University of Waterloo Stratford Campus opens new building to house digital media programs and foster innovation

WATERLOO, Ont. (Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2012) - The University of Waterloo Stratford Campus marks a historic occasion today with the grand opening of its new building that will house programs designed to support the confluence of art, business and technology for the next generation of innovators. Leaders from the university, partners from government and industry, and students will all participate in the opening ceremony at 11 a.m. today.

“The grand opening today of the University of Waterloo Stratford Campus marks the culmination of a significant investment in making this building and campus a reality,” said Feridun Hamdullahpur, president and vice-chancellor of Waterloo. “We are very proud of the unique partnership between the university, various levels of government, and the private sector that mobilized a great vision and brought us all to this important occasion.”

“Stratford Campus graduates will make a difference across many sectors in Ontario where jobs and opportunities will continue to grow in digital media,” said Brad Duguid, Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. “The Province is pleased to have been a partner in creating this wonderful facility.”

The new, 42,000-square-foot Stratford Campus building is in itself a testament to artful design and high-tech digital media, with the centre-piece a three-storey media wall of 150 Christie® MicroTiles® from Christie that comprises a complete visual display and custom content management system. The media wall is the tallest installation of MicroTiles in North America.

“Christie’s innovative visual technology solutions will play a key role in the university’s mission to intersect technology, business and art under the Faculty of Arts programs. A first in Canada, the Stratford Campus is designed to create the next generation of digital media graduates, jobs, content and companies,” said Paul Salvini, chief technology officer, Christie Digital Systems Canada.

The building was enabled through the generosity of the Ontario government and the City of Stratford, which each invested $10 million for a total $20 million for the building. The city’s full commitment to the project included the additional expenditure of $4.5 million for the land. The building was designed by Canadian architectural firm ZAS Architects and built by Bondfield Construction over the last 18 months.

Operating costs for programs at the Stratford Campus were contributed by the federal government along with funding and in-kind services from OpenText.

“OpenText software is already being used by professors doing research on digital media applications, with more innovation to come,” said Tom Jenkins, executive chairman and chief strategy officer at OpenText. “The programs that will be supported at the university’s Stratford Campus are significant, and will contribute to Canada’s ability to lead in the digital economy.”

“Today we celebrate establishing a brand new curriculum that is important for Canada’s future success in digital media on an international playing field,” said Ginny Dybenko, executive
director of the Stratford Campus. “We initiated our graduate program last year in a temporary location. This fall, we launched our undergraduate program in our new building with overwhelming success.”

The University of Waterloo Stratford Campus currently has 98 students enrolled in the Global Business and Digital Arts undergraduate program, and 19 students taking graduate studies in digital media. The undergrad program initiated this year drew a pool of 400 applications for an original plan of 50 spaces. The response rate to the program was so high that the university decided to launch with a double cohort – the largest inaugural class for a program at Waterloo. The university already has success stories with graduates filling co-op and permanent roles at companies such as Google, RBC, CBC and various startups, where their participation is providing insight in user experience.

“It’s exciting to see that the foresight in program planning to embed artistic design into high-tech digital media projects is resonating with students and providing real-world skills for our graduates,” said Douglas Peers, dean of arts at the University of Waterloo. “In the city that is synonymous with Shakespeare, it’s fitting that the Stratford Campus is honing digital media talent for the future.”

The City of Stratford is a proud supporter of digital media under the leadership of Mayor Dan Mathieson, and Stratford has been designated an Intelligent City for two years in a row.

"Stratford is becoming a global force in digital media and creative economies,” says Mathieson. “The Stratford Campus adds yet another element to our entrepreneurial renaissance and we look forward to witnessing and participating in the growth of the campus and this city.”

Given the city’s focus on digital media, the Stratford Campus plans to be inclusive of the community with an open-door policy for the campus and a slate of free lectures and programs available to the community.

About the University of Waterloo
In just half a century, the University of Waterloo, located at the heart of Canada’s technology hub, has become one of Canada’s leading comprehensive universities with 34,000 full- and part-time students in undergraduate and graduate programs. Waterloo, as home to the world’s largest post-secondary co-operative education program, embraces its connections to the world and encourages enterprising partnerships in learning, research and discovery. In the next decade, the university is committed to building a better future for Canada and the world by championing innovation and collaboration to create solutions relevant to the needs of today and tomorrow. For more information about Waterloo, please visit www.uwaterloo.ca.

About Waterloo Stratford Campus
The University of Waterloo Stratford Campus www.stratfordcampus.uwaterloo.ca is focused on undergraduate, graduate and executive education programs, research, commercialization and community outreach. This collaborative, strategic partnership between the City of Stratford and the University of Waterloo brings students, leading researchers, businesses and entrepreneurs together to create, examine and commercialize opportunities in the digital media space. The campus leads an evolution in learning and career preparation. Students are immersed in a rich, technology driven environment where theory and practice, science and commerce, creativity and innovation merge to forward digital media.

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