

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **HISTORIC CLASS OF 2011 GRADUATES FROM QUEST UNIVERSITY CANADA IN FIRST-EVER COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY**

*Graduates took a leap of faith four years ago to embrace the founding vision and help shape a new approach to post-secondary education in Canada*

**SQUAMISH, BC**, April 30, 2011 – Today, Quest University Canada (Quest) bestowed degrees upon 49 young men and women at the University's very first Commencement Ceremony. Hailing from Canada, Australia, Bhutan, Bulgaria, Germany, Nigeria, Uganda, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the graduates became firmly entrenched in the University's history books as its inaugural "Class of 2011". Quest, founded four years ago to provide an innovative approach to post-secondary education in Canada, is today the focus of celebration for all that has been accomplished by so many.

"These students have been our partners for four years," said David Helfand, Quest's President. "Their energy and enthusiasm, their ideas and their commitment have played a huge role in making this day possible. The dedication of their parents to this marvelous experiment, the support from our Board and our benefactors, and the tremendous spirit of collaboration among our faculty and staff have all played large parts in our success, but these students made it happen."

Quest University founder Dr. David Strangway, O.C. returned as Chancellor at the Commencement Ceremony to bestow the degree of Bachelor of Arts and Sciences upon this historic first graduating class. Well-known for his tireless commitment to pushing the boundaries of higher education in Canada, Strangway presided over the ceremony marking the realization of his vision two decades in the making.

The 49 graduating students committed to their Quest education four years ago while the school was, quite literally, still emerging from a pile of construction debris. These students and their families took an incredible leap of faith to place their trust in the vision that Dr. Strangway and Quest were advocating: *if you want to change the world, you need to change the way you learn about it.*

Graduating student Kevin Eastwood, from Kamloops, British Columbia, was chosen by his fellow students to speak on their behalf at the ceremony. "This day is bittersweet for us all. It signifies the end of an exhausting and rigorous four years, but it also means moving on from a place we've helped build and a place that has fundamentally changed us in so many ways," said Eastwood. "I believe that at the very essence of what we've learned, we as Quest graduates, are taking away a new attitude that is less common in our world - an attitude of cooperation and consensus-building. At Quest we've learned to listen and to learn from others, to realize that all opinions deserve respect and understanding, and to move forward based on consensus. Our education, both inside and outside the classroom, has promoted academic and personal growth. We have learned from each other, gained more of an international perspective, and looked at the world around us, not just at our textbooks. These are vital skills that we will take with us, and that will truly set Quest graduates apart."

The graduating students will embark upon a variety of paths following their graduation. A number of students will move on to graduate studies in education, epidemiology, economics and development, language studies, law, and outdoor education. One student has been accepted into the US Peace Corps for a two year posting to Africa, and several students have received job offers or have secured employment in their field through connections made during their experiential learning blocks. Eastwood plans to apply to grad school in the fall to study agricultural and food sustainability.

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Though there have been critics, as well as set backs along the way, today marks achievement for Quest on a number of different levels. In four short years the University, under the leadership of Dr. David Helfand and an incredible international faculty, has achieved recognition for its exceptional level of student engagement and its unique approach to education. In the 2010 National Survey of Student Engagement, Quest ranked higher than all other schools in North America.

“Our first-place ranking in the Engagement Survey, and the overwhelmingly positive reaction to our students and our program from distinguished visiting faculty who come to teach here, provide valuable external perspectives on what those of us who work at Quest know,” said Helfand. “We have created a unique and highly effective academic program that produces graduates who are skilled in communication, imbued with quantitative reasoning skills, inherently trans-disciplinary in their approach to problems, technologically literate, instinctively collaborative, and engaged in their local and global communities. We have great confidence in their future success; they will have an impact that far exceeds their numbers.”

*About Quest University Canada:*

Quest University Canada, the country's first independent, not-for-profit, secular university opened its doors in September 2007 with a vision to build a new kind of university focused on excellence in undergraduate education. Its simple philosophy – that education, in its truest sense, comes not from providing the right answers, but from learning how to ask insightful questions – has driven the development of a campus and a curriculum focused on producing broadly educated individuals with an informed perspective on the problems of the twenty-first century and the integrative abilities to address them. Quest's unique approach to learning offers all seminar classes with a maximum of 20 students, a Block-Plan style of learning where students focus on just one subject at a time for a month, unprecedented access to faculty mentors, and the ability for each student to concentrate his or her studies by posing a unique “Question” that directs the final two years of work. <http://www.questu.ca/>

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