

September 9, 2016

Dear Western students, faculty and staff colleagues,

Welcome to the 2016-17 academic year! I hope you enjoyed your summer and that you are looking forward to the opportunities and challenges the new academic year will bring.

Let me first extend a warm welcome to our 5,300 first-year undergraduate class (the largest in Western's history) who have arrived at Western and are settling into their new home on campus and in the broader community. For the past several years our incoming classes have laid claim to having the highest average entering grade in Ontario and once again our newest cohort will rank among the best and brightest.

Some other interesting facts about this year's student body include that we have 600 undergraduates who come to us from countries outside Canada, and 500 who hail from Canadian cities and towns outside Ontario. Add to that another 1,250 international graduate students and 190 international postdoctoral scholars, and it's evident that Western is becoming one of the most diverse academic communities in Ontario. To one and all of our more than 32,000 students on main campus (and 6,000 more at Huron, Brescia and King's), I wish you my very best for success in your studies and extracurricular activities.

Second, I want to highlight some very exciting news announced earlier this week in Waterloo by Minister of Science Kirsty Duncan and celebrated here in London with MPs Peter Fragiskatos and Kate Young. We were thrilled to learn that Western's "BrainsCan" initiative has been awarded a \$66-million grant from the Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF) — the largest research grant ever received in Western's history — providing a significant boost to our world-class strength in cognitive neuroscience and imaging.

In conjunction with this great news, we were also delighted to announce a partnership with researchers at McGill University who also received CFREF funding. This partnership ushers in a new era of collaboration between scholars from two great Canadian research universities, leveraging our institutions' complementary expertise to better understand disorders such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, traumatic brain injury, and schizophrenia. The Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR) is also a partner in this initiative. Working together with McGill and CIFAR we'll become a research powerhouse in the world of brain research.

Led by Professors Adrian Owen and Lisa Saksida as Co-Scientific Directors, BrainsCAN's goal is to reduce the burden of brain disorders affecting nearly 3.6 million Canadians, diminishing quality of life and creating an enormous burden on society and on our health-care system. Neurological and psychiatric disorders together account for \$22.7 billion per year in health-care costs in Canada.

Cognitive neuroscience and neuroimaging at Western — which includes the Brain & Mind Institute and Centre for Functional & Metabolic Mapping — involves researchers from Faculties across our campus. With most of these researchers being jointly appointed in at least two Departments in different Faculties, BrainsCan is one of the most scientifically diverse research groups working in cognitive neuroscience and neuroimaging in the world.

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This investment recognizes the excellence of the world-class research happening here at Western and the merits of our strategic, multidisciplinary approach to addressing complex global problems. We are extremely grateful to the Government of Canada for its \$150-million total investment at Western and McGill into this important field of science, which sends an important signal that neuroscience is a priority area of research for our country and the world.

I want to extend my heartiest congratulations to the many faculty and staff colleagues across campus who helped to conceive the idea for BrainsCan, who helped assemble our winning submission to CFREF, and who will participate in the initiative's future success. For more information on BrainsCan, I encourage you to visit <http://uwo.ca/brainscan/index.html>

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amit". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a long horizontal stroke at the end of the word.

Amit Chakma
President & Vice-Chancellor