

MEDIA RELEASE

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RIDGETOWN CAMPUS GRADUATING CLASS OF 2011 WILL BE LARGEST IN CAMPUS' HISTORY

The 59th annual Spring Convocation at the University of Guelph's Ridgetown Campus, to be held on Friday, June 3, 2011 will be the largest graduating class the campus has ever had. The 306 graduates from diploma and certificate programs in Agriculture, Horticulture, Environmental Management, Veterinary Technology, Performance Horse Handler and Veterinary Medical Administration will be celebrating this milestone achievement with family, friends and instructional staff.

Ridgetown Campus is one of three regional campuses of the University of Guelph's Ontario Agricultural College (OAC). The large class is a result of increased enrolments in several program areas, especially the Agriculture Diploma program. Robert Gordon, dean of OAC, who will be presenting graduates with their certificate or diploma, notes "I'm looking forward to personally congratulating these students on the successful completion of their studies, and I wish them much success in their chosen fields. We know they will make a positive difference in the communities in which they will live and work."

"We want our graduates to see this special day as just the beginning of their life-long learning process and we look forward to watching their career development" says Art Schaafsma, Ridgetown Campus Director.

The graduation procession will begin at 1:45 PM and the ceremony will start at 2:00 PM in the Rudy H. Brown Rural Development Centre, Don Pestell Auditorium. The Class of 2011 has selected Gerald Backx of Grand Bend, Ontario as valedictorian. Backx is an Agriculture Diploma student and is currently employed at the Ridgetown Campus, Huron Research Station in Exeter as an agronomy technician supporting the research program of David Hooker, an expert in field crop agronomy.

Ben Arnold, class of 1999 alumnus and senior manager, agribusiness sales for CASCO Inc., will be addressing the graduating class. Arnold took a strong interest in agricultural marketing as a student and has developed a successful career in agribusiness. In support of his alma mater, he has recently joined the Ridgetown Campus Agri-Food Foundation board.

Awards for academic proficiency and outstanding leadership will be distributed to a number of students. "We are very fortunate to have financial support from our local community and businesses towards our awards program," says Schaafsma. This year, over \$24,600 in cash and gifts will be awarded.

Established in 1874, OAC is Canada's largest and most comprehensive institution for teaching, research and extension service in food, agriculture, communities and the environment. The OAC academic programs offered at Ridgetown Campus provide students with unique experiential learning and the opportunity to work with world class researchers, professors and lecturers, developing important career and life skills.

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