about upcoming alumni events, visit www.alumni.uoguelph.ca/.

New OAC AA President Looks Ahead

It is an honour for me to serve as president of the Ontario Agricultural College Alumni Association (OAC AA). My involvement with OAC began when I was a food science graduate student almost 10 years ago. Although I have worked for OAC in different capacities since then, I believe that having the opportunity to lead the OAC AA is the most important role that an alumnus can play.

For the coming year, I will lead an initiative to develop a five-year strategic plan for the OAC AA with the support of a well-structured and dynamic president’s advisory council. We also look forward to planning new social and networking events with the goal of involving the entire OAC community. My hope is to strengthen ties with graduate program alumni, who are an important group of future government and industry leaders.

As president, I will focus on promoting a strong and loyal Aggie spirit to ensure that relationships between students and alumni are well-maintained following graduation. By sharing their experiences, alumni can become important mentors and guides for future generations of graduates. I intend to do my best to communicate the need for students to give back.

It has often been said in many ways, “To whom much is given, much is expected.” To make this a tradition, we need to support OAC by promoting its image, preserving its values and contributing to its development in every way possible.

Angela Tellez Garay, PhD '09
OAC Alumni Association President

Foundation Focuses on Priorities

It is truly an honour to serve as chair of the OAC Alumni Foundation for the next two years. We are very fortunate to have a superb and experienced group of volunteers who participate in the operation of the foundation.

We have a lot to do to continue supporting the college in attracting and developing Ontario’s future agri-food and rural leaders. The foundation has an excellent strategic plan in place as we continue to explore options to improve our effectiveness and relevance in achieving our objectives. Student recruitment and awards, donor stewardship initiatives, and growing the prestigious Order of OAC are the foundation’s key areas of focus in the future.

I would like to introduce Bruce Stone, BSA ’53, as the foundation’s new honorary chair. He has a distinguished history of leadership and support of the foundation, and it is my pleasure to welcome him into this special role.

Thank you to past chair Linda Hruska, B.Sc.(Agr.) ’85 and M.Agr. ’88, for her tireless leadership and ongoing involvement with several foundation committees. We will be counting on your continued advice and counsel as we go forward.

I would also like to wish Bruce Christie, a long-time foundation member and previous chair, a warm farewell and all the best in his new endeavours. He has been instrumental in leading, advising and assisting the foundation over the past several years and will always be a friend.

I look forward to working with the OAC dean’s office, the OAC Alumni Association, and Alumni Affairs and Development to ensure that our activities support one another.

Mark Ostrowski, B.Sc. ’79
OAC Alumni Foundation Chair
Where We Are Now

Over the past five years, I have communicated the fiscal challenges that OAC has faced. The college has certainly dealt with considerable challenges, and we will no doubt continue to face greater pressures due to shrinking provincial support for post-secondary institutions and a need for universities to further develop innovative ways of delivering programs.

That being said, with the tremendous support we have received from alumni, industry, external partners, faculty, staff and students, OAC has shown its resilience. We have again established OAC in a leadership role within the University of Guelph and throughout our agriculture and food sectors.

I am immensely proud to share that OAC is by many metrics the most valuable college at the University in terms of what we contribute financially and fundamentally to the operations of the institution. We also provide tremendous value externally through our research contributions and workforce leadership.

Through staff, faculty and especially alumni fundraising efforts, we have received more than $11 million this past year. Financial support from alumni has also allowed us to leverage other funding. A perfect example is the recent expansion of the Bio-Products Discovery and Development Centre, where we were able to leverage project funds donated by alumni with FedDev Ontario at a dollar-for-dollar level to support a $4.2-million upgrade of facilities.

During the past five years, OAC has also rededicated itself to enhance its commitment to undergraduate teaching. In doing so, we have redesigned the curricula for most of our undergraduate programs. Our aim to engage students in their specific discipline areas earlier resulted in more OAC professors now teaching first- and second-year courses. Our world-renowned OAC faculty are now teaching more U of G undergraduate students than ever before and almost twice as many as five years ago.

We have repositioned ourselves within the University as the undoubted leader in research, graduate student training, career-ready associate diploma training and student engagement. I have no doubt that this is significantly due to the positive attitude and steadfast support of our generous alumni.

You have been huge supporters of our strategic priorities, including our student liaison efforts that have resulted in tremendous increases in both applications to our programs and enrolment. Many of our programs have seen significant increases, including a 35-percent increase in enrolment this year in the bachelor of science in agriculture degree. We have also seen a significant upsurge in the quality of applicants.

OAC is resilient and strong. With your help we will continue to maintain OAC as Canada’s pre-eminent agricultural college. I look forward to continuing to work with you for OAC’s success.

Robert Gordon, PhD ’96
OAC Dean

Ken McEwan, left, newly-appointed Ridgetown Campus director, and Rob Gordon, OAC dean, prepare to lead the Ridgetown graduation procession.
Out and About with OAC

In June, the OAC Class of 2013 celebrated becoming new alumni while other classes celebrated their milestone anniversaries.

1. Graduates of the Kemptville Campus Class of 2013 toss their caps in celebration of their graduation.

2. The Campus d’Alfred Class of 2013 pose for a photo with OAC dean Rob Gordon (front row, wearing blue robe).


4. From left, graduating students Laura Snell and Katie Speed chat with Kemptville Campus professor Katrina Merkies at the bachelor of bio-resource management graduation reception.

5. From left, bachelor of landscape architecture students Stephan Eszes, Rose Brokenshire and Michael Lennox celebrate their graduation outside the Landscape Architecture building at the University of Guelph.
6  OAC dean Rob Gordon, left, poses for a photo with the OAC convocation award recipients at the Guelph campus.

7  Veterinary technology diploma students celebrate following the Ridgetown Campus graduation ceremony. From left, Emily Yurek, Kayla Pereira, Melanie Vanhie, Natalie Bouwmeester, Emily Wong and Kacey Wilson.

8  The Class of OAC ’63 gets ready for a photo at their reunion in Peter Clark Hall during Alumni Weekend 2013.

9  Members of the Class of OAC ’68 make new memories at their reunion during Alumni Weekend 2013.
KEMPSTVILLE

Exceptional Marks, Exciting Future

Kendra Cavanagh with fellow award winner Dan Kristolaitis.

Graduation day is a celebratory day for all students, but for one Kemptville Campus graduate the day was extra special. At the May 24 graduation ceremony, Kendra Cavanagh received the Governor General’s Collegiate Bronze Medal for achieving the highest average in an OAC diploma program. She graduated from the associate diploma in agriculture program with an amazing 95.8-per-cent average.

“Kendra is truly an all-around impressive individual who stands out for her stellar academic performance and her many personal accomplishments during her time on campus,” said Claude Naud, Kemptville Campus director.

At the graduation ceremony, Cavanagh took home another six awards for her academic achievements and contributions to the campus community.

When asked how she managed to fit it all in, Cavanagh replied, “Support from good friends. It’s really the people around you that matter.” She added that taking time for yourself when you need it is an important part of balancing so many commitments.

Hired by Farm Credit Canada, Cavanagh is now working in the Kingston, Ont., office in a full-time developmental relationship manager position.

By Stephanie Craig

RIDGETOWN

A Winning Opportunity

Jasper de Regt, centre, with his father, Rein, and mother, Anja de Regt.

When Jasper de Regt heard that there was an opportunity to win an award for the best farm enterprise presentation through his farm project course, he told his parents, “I’m going to try to win that!” His father, Rein, replied, “If you win, I’ll match the prize money!” The challenge was on, and the work began to do a comprehensive analysis of his home farm, Bear Creek Farms in Denfield, Ont.

The second-year farm project course offers agriculture and horticulture students the chance to do a detailed business plan summarizing the key strengths and weaknesses of a farm or horticulture operation, which includes preparing a three-year financial projection based on expected major developments in the business. It’s a big project for any student, but an excellent learning opportunity to bring farm production and agricultural business practices together.

De Regt came to Ridgetown Campus with previous post-secondary training, having completed the mechanical engineering program at Fanshawe College in London, Ont. He then built on his agricultural experience by working on a harvest crew in western Canada and Australia.

After these diverse experiences, de Regt decided he wanted to farm for a living and enrolled in the agriculture diploma program at Ridgetown Campus in September 2011. Two years later, he found himself sitting with the graduating class of 2013.

During the scholarship and awards program, it came time for the Farm Credit Canada award presentation for the best business plan project. It was a complete surprise to both de Regt and his parents when he and his classmate Alexander Zelem were called to the podium to receive the award. Both students were presented with $1,000 cheques from the award donor.

De Regt is now employed full-time at Greiden Farms Ltd. in St. Mary’s, Ont., one of Ontario’s top dairy farm operations.

By Liz Meidlinger
Bright Future Lies Ahead for Dedicated Graduate

Yohan Cardinal receives a bursary from Mélanie Genier of Farm Credit Canada.

Yohan Cardinal, a recent graduate of Campus d’Alfred, showed an interest in dairy herds from an early age. Although he did not grow up on a farm, his passion stemmed from two strong influences: his uncle, who owned a farm, and a childhood friend, who lived on a neighbouring farm.

Because of its reputation and proximity, Campus d’Alfred was Cardinal’s first choice to learn more about farming. He enrolled in the agricultural technology diploma program in 2011 and became president of the student council in 2012-2013.

At the 2013 graduation ceremony in May, Cardinal gave a valedictory speech that was highly complimentary of his teachers. “This is the piece of the puzzle that makes all the difference,” he said, adding that his success is due to his teachers’ ability to adapt to students, which in turn leads to a greater understanding of the material.

Cardinal also stands out because of his academic performance. He graduated on the director’s honour roll and, along with his business plan project partner, Alexandre Castonguay, received a Farm Credit Canada bursary of $1,000 for the best submission. He was also presented with the silver medal for the second-highest final grade in the agricultural technology diploma program and received a bursary of $1,000.

Since graduating from Campus d’Alfred, Cardinal has begun his career as a genetic adviser and insemination technician at the Centre d’insémination artificielle du Québec. Although he hasn’t set any long-term plans, his passion for farming has opened many possibilities for him.

By Nicole Tessier
Alumni Support Increases Research Capacity

Car parts, planters, chairs and fuels can all be made from plants. Researchers from across the University of Guelph are working at the Bioproducts Discovery and Development Centre (BDDC) to investigate and commercialize these types of biomaterials.

Established in 2008, the BDDC aims to develop new biomaterials with as much bio-based content as possible while improving cost and performance.

In mid-2012, OAC began a Phase 2 fundraising project to double the square footage of the BDDC with the goal of increasing research, teaching and commercialization capacity. In support of the project, the OAC BSA Classes of ’61 and ’62 began class projects in 2012.

The OAC Class of ’61 launched their project in fall 2012, having raised $30,000 to date toward their goal of $61,000. “This is an opportunity for our class to help leave a legacy on the campus and at the same time provide additional markets for agricultural products and byproducts,” said Dave Hume, Class of ’61 president, who spearheaded the project.

Thanks to a tremendous effort by OAC ’62, the class was able to reach their goal of raising $100,000 toward Phase 2 of the BDDC within one year.

Bill Harrison, BSA ’62, also contributed $250,000 to the project, saying his gift was due to his debt to OAC and his belief in the importance of the research. “OAC’s biomaterials research and the results of it represent the most earth-shaking technology I have seen to date. The potential impact on manufacturing and design is massive,” he said.

Harrison’s gift also welcomed him into the Order of OAC. During the celebration ceremony in May, he said, “My gift is to the OAC biomaterials program. These funds will be used to establish a commercialization laboratory in the new facility. OAC is the world-class leader in biomaterials. We have to make a personal commitment to keep it in first place.”

Phase 2 of the BDDC opened in August. This project also received support from several other sources, including the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario. A major Canadian bank has also agreed to support the project with a $1.25-million gift, and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Ministry of Rural Affairs contributed $550,000. More information on the BDDC can be found at www.bioproductscentre.com.

Upcoming Events

Sept. 21
Homecoming 2013

May 8
U of G’s 50th-Anniversary Celebration

June 21
The Conversat Ball
is reviving a tradition for Alumni Weekend 2014. Details and registration information will be available soon at www.alumni.uoguelph.ca.

Are You Following…

@UofGalumni
The official Twitter account for alumni of the University of Guelph features alumni stories and keeps alumni up-to-date on University activities.

@cropdoc2
Dave Hooker, a plant agriculture professor at the Ridgetown Campus, shares updates on his research, Ridgetown Campus and interesting resources related to field-crop agronomy.

OAC Alumni News

A publication of the OAC Alumni Association for the alumni and friends of the Ontario Agricultural College at the University of Guelph.

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