



MEDIA RELEASE

March 31, 2010

Donation pushes Centre fundraising campaign over \$1.45M

PENTICTON, B.C. - A \$150,000 donation from the BC Wine Information Society has pushed the \$5M Centre of Excellence fundraising campaign over the \$1.4 million mark. The Society announced its gift at a special celebration today.

"This is an extraordinary gift from an extraordinary group of people," according to Okanagan College president, Jim Hamilton. "The Society has proven once again that they are committed to doing what is best for the community. Their donation will go a long way in supporting our students by creating study spaces, recreational facilities and providing the latest in equipment and technology."

BC Wine Information Society Board President, Keith Bevington, says the Society's donation reflects the importance it places on the College and in particular, what the Centre of Excellence will bring to the area.

"The Centre of Excellence will increase the opportunities for more people to study and stay in the area. The College's viticulture program has already proven to be an enormous asset and the new programs offered through the Centre will benefit even more businesses."

Established in 1996, the Society operates the VQA Wine Shop, the first VQA store in BC, located in the Penticton & Wine Country Visitors Information Centre and returns the profits to the community for wine education and awareness. It also promotes BC wines and wine tourism in the Okanagan. In 2006, the Society established two College awards and today it presented its Bursary Award, given to a full time student entering the Viticulture Certificate Program at the Penticton campus, to Nick Thompson of Penticton. Its Scholarship Fund is awarded to a student who has completed their studies in the Winery Assistant Certificate Program at the Penticton campus.

The Society's donation to the Centre of Excellence fundraising campaign will help create more opportunities for more students through expanded and new programs. The additional space provided through the Centre opens the door for more than 500 new students to study and train in the South Okanagan while surrounded by the encouragement and support of family and friends. It is anticipated that when they graduate, most will continue living in the area, boosting the economy and increasing business opportunities.

Centre of Excellence fundraising campaign chair, Jim Henderson, calls the Centre a showcase and says it already has boosted the area's profile.

"Our fundraising campaign is aimed at the latest technology that will take the Centre to the next level in green construction, energy conservation and sustainability," said Henderson. "Our

graduates will be job ready for the marketplace and will use their education to build and create new business opportunities in fields that are becoming increasingly important in our world.”

The Centre of Excellence is on budget and scheduled for completion in 2011 at a cost of \$28 million. The Federal and Provincial governments supported the initiative with \$23 million in funding, \$13 million and \$9.1 million respectively, through their Knowledge Infrastructure Program. The College has committed to raising the remaining \$5 million through its fundraising campaign.

With one year left in the fundraising campaign, the eleven-member Centre of Excellence campaign executive committee is aggressively seeking donations to hit the \$5M total. For more information and to donate visit: www.okanagan.bc.ca/centreofexcellence or call 1-888-650-6968.

-30-

For more information please contact:
Donna Lomas, Regional Dean, South Okanagan Similkameen
Okanagan College
250-492-4305, ext. 3216