

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HELFAND TO SERVE AS FULL-TIME PRESIDENT AT QUEST UNIVERSITY CANADA

SQUAMISH, BC, July 11, 2011 - The Board of Governors of Quest University Canada announced today that Professor David J. Helfand has agreed to serve as full-time President of the University. Helfand became a Founding Tutor at Quest when he took a leave from his faculty position at Columbia University during the Fall of 2007. For the past three years, he has led the institution on an interim basis, much of the time while commuting to New York.

"We are delighted that David has agreed to be Quest's President," said Ian Worland, Quest's Board Chair. "He is totally committed to the Quest vision, and his combination of administrative and academic leadership skills will serve us well in the coming years."

Quest University Canada, a highly innovative institution with a focus on excellence in undergraduate education, opened its doors in September 2007 as Canada's first independent, nonprofit, secular liberal arts and sciences institution. The University graduated its first class in April 2011. Its spectacular, purpose-built campus is located in the Coast Mountains halfway between Vancouver and Whistler in British Columbia.

Professor Helfand was first engaged by the founders of Quest in 2005 when they learned of his successful efforts to add science to Columbia's famed Core Curriculum. His initial commitment to the project was a one-day meeting to discuss the integration of the sciences, the humanities, the social sciences, and the arts in a balanced undergraduate education. Thenceforth, he gradually became more deeply engaged. He assisted in the hiring of Quest's inaugural faculty, and, with them, in developing the University's unique curriculum. One term of teaching at Quest convinced Helfand of the institution's bright promise.

"I have been lecturing at Columbia for a third of a century," said Helfand who has won several teaching awards there including the University-wide Presidential Award, "but I feel I only began truly teaching when I came to Quest. Here, the students, the faculty, the staff, the architecture, and the institution's organization are all focused on one goal: providing a life-changing education that will produce graduates who are international in outlook, skilled in communication, imbued with quantitative reasoning abilities, inherently trans-disciplinary in their approach to problems, technologically literate, instinctively collaborative, and engaged in their local and global communities."

There is independent evidence that suggest these lofty goals are being met at Quest. In the 2010 National Survey of Student Engagement, a decade-old instrument designed to measure the levels of academic challenge and student engagement for undergraduates, Quest was ranked number one in North America.

More...

Helfand received the Bachelor of Arts degree from Amherst College in 1973. He continued his education in Amherst at the University of Massachusetts with his advisor, Joseph Taylor, the 1993 Nobel Laureate in Physics; he received the PhD in 1977 and moved directly to Columbia University in New York, first as a postdoctoral research fellow and, for the last 33 years, as a faculty member in the Departments of Physics and Astronomy. At Columbia, he served as Chair of the Department of Astronomy as well as co-Director of the Columbia Astrophysics Laboratory for the majority of the years between 1985 and June 2011.

This year, Helfand was elected President of the American Astronomical Society, the professional organization of astronomers, astrophysicists and planetary scientists in North America, a post he will hold concurrently with his appointment at Quest.

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/>

Media contact:

Christina Moore, 604-848-8251

christina@reddoorcommunications.ca