

Ideas on the Edge



Spreading Wings

A NEW SCIENCE RESEARCH CENTRE AT WILFRID LAURIER IS ATTRACTING A COHORT OF BRIGHT YOUNG SCIENTISTS.

“They feel released. They’re able to undertake things they haven’t been able to do before.”

Dr. Arthur Szabo is talking about the remarkable community of young researchers he’s been helping to assemble at Wilfrid Laurier University—and about the

RESEARCH THAT MATTERS REAL-WORLD BENEFITS FOR ONTARIANS:

- higher quality post-secondary and graduate education for Ontario students
- ability to attract world-class researchers
- a variety of spin-off products and processes, particularly in the areas of medicine and the environment

new Science Research Centre that’s bringing out their best work. When Arthur Szabo became Dean of the Science Faculty at Laurier, his first priority was to attract top-drawer faculty. “I stressed the

fact that if we’re going to develop high quality, innovative programs, we would have to attract high quality faculty. High quality faculty are research active, and if you want to recruit that kind of faculty, you need the resources, the infrastructure.” The leadership of Laurier agreed and in 2003 the university opened the doors on a brand new, 43,000-square-foot Science Research Centre. The Centre, funded in part by a \$4.3 million

investment from the Ontario Innovation Trust, contains state-of-the-art labs, plant growth rooms and a suite for mathematics research.

True to Dr. Szabo’s predictions, the new facility has played a key role in recruiting some very fine young



researchers. “I thought Wilfrid Laurier was this small place,” says Dr. Vladimir Kitaev, a specialist in materials chemistry, who came to Canada from Russia. “So I was amazed when I saw this new building with state-of-the-art laboratories, and several instruments I never had access

Project: Laurier Science Research Centre
Institution: Wilfrid Laurier University
Research Discipline: Natural Sciences/Chemistry
Principal Investigator: Dr. Arthur Szabo
Trust Investment: \$4,327,440
Total research investment from all sources: \$10,818,599

to where I was working before. It absolutely told me: this is a place that cares about research!" Kitaev is now using the centre's resources to pursue research in self-assembling nanoparticles—science that will have a wide range of applications in creating new materials.

The quality of Laurier's research facilities was also a



big factor in attracting Dr. Robin Slawson to the university. She's an environmental microbiologist working on water quality issues. "It was certainly very critical in my decision. Having that building sitting there is evidence in place that growth is happening, that research is a priority."

Investments by the Ontario Innovation Trust, together with those from the Canada Foundation for Innovation, are playing a key role in that growth, according to Dean Szabo. "The instrumentation and

infrastructure we've acquired through support from the Ontario Innovation Trust has had a really significant



Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo

"They did everything right!"

Matthew Smith

"Absolutely. It was a crucial thing," Matthew Smith says of the role Laurier's new Science Research Centre



played in attracting him back to Canada from a research position at the University of Massachusetts. "When I came up for my interview and went through the building, I

thought: they did everything right!" The brand-new 43,000-square-foot facility contains the labs and state-of-the-art equipment Smith needs to conduct his cutting-edge research in molecular biology and biochemistry. His work on plant cell development may lead to applications in such widely-varying fields as agriculture and the treatment of human disease.

impact on us—perhaps a greater proportional impact than it might have had in another, larger institution." But



DEAN ARTHUR SZABO

the story has only begun, as far as Arthur Szabo is concerned. There's plenty of growth ahead. "We're not a mature faculty yet, we're in a growth phase. Our wings are still wet. But we're coming out of the cocoon." Thanks in part to outstanding research facilities, the best at Wilfrid Laurier is yet to come.



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Infrastructure for Innovation About the Ontario Innovation Trust

The Ontario Innovation Trust was created in 1999 by the Government of Ontario to invest in research equipment and facilities at Ontario's universities, colleges, hospitals and other non-profit research institutions. The Trust is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, according to the terms of a Trust agreement established by the Ontario government. A small permanent staff looks after day-to-day operations.

Since its inception, the Trust has committed almost \$843 million to strengthen Ontario's position in the global marketplace of ideas. This represents more than a third of the \$2.44 billion in total funding that has been invested in Trust-supported projects.