

Malaspina University-College
NEWS RELEASE

Friday, November 12, 2004

Penny Barnes appointed as Malaspina's first Canada Research Chair

Top research scientist Dr. Penny Barnes has been appointed as Malaspina University-College's first Canada Research Chair.

The announcement was made today (November 12) by Prime Minister Paul Martin. Barnes, whose research focuses on Ecologically Sustainable Shellfish Aquaculture, is one of 194 new Chairs appointed through the Canada's Research Chairs program. The program helps post-secondary institutions attract and retain the best and brightest researchers from around the world.

"We're absolutely delighted about Penny's appointment to a Canada Research Chair," said Malaspina President Rich Johnston. "She's been recognized as one of Canada's leading researchers. Her new position will help build research capacity at Malaspina and directly benefit faculty researchers and students."

Barnes' appointment brings with it a \$100,000 per year grant for five years, renewable once. Barnes was also successful in receiving matching infrastructure grants to support her research through the B.C. Knowledge Development Fund and the Canada Foundation for Innovation, bringing her total funding for research to over \$750,000.

Dr. David Thomas, Vice-President of Instruction & Research, said Malaspina was one of 17 small universities in Canada eligible to enter a special Canada Research Chair competition; only seven proposals were approved.

"Obviously Penny's proposal was of top quality and on par with national standards," said Thomas.

Barnes, who worked as a researcher at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama for nine years, was hired by Malaspina University-College last year. She competed as a Tier II Canada Research Chair, a competition that recognizes "exceptional emerging researchers acknowledged by their peers as having the potential to lead in their field."

Thomas said the timing of Barnes' appointment coincides beautifully with the recent opening of the new Centre for Shellfish Research at Malaspina's Nanaimo campus. "Not only does Malaspina have its first Canada Research Chair, but Dr. Barnes has a brand-new state-of-the-art facility in which to conduct her research," said Thomas. "The timing couldn't be better."

Barnes heads up the Ecological Interactions Research Program for the Centre for Shellfish Research. She is already working on a number of projects to investigate the ecological sustainability of shellfish aquaculture.

Barnes said marine shellfish aquaculture – with support from governments and many coastal communities – is poised for coast-wide expansion in B.C.

“If shellfish aquaculture is to expand significantly, it must do so within the bounds of ecological sustainability,” she said. “The question is: how do we ensure that the development of the shellfish aquaculture industry in B.C. is linked with conservation of marine ecosystems?”

Barnes is developing this link through her research on the interactions between shellfish aquaculture and the coastal marine environment. Her work will help further our understanding of the fundamental biological, physical and chemical processes in B.C.’s coastal waters. This research will be combined with ecological and physiological studies specific to shellfish culture. Barnes will also incorporate the development of new shellfish farming practices into her study.

So far, Barnes’ research team includes senior and junior lab technicians, two graduate students, and numerous undergraduate student researchers.

“Without the research being conducted by Dr. Barnes and her team, the sustainable expansion of shellfish aquaculture will suffer from a lack of scientific basis for planning and policy,” added Thomas.

Prime Minister Paul Martin said, “We’re proud that the funding announced today will support research by Canada’s leading scholarly and scientific minds. From health care, to the environment, to building stronger communities, the work of these Canada Research Chairs will have a direct impact on the lives of Canadians and help position Canada as a world leader in the 21st century economy.”

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