



## RESEARCH NEWS

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### **World-leading Environmental Toxicologist to Join U of S**

John Giesy, a world-renowned expert in industrial pollutants and their effect on people and the environment, has been appointed Canada Research Chair in Environmental Toxicology at the University of Saskatchewan, the federal government announced today. Over his 30 year career Giesy has received over \$57,000,000 dollars in research funding for research, the results of which are presented on over 550 publications. Over the past 10 years, in the areas of Ecology and Environmental Science is the 4<sup>th</sup> most cited author (<http://www.in-cites.com/top/2004/fourth04-env.html>). Giesy has been president of Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry, which is the world-wide leading academic organization in his field and is the recipient or may of the world's to awards in environmental science, including the prestigious Vollenweider Lectureship from Environment Canada.

The U of S was awarded \$1.4 million over the next seven years for the Chair, as well as \$906,000 from the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), the University, and other partners to buy related laboratory equipment.

“Environmental sustainability is becoming ever more critical as populations grow and industrial society puts pressure on the natural systems that sustain us,” said U of S Vice-President Research Steven Franklin. “Professor Giesy’s appointment is part of the University of Saskatchewan’s vigorous response to these urgent issues, both in discovery research and in training the next generation of environmental scientists.”

The U of S has identified environmental sciences including eco-toxicology as one of six priority areas for its Canada Research Chairs.

Giesy, currently Distinguished Professor of Zoology at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan, will assume his position with the U of S department of veterinary and biomedical sciences in May, 2006. His work will be based at lab facilities in the U of S Toxicology Centre, newly rebuilt and refurbished to accommodate a robust research program to study industry-produced persistent organic pollutants (POPs).

He will work to develop rapid, sensitive, and cost-effective tools to test for these chemicals in the environment, particularly in regions such as Canada’s Arctic where fragile ecosystems and a heavy reliance on native foods make populations especially vulnerable. Ultimately, these tools and the knowledge generated will guide policy makers and regulators in prescribing more environmentally sustainable practices.

Giesy was the first to identify the presence in the environment of perfluorinated compounds, a class of POPs used in common products such as paints, cosmetics, electronics, and firefighting foams. Though it had been thought that these chemicals didn’t migrate through the environment, Giesy and his colleagues detected the compounds in animal tissues from all over the world --

from Ganges River dolphins to North American bald eagles. It is still unclear what effect these chemicals may have on wildlife and people.

Another of his “firsts” is the discovery that some POPs become more toxic when exposed to light. He has also worked on the long-term effects of Agent Orange on Vietnam War veterans, as well as the hormone-disrupting effects of other POPs on reproductive systems in wildlife.

Giesy is also adept at “green chemistry” – the design of more environmentally friendly alternatives.

Giesy will lead a world-class training program in eco-toxicology. His group is expected to include 16 graduate students and five post doctoral fellows, as well as employ five research technicians and attract three to five visiting scientists at any given time.

With the addition of Giesy’s Canada Research Chair, the U of S has now been awarded nearly \$28 million to support 29 Chairs, as well as nearly \$10.4 million in related CFI and partner infrastructure funding.

A team of academic peers chooses the most outstanding candidates from nominations submitted to the Canada Research Chairs program by universities. Giesy’s chair is one of 72, together worth \$62.9 million, announced today in Charlottetown.

“Our universities are vital centres of cutting-edge research and innovation,” said Industry Minister David Emerson. “The ideas generated at these institutions extend the frontiers of knowledge and create a deeper understanding of the complex world in which we live. Communities all over the country will see the benefits of the work done by the more than 1,500 Chairholders who conduct research at Canadian universities.” When asked about taking up the chair, Giesy said “It is the opportunity of a lifetime to be able work in a program the caliber of which has been developed at the U of S. It is a great university in a great country and I can not wait to get started”. All of the people I have met and all of the interactions at U of S have been first class all the way!”

The \$900-million Canada Research Chairs Program was created to enhance universities as centers of world-class research excellence by attracting and retaining excellent researchers in Canadian universities. By the end of 2005, Canadian universities will have 2,000 new Canada Research Chairs. For profiles of U of S Canada Research Chair holders, visit <http://www.usask.ca/crc> or the national website at <http://www.chairs.gc.ca>.

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