MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Cast your vote at the SUB

Voting in this year’s municipal election just got a bit easier. Thanks to a multi-year campaign by the UVic Students’ Society, advance polls for Saanich, Oak Bay and Victoria are coming to UVic. Students, faculty, staff and other eligible voters can cast ballots on Thursday, Nov. 6 from noon to 9 p.m. in the SUB Michelle Pujol room.

CONVOCATION 2014

Watch Fall Convocation on the web

The Fall Convocation ceremonies will be webcast live on Nov. 10–12. If you’re not able to attend in person, you can watch the ceremonies at uvic.ca/convocation. The video of each webcast will be available for six weeks following Convocation. All ceremonies take place in the University Centre Farquhar Auditorium. For event times and more information, visit uvic.ca/convocation.

PATHS TO EMPLOYMENT

RUCBC study shows value of a university degree

It’s a good investment, even in tough times: five years after graduating into one of the most challenging economic environments North America has seen in a generation, 2008 grads from BC’s six research universities have lower unemployment rates and higher salaries than those who did not complete an undergraduate degree. More info about the Putting Degrees to Work report, from the Research Universities Council of BC: bit.ly/2008-RUCBC.

FALL 2014 CONVOCATION

A Nobel-filled year for biochemistry grad

How many people can say they’ve rubbed shoulders with 37 Nobel laureates? For Michelle (Tinkin) Parker that amazing experience capped a remarkable academic career at UVic that culminates this month with a PhD in biochemistry.

This June, Parker had the privilege of joining 600 aspiring young researchers from almost 80 countries taking part in the 2014 Lindau Nobel Laureate Meeting on Physiology and Medicine in Germany. She and the other students—mainly master’s and PhD students—attended lectures, panel discussions and master classes with 37 Nobel laureates at the meeting, which is intended to promote dialogue among generations, cultures and nations.

"It was an exceptional opportunity to meet the founders of modern science and top young scientists from around the world," says Parker, whose favourite lecture was by 89-year-old geneticist Oliver Smithies, co-winner of the 2007 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

"He used his life experiences to discuss how the ordinary and extraordinary pieces of our lives intertwine with our scientific education and result in the evolution of ideas," she says.

Parker was selected for Lindau by the Canadian Student Health Research Forum after winning one of 10 Gold Awards of Excellence at a poster competition for the top five per cent of health research graduates across Canada. Of the 10 poster topics, judges deemed Parker’s to have “the greatest novelty and potential” and awarded her one of three Canadian nominations to attend the 2014 Lindau Meeting.

Parker’s PhD research focuses on the strategy used by a group of parasites (the “apicomplexans”)—including those that cause malaria and toxoplasmosis—to invade host cells and cause disease. “We see this invasion strategy as an Achilles’ heel for therapeutic intervention,” she says. “One of our major goals is to support the development of more effective drugs and vaccines.”

Parker has already published 16 papers in peer-reviewed journals, including Science, one of the world’s leading research journals. 

Challenges and opportunities highlighted at Campus Update

President Cassels emphasizes need to sharpen focus and build on strengths

UVic has made some big strides in the last few years—in terms of national and international recruitment, research and graduates’ success—but that’s not to say we’re sheltered from demographic change, competition and the sustainability challenges facing post-secondary institutions, UVic President Jamie Cassels said during the Oct. 7 President’s Campus Update session.

The town hall-style event—continuing the engagement and dialogue initiated during Cassels’ Campus Conversations last year—was packed with more than 300 faculty, staff and students. Cassels spoke for 30 minutes and then fielded a variety of questions from the audience for another three-quarters of an hour.

While he was eager to celebrate the university’s accomplishments, Cassels balanced the discussion with the need to work together to meet current challenges—and be ready to take advantage of opportunities when they arise.

The session tackled issues such as how do we as an institution continue to thrive, nationally and internationally, in a fiercely competitive post-secondary environment? And how do we maintain and enhance quality of the student experience during times of constrained economic resources?

Capacity and demographics driving change

Cassels began by outlining the challenge posed by increased university capacity across Canada coupled with a projected decline in youth population. Emphasizing the need to ensure that students from across Canada and around the world see UVic as a university of choice, Cassels said: “We’re starting from a position of real strength. [UVic] is a destination university, our enrolments are strong, our national and our international reputation is increasing, we have core strength in both our teaching and our research accomplishments, and we have differential strengths as well. . . . real reasons why people would choose the University of Victoria.”

Among those reasons, said Cassels, are our size—big enough to offer comprehensive programs and small enough for a more personalized working and learning environment—our research accomplishments, the enrichment of graduate and undergraduate education by that research culture, our extraordinary faculty and the wealth of experiential learning opportunities for students. 
CARSA now home to the Peninsula Co-op Climbing Wall

One of the focal points of UVic’s Centre for Athletics, Recreation and Special Abilities (CARSA) is getting a new name even before it opens.

Peninsula Co-op was announced on Nov. 4 as the first corporate naming partner for CARSA, sponsoring the colourful 16-metre climbing wall that will now be known as the Peninsula Co-op Climbing Wall.

“Our board of directors and members relation are confident in the project and wanted to be involved in this fabulous state-of-the-art multi-use complex,” says Penny Sopel, marketing and community relations director at Peninsula Co-op. “CARSA will definitely be an asset to everyone on and off campus.”

CARSA is a world-class training and learning facility that will provide community members with access to athletics and recreation resources.

Sopel adds: “To know that CARSA has been designed to serve a diverse group of users such as students, staff, high-performance athletes, people with diverse abilities and the community-at-large is just fantastic. This emulates Peninsula Co-op’s-op’s culture and values of people first.”

The announcement comes as CARSA nears completion, with an expected opening in spring 2015. The value of the sponsorship is a mix of cash, scholarship funding and in-kind advertising over 10 years.

Clint Hamilton, director of athletics and recreation at UVic, adds: “We appreciate a partner like Peninsula Co-op coming on board to support this facility. The UVic community stands to benefit from this investment being made in CARSA.”

Peninsula Co-op (peninsulaco-op.ca) is a local cooperative business widely respected for its commitment to integrity, excellence, accountability and respect.

In addition to the Peninsula Co-op Climbing Wall, CARSA features a two-story fitness and weight-training atrium; a multi-purpose field house for a variety of activities; a 2,100-seat performance gym; multipurpose rooms for dance, fitness and club programs, including a yoga studio and spin classes; a rowing ergometer centre; squash and racquetball courts and more.

CARSA is also the new home for CanHealth, an organisation dedicated to helping people across the ability spectrum improve their quality of life, with a focus on promoting independence and inclusion.

For more news on the Nov. 4 announcement, visit http://bit.ly/1H10TVH. For general information on CARSA, visit uvic.ca/carsa.

PARKER CONTINUED FROM P.1

journals. Her paper—the result of collaboration with French scientists—was chosen as the top biochemistry paper in that issue and has been cited more than 70 times since its publication.

Parker says her most memorable personal experience at Lund was with Francoise Barre-Sinoussi, who shared the 2008 Nobel with her mentor for their joint discovery of HIV.

“I chose to sit with her at dinner one evening based on our common interest in the study of pathogens,” says Parker. “We had a memorable conversation that touched on a variety of topics from general life as a scientist, to her experience of winning the Nobel, to the excitement of scientific discovery.

“Getting to know the personalities behind some of the most significant contributions to modern science was unforgettable,” she adds.

Parker plans to stay on in the UVic lab for another year to continue her investigations into pathogens and host cells while her new husband Matthew finishes his PhD in biochemistry. Then she’ll likely pursue postdoctoral studies in academia or industry.

“My main career goal is to be involved in fascinating science that has a clear path to beneficially impact the lives of others.”

Groundbreaking work on Indigenous law recognized with prestigious research chair

BY MARGARET SUDERMAN

UVic Law professor John Borrows secured one of the most prestigious research professorships in the country when he was officially named Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Law last month.

“The Canada Research Chair will enable me to devote more resources and time to figuring out how Indigenous peoples’ laws can be studied and applied in Canada,” says Borrows. “With the profile and the resources that come with the chair, I’ll be able to involve more students and Indigenous communities in that work as well.”

A homecoming for Borrows

Borrows arrived back at UVic this May following several years at the University of Minnesota. His new position at UVic is in many ways a homecoming, since Borrows served as the Law Foundation Chair of Aboriginal Justice and Governance at the law school from 2001 to 2011. One of Borrows’ greatest hopes for his research chair is for it to help bring the proposed JID program—a four-year dual Indigenous law degree program where students will receive an Indigenous law degree and a Canadian law degree—to fruition.

“Faculty Council has approved, in principle, an Indigenous law degree and I am hoping that this research chair will be a catalyst to move that into approval in practice,” says Borrows.

In addition to his research chair, Borrows says further work in the field and direct engagement with Indigenous communities is a priority for his future at UVic.

“The other plan is to go into communities, particularly Ojibway communities of which I am a part, to work with them in developing regulatory and dispute resolution systems that build upon their own legal orders,” says Borrows. “I find they have already done the preliminary groundwork in my job is to help them reach the next level.”

Two other Canada Research Chairs at UVic have also been renewed: Aaron Gulliver (Advanced Wireless Communications) and Clay Hidalgo (Cognitive Neuroscience).

Indigenous economic development consortium announced

1-888 Law - John Borrows, Miles Richardson, Abioma Thomas, Elder Mary Sam, Chief Andy Thomas, and Gustavson Dean Saul Klein at an October ceremony to mark the launch of the National Consortium for Indigenous Economic Development (NCIED). Full story: bit.ly/1K6ah1f

PHOTO: UVIC PHOTO SERVICES

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Enhanced planning: tools for today and tomorrow

If you’re inclined to think that planning might be the tiniest bit dull, you’ll quickly be set straight by Dr. Blackstone. Generally, she’s knee-deep in the Faculty of Fine Arts as its dean, but as acting associate vice-president academic and chair of the Enhanced Planning Tools Working Group, she’s busy thinking a decade ahead.

“Most universities operate in a resources-constrained environment,” she says, “and that means effective planning tools are critical. When this project is complete, campus administrators at all levels will have reports that provide relevant, accurate information to support their strategic decision-making processes.”

Meeting since December 2013, the working group started by identifying seven criteria that align with UVic’s strategic priorities. Focusing initially on the criteria of quality, demand and financial considerations, the group determined what qualitative and quantitative measures might be appropriate. This process will continue with the other criteria.

The working group takes its initial recommendations to an advisor committee, then to Integrated Planning Council, Executive Council and others. Cassels identified social anxiety about what the plans will do to our culture, our academic environment and our future. “I know from experience that when a dean, head or a director needs to make financial choices, it’s vital that we have appropriate tools and data-driven information. It’s reassuring that this committee is asking what tools we need to ensure the success of our programs.”

Blackstone emphasizes, “When we’re not optimizing the quality of the programs we run, we’re not optimizing the quality of the education we provide.”

Cassels outlined the need to carefully evaluate information they need and opportunities for learning. “The plan will assess support planning tools. Currently, we’re not able to get a complete picture of how we’re performing.”

“The Enhanced Planning Tools project is critical. When this project is complete, we will have a comprehensive understanding of the quality and value of what we do. We can continue to prove our social mission.”

“Because we’re starting from an extraordinary position, I’m utterly confident that we’ll be able to continue to enhance the quality of what we do.”

My departmental administrative staff can request course websites through axcp.uvic.ca/olsa. Official faculty, department and unit websites are not eligible for OAC and should instead use the standard UVic template in the Cascade content management system.

OAC can be accessed from any computer with an internet connection, meaning you don’t have to be on campus to view or manage websites. And, it’s mobile-friendly, so you can see sites from a tablet or smartphone.

If you’re new to WordPress, on-line instructions for the creation and management of OAC websites are available at uvic.ca/help. Drop-in help sessions are also provided, and you can email til@apex.uvic.ca for information about workshops. Contact the Computer Help Desk if you’re having problems accessing OAC with your NetLink ID and password.

Build a better blog with UVic’s Online Academic Community

BY LINDSAY GAGEL

Looking to create a personal website? A blog to discuss your latest research? Maybe you want a place to show off photos of your cat? Thanks to the Online Academic Community (OAC), current UVic employees and students can now create their own websites and blogs through a simple, user-friendly platform.

With more than 100 themes and plugins available, UVic faculty, staff and students can create, customize and manage their own sites—professional or personal—or through a personal website? A blog
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determined what qualitative and quantitative measures that are consistent and transparent campus wide.
2015 Maclean's rankings

Once again, UVic is ranked among the Canadian comprehensive universities by Maclean's magazine. This is the eighth consecutive year that UVic has been ranked either first or second in this category. In a strong showing across the board, UVic ranks up top-three finishes in eight of the 12 key performance indicators used by Maclean's for its 2015 rankings. In recent years, UVic and Simon Fraser University, which finishes first in the comprehensive category this year, have moved back and forth between the top two positions among Canada’s 13 comprehensive universities, a category that denotes a significant amount of research activity and a wide range of programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, including professional degrees.

UVic receives top scores for student awards and medical/science grants, and second for total research activity and library acquisitions.

Engineering a culture shift on campus

BY JOLIE SLOAN

Some people are born leaders, and convocating graduate Tiffany Yu undoubtedly falls into that category. Never one to shy away from a challenge, Yu saw a need in the Faculty of Engineering and set out to create change, becoming heavily involved with the Engineering Student Society (ESS). After attending the National Conference on Women in Engineering, Yu was inspired to create an engineering group for women at UVic. With help from faculty members and fellow ESS members Taylor Ernst and Alisa Minderova, the organization “Leadership Through Diversity” (LTD) was born.

“In engineering,” says Tiffany, “you meet a lot of shy people, but also a lot of people who just don’t know how to get involved. I really wanted to find a way to connect everyone and bring people together.”

The student-run organization within the ESS has been going strong for two years and is designed to be inclusive and supportive of all types of diverse student populations. LTD created a tri-mentorship program, which matches first-year students with third- and fourth-year students and industry partners including Viking Air, Schneider Electric and BIC.

Besides being an exceptional student herself, Yu—”the second oldest of five children—is driven to challenge the way things work, and make them better. In recognition of her years of service to the ESS and her visionary role in creating LTD, Yu was nominated for the Provost’s Advocacy and Activism Award in Equity and Diversity.

Working in operations engineering at Spectra Energy is not what Yu dreamed of as a little girl—it’s way better. She initially applied to study humanities at UVic, but after attending a mother-daughter robotics workshop shop on campus (“because of the free pizza,” she quips), she quickly changed her mind. After the workshop, Yu was hooked. She switched to engineering and says it was the best decision she’s ever made. If her success at UVic is any indication, she’ll be taking on leadership roles wherever she goes.

Uvic degree is about learning and action, says grad

BY ANNE MACLAURIN

A passion for making social connections and getting her hands dirty in community work makes social sciences grad Kathryn Juricic begin at UVic with the intention of moving on after her first year; however, after taking some environmental studies courses, she didn’t want to leave. “I felt I wouldn’t receive the same caliber of learning and atmosphere anywhere else. I was surrounded by inspirational people who were bound together through learning and action,” she explains.

It was the study of power that ex- cited Juricic about the political studies program and a professor who “lit a fire that has yet to die out.” Her courses in political science inspired her to do a double major in another area of interest: environmental studies—leading to a double major in political science and environmental studies.

“Environmental studies at UVic offers an integrated, experienced and impressive course load. The school really challenges you. She despair you get from learning about the state of our global environment and social health with the tools and passion to get out in the world and do something about it,” she explains.

During her degree, Juricic sought opportunities for the way she learned and was exposed to the world. She discovered that Island Health and this agreement already have strong ties with Island Health Authority (Island Health) is the goal of an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding).

Working together for health

An enhanced research partnership between UVic and the Vancouver Island Health Authority (Island Health) is the goal of an MOU recently signed between the two organizations. Island Health is one of six health jurisdictions in BC, providing health care and support services to more than 760,000 people. The agreement will streamline how the two organizations work together by creating new opportunities for collaborative research, joint funding and skills training; exploring commercialization of innovative health research and related technology, and promoting information-sharing and database development. “Our researchers already have strong ties with Island Health and this agreement opens the way for even more engagement,” says Dr. Michael Hayes, UVic’s director of health research and education. More collaboration will help improve patient outcomes and open up opportunities for our researchers by giving them access to clinical and physical facilities. Island Health has identified three priority populations: seniors, Aboriginals and those with mental health and addiction, “UVic has research centers in all three areas, so this is a perfect fit for us,” he says.

Commerce grad is in a New York state of mind

BY MOIRA DANN

Ross Rich, who graduates this November with a commerce degree from the Gustavson School of Business, has spun himself into his dream job already—as a marketing assistant with Columbia Records in New York City.

Rich will also maintain the artist-management firm he started in 2013, which includes talented singer Jade Tjokrom (another UVic student) on its artist roster. Rich’s road to music industry opportunity included creating a production/promotion firm, Victory Events, and working alongside fellow commerce students Code Worker and Tanner Manning.

Rich credits Gustavson for honing his entrepreneurial instincts. “He explains that the combina- tion of teachers, students and the overall environment created at Gustavson was one of the biggest contributors to his undergradu- ate success. “It’s very nurturing,” he says. “It’s an environment you prosper in if you’re doing something you enjoy.”

Rich’s interest in the music business grew from performing rap, along with his brother. “It’s funny to think about,” he says, now that he’s surrounded by interna- tionally recognized recording art- ists, but it was his own performing experience that equipped him for work in the entertainment industry.

Rich says living with his brother and fellow commerce grad Devon Vivian (another BCom student) was a “defining part of my degree” because all three are “entrepre- neurial spirits.” They bred it all the time; talking about their business ideas and discussing inspi- rational business biographies they’d read (Richard Branson and Jeff Bezos, for two). They kept another inspired.

Rich says his learning outside the classroom was “110 per cent” where he learned the most. add- ing he wouldn’t have been able to take full advantage of volunteer and extra-curricular opportuni- ties without the foundation of his classroom learning.

Rich talks about all he learned from his peers and professors and has a long list of fellow classmates and professors who were central to his Gustavson experience. “For me, it was all about the people I was surrounded by that helped me gain the confidence and the experiences to do this.”

“Sometimes, I am in New York…I can’t believe it.”
Urban design to support the disoriented

BY AMANDA FARRELL-LOW

You may have heard of care facilities designed specifically for people with dementia; they have features such as circular walkways, colour-coded areas that help people recognize where they are, or simple signs hung at eye level. But what if we started taking the needs of people with dementia into consideration when we designed a new park or a city street? These were questions Maria Przydatek and Trevor Hancock on supportive environments and healthy public policy. Maria Przydatek’s master’s research focused on dementia-friendly design. Przydatek’s master’s research helped her draw up a list of recommendations municipalities should consider when it comes to making public places more accessible for people with dementia.

“Imagine that modifications to the built environment offer a broader range of support, rather than just individualized programs targeting a particular lifestyle choice or behaviour,” she says of the importance of applying this work in public spaces. “They offer really positive solutions for a lot of other people with different impairments.”

Przydatek is a graduate of the Social Dimensions of Health program, with Neena Chappell from the Department of Sociology and Joan Wairall-Higgins of the School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education supervising her work. She says the interdisciplinary aspect of that program was a great way to respond to the complicated real-world situations in healthcare and a huge asset to her research.

“I really appreciated being connected to various researchers across campus,” says Przydatek. “It was really valuable to reflect on various perspectives. That allowed me to think more critically about best approaches to research questions and how that research might add value to a field of study.”

Not surprisingly, Przydatek’s research has led her to the Alzheimer Society of BC, where she is now working as a research analyst. She’s continuing where she left off with her master’s work, providing tools that municipalities can use to make their communities more friendly for people with dementia. She says a presentation by the society’s CEO at this September’s Union of BC Municipalities meeting has led to many communities expressing interest in the work.

“I’m excited to be at the society,” she says. “It’s really neat to see your master’s work develop into something bigger and be a part of that.”

Graduating with a provincial contract

BY VANESSA STOFER AND MEGHAN THOMPSON

For new grad Darcie Scollard, co-op has made her future a lot less daunting—and helped her pocket a contract with the provincial government to carry her into post-grad life.

“As a humanities student, I was particularly worried about life after university,” Scollard says. “Since I became a co-op student, a lot of stress around finding a job after graduation has been lifted off my shoulders.”

While pursuing a degree in English, Scollard signed up for a professional writing class, thinking she might try to break into journalism. “I loved the program, and it shifted my skill set more toward web content creation and user experience design,” she says. Late in her third year, with graduation on the horizon, Scollard joined the co-op program to gain work experience before graduation. Having completed a full year of the co-op program to gain work experience, Scollard has obtained a contract with the Ministry of Energy and Mines to work as a technical writer and web editor.

Scollard spent her final workterms at the BC Ministry of Energy and Mines as a technical writer and web editor. Responsible for a broad range of tasks, she worked on web development, logo design and event planning—and captured promotional video footage at a mine.

“This August, she was hired on contract at another provincial resource ministry—the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations—as a web publisher. She works with clients from the six natural resource ministries to migrate outdated website content into a new content management system. This involves writing, editing, and gaining approvals on content, creating new pages and, eventually, retiring the old sites.

“The website project is government-wide, so I get to interact with colleagues in many areas,” she says. “As a recent graduate, I am very excited to be gaining valuable experience in project management, government communications and information technology.”

Now feeling confident in her career aspirations, Scollard has laid a path for her future paved with relevant work experience—and she’s happy to recommend co-op to others.

“I think everyone should be a co-op student,” she says. “You really can’t put a price on experiential learning—and the value that working in your field before graduation will add to your academic and professional career.”

Grad is first WSÁNEĆ lawyer

BY MARGARET SUDERMAN

When UVic law graduate student Robert Clifford was called to the bar in 2012, the celebration at the Victoria Law Courts involved much more than the usual fanfare of family and friends with cameras and congratulatory flowers.

A special ceremony with traditional drumming and singing took place to honour Clifford—a member of the Tsawout First Nation—and the first person of the Four Soonsich (WSÁNEĆ) Tribes to become a lawyer.

Now more than two years later, Clifford’s family and community are marking yet another of his academic milestones. This November he graduates with a Master of Laws from UVic.

For Clifford, the occasion marks the end of a long era at the university. Originally from Sidney, he chose to attend UVic and major in anthropology for his undergraduate degree. He chose UVic for both of his law degrees in part because of its focus on Indigenous legal traditions.

“When I went into law school it was always with an interest in Aboriginal law and Aboriginal rights and the different ways I could assist my community and First Nations communities in general,” says Clifford. “UVic was the only school I applied to—it was my overwhelm-
As a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) candidate in the Department of Writing, Hannamala Leavitt has spent the past two years fulfilling the same kind of duties and responsibilities as most UVic graduate students: conceiving a thesis, working with a supervisor, giving lectures, teaching classes, marking papers, reading, writing, researching. But given her specialty in creative non-fiction, Leavitt is also tasked with interpreting the world as she sees it—no easy job when you’re a blind writer.

After losing most of her vision from a brain tumour at age 10, the 55-year-old Leavitt now sees the world in more conceptual terms: blindness is not a challenge to be conquered but the space she inhabits—which, for a writer, can create unique opportunities. “People say, ‘We don’t know what your characters look like’—but neither do I,” she chuckles. “I haven’t seen details of my environment and people for so long, I don’t reflect them in my writing.”

By its very definition, creative non-fiction is inevitably as much a blend of her own experiences and memories as it is of limitations. “I don’t try to write straightforward stories; ‘I’ve always been a storyteller,” says Leavitt, who arrived at UVic with a stack of published works under her name. “Non-fiction is inevitably as much a blend of my environment and people for so long, I don’t reflect them in my writing.”

Dr. Irving Rootman has indirectly contributed to the health and well-being of millions of Canadians. He designed and implemented the Canadian National Health Promotion Survey in 1985, the first survey of its kind in the world. The data aided researchers and policy-makers in understanding the factors that contribute to, and may improve, individual health.

The survey—implemented while Rootman was employed by Health and Welfare Canada—collected information on a range of issues of current or potential concern, including tobacco, alcohol and other drug use, nutrition, fitness, safety, and mental health.

With the new information in hand, the stage was set for the creation of new health promotion programs designed to address the factors that contribute to health and well-being. Rootman helped establish the Canadian Consortium for Health Promotion and developed a national program of research in literacy and health. He also chaired the advisory committee for the recently established UVic School of Public Health and Social Policy.

BY JOHN THRELFALL

Writing grad sees beyond perceptions of limitations

The blindness I’ve figured out how to live with, but the attitudes about it are where I always stumble: how did I instinctively know to be ashamed of it? How did I, even as a young kid, know blind people lived in the margins? And while her historical discoveries have been fascinating—ranging from Industrial Revolution-spanwed syphilis and both world wars to 1950s “incubator babies” and contemporary macular degeneration—Leavitt’s biggest hurdle has been the same as any other writer herself: “It’s been a huge emotional challenge,” she admits. “I like telling other people’s stories, not my own.”

Realizing that being identified as “a blind writer” could be both a niche and trap, Leavitt didn’t just want to write about growing up without sight. “There are already a lot of memoirs out there about that. I don’t try to write straightforward stories. I’ve read a lot of material with Stephen Hawking’s voice echoing in my mind,” she laughs. “Dealing with that repetitive monotone synthetic speech all the time is a whole other level of challenge.”

Ultimately, Leavitt has no desire to be framed as any kind of leader or champion; like any other writer, she’d rather be known for her words. “We can’t all be superheroes,” she says. “Some of us are just normal, everyday people with plenty of challenges that nobody ever sees.”

Stephanie Nolen, Honorary Doctor of Laws (LLD)
10 a.m., Nov. 10

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The university confers degrees honoris causa to individuals who have exceptional records of distinction and achievement. Honordors include world-renowned scholars and artists, celebrated and visionary public figures, prominent professional and community leaders, and philanthropists.

December 2014

The Ring Convocation

The Ring Convocation

The University of Victoria will present two honorary degrees for outstanding achievements in public health promotion and journalism during fall convocation ceremonies.

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FALL 2014 HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENTS

Inspired leadership

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Stephanie Nolen, Honorary Doctor of Laws (LLD)
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Journalist and author Stephanie Nolen won four national newspaper awards for her reporting on the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa and the wars and humanitarian crises in Uganda, Sudan, Somalia, Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone. Her book 28 Stories of AIDS in Africa won the PEN Courage Award and was nominated for the Governor General’s Literary Award for Non-Fiction.

She requested and received a post as chief of the first African bureau for The Globe and Mail, subsequently reporting from more than two dozen countries. In 2006, her editor, Edward Greenspon, stated that Nolen has “probably done more than any single other person with the possible exception of Stephen Lewis to educate and sensitize Canadians about the horrible human toll HIV/AIDS is taking in Africa.”

Nolen opened the The Globe and Mail’s first New Delhi bureau and her “Breaking Cast” multimedia project received the 2014 Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Award for “coverage that most accurately and sensitively portrays India to a foreign audience.”

Note: Due to personal circumstances, Ruby Dunstan is unable to attend fall convocation to accept the honorary Doctor of Laws she was scheduled to receive. Dunstan, the first female chief of the Lytton First Nation and a leader in the fight to protect the Stuxi Valley from logging, will have her degree conferred at a future convocation ceremony.
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25

- Special Event, 7:30 p.m. UVic Winter Aries Market and Nov. 26. The newly minted UVic Winter Aries Market is a great place to find unique, handmade gifts and support local charities. University Centre Lobby.

- Special Event, 7 p.m. That Chemistry Show for United Way. Coordinated by the UVic Chemistry Students’ Society, the event comes on a tradition started by the legendary Dr. Zirk, UVic Prof Emeritus Dr. Reginald Mitchell, at Universities in the EU: The German Case. Prof. Scheer, Author. Turpin A212. 250-721-8514

- Studies in Religion & Society Lecture. 4:30 p.m. Arizona’s Philosophy and Religious Belief — Stories of Contemporary. Prof. Kathy Recob (UVic). Turpin A212. 250-721-6155

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28


- UVic Emergency Alerts. Be in the know. Register your mobile phone to receive UVic Emergency Alerts notifications.

www.uvic.ca/alerts
Rebekah Erickson’s life profoundly changed shortly after graduating from high school, when someone very close to her tragically passed away from suicide. In learning to cope with the grief, confusion and sadness, Erickson found her passion in life—helping others.

“I realized the importance of having a strong support network around you,” said Erickson, in her fourth year of psychology at the University of Victoria. “The loss I experienced really ignited my desire to help people who are dealing with mental illness and struggling to find that support.” A peer helper in the University’s counselling services, Erickson is pursuing a career in the mental health field.

You are not alone.

Learn about the new tools, resources and initiatives supporting positive student mental health.

• Resource website
• Campus-wide faculty/staff training
• Activity grants to support student-led mental health activities and events
• Assisting Students in Distress’ folder with quick tips and resources to help staff and faculty support students at risk

uvic.ca/mentalhealth

By Joanne McGachie

Rebekah Erickson’s life profoundly changed shortly after graduating from high school, when someone very close to her tragically passed away from suicide. In learning to cope with the grief, confusion and sadness, Erickson found her passion in life—helping others.

“I realized the importance of having a strong support network around you,” said Erickson, in her fourth year of psychology at the University of Victoria. “The loss I experienced really ignited my desire to help people who are dealing with mental illness and struggling to find that support.” A peer helper in the University’s counselling services, Erickson is pursuing a career in the mental health field.

Many mental illnesses are initially undetected and people do not seek help. For too many people in that place, suicide seems to be the only choice they have.

Almost a quarter of 15- to 25-year-olds who die, die by suicide—and that’s not acceptable,” he continued. “We know that about 90 per cent of the people who die by suicide have a mental illness at the time of their death. We also know that mental illness is treatable, but stigma and misunderstandings too often act as barriers to getting treatment.

“At the individual and societal levels, we must challenge our old ideas. We must have this conversation, and I am extremely pleased to be here to witness the beginning of UVic’s conversation on mental illness.”

Reaching out, with new tools

The three-year strategy describes initiatives that will focus on reducing the negative stigma associated with mental health issues, building a more welcoming and supportive university community and enhancing the university’s ability to support students who may be at risk. The strategy will provide practical tools to students in distress or crisis and offer employees the training and resources needed to support student mental health.

All university community members are encouraged to take an active role in implementing the goals, objectives and initiatives.

“The people who interact with our students on a regular basis are the ones who are most likely to notice if someone is in distress,” said Jim Dunsdon, associate vice-president of student affairs. “We want all of our employees—whether they are faculty or the folks who work across the university’s various frontline services—to have simple, practical and effective tools to recognize the signs and know what they can do to help.”

The first four initiatives within the strategy are being launched immediately:

• A dedicated Student Mental Health website provides information to students, faculty, staff and families. The website enhances and reorganizes information to be more accessible and current.

• Campus-wide training for faculty and staff will enhance awareness about issues and good practices. The training will strengthen faculty and staff ability to identify students at risk, provide assistance, and know where and when to refer students for more support.

• Student Mental Health activity grants are available to support student-led activities. There is $10,000 available per year for activities, events and programs supporting student mental health.

• An “Assisting Students in Distress” folder provides faculty and staff with quick tips and resources to support students at risk. There will be broad distribution across campus and online.

For more information on UVic’s New Student Mental Health Strategy and its initiatives, visit: uvic.ca/mentalhealth.