

MEDIA RELEASE

Innovative Agribusiness Leader to Address Ridgetown Campus Graduates

May 26, 2014: RIDGETOWN - The 62nd Spring Graduation at the University of Guelph's Ridgetown Campus, will be held on Friday, June 6, 2014 with Jim Campbell, General Manager, AGRIS Co-operative as the graduation speaker.

The 256 graduands at Ridgetown are completing diploma or certificate programs in Agriculture, Horticulture, Environmental Management, Veterinary Technology, Performance Horse Handler, and Veterinary Office Administration and will be gathering in the Rudy H. Brown Rural Development Centre to celebrate with family, friends and classmates.

Graduates finishing the Agriculture Diploma program, the largest academic program at the campus, have several opportunities for employment and many will go to work either in agribusiness or at their family farm business. Students in several programs finished their last academic semester with an industry work placement that often leads to their first industry job.

"I'm thrilled to recognize Ridgetown Campus' most recent cohort of graduating students. I know they will go on to make significant contributions in their careers and in the communities in which they live," said Rob Gordon, Dean, Ontario Agricultural College (OAC). "They join a strong network of Ridgetown Campus, OAC and University of Guelph alumni supporting the future of our agriculture and food industries here in Ontario and across the globe."

"I see graduation day as a milestone celebration as these individuals move from students to alumni, and begin to make their mark wherever they may be headed," stated Ken McEwan, Campus Director.

The Class of 2014 has selected Gerard Van Den Boogaard of Gorrie, Ontario to deliver the valedictorian address. Gerard is an Agriculture Diploma student who grew up on a cash crop and farrow-to-finish swine operation. He is currently employed for the summer at Pioneer Hi-Bred Production's parent canola seed plant near Wingham, Ontario as a Production Technician. This fall, Gerard plans to further his studies at the University's Guelph campus where he is enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture program.

Jim Campbell, General Manager, AGRIS Co-operative, Chatham, will address the graduates. Campbell has a passion for agriculture. He grew up on a local farm, and then completed an undergraduate and masters of business administration before he began his successful agribusiness career. Through Jim's leadership, AGRIS Co-operative now services over 1,200 farmer-owners at 14 facility locations throughout Kent, Essex, Lambton, Elgin and Middlesex counties. Jim believes in the co-operative business model, and strives for excellence and innovation from farm service delivery to solar energy creation.

Prior to the 1:45 p.m. student procession and graduation ceremony, a special Donor Appreciation Luncheon will be hosted to celebrate the on-going support of campus award donors. Awards for academic proficiency and student leadership will be presented to a number of graduates. “We are very fortunate to have the financial support from our alumni, community friends and many local businesses,” says McEwan. “This year, approximately \$22,500 will be awarded to many deserving students.”

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 valuable experiential learning opportunities and the chance to learn from world class researchers, professors and lecturers, developing important career and life skills.

Ridgetown Campus has been delivering leading applied agricultural and environmental research for over 90 years, and training Ontario youth for over 60 years. This track record of service delivery has deep roots in the Ridgetown campus community.

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