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## **U of L research experience prepares alumnus for PhD studies at prestigious University of Cambridge**

This October, Sam Woodman (BSc '15) will be attending lectures at the University of Cambridge just like Stephen Hawking, Charles Darwin, Isaac Newton and famous funnyman, John Cleese, have done before him.

After securing acceptance into a three-year doctoral program at Cambridge, one of the world's oldest universities located in Cambridge, England, Woodman applied for every scholarship he could find. A Cambridge education comes at a significant cost, roughly \$70,000 for tuition and living expenses per year. Up until about a month ago, he thought he'd have to shelve his plans because none of the scholarships came through. Then he learned he'd been awarded the William and Margaret Brown Scholarship, which will cover the costs of his entire PhD program. The scholarship is awarded to a Canadian PhD applicant in the fields of engineering, natural sciences or physical sciences.

"It came out of the sky. I read the email five or six times because I wanted to make sure I read it correctly. It was quite a shock," he says.

Woodman graduated from Catholic Central High School in 2011 and spent the summer working as a research assistant with Dr. Stewart Rood, U of L biology professor. He'd started his research career the summer before when he participated in the Heritage Youth Researcher Summer Program, which gave him the opportunity to learn and conduct research in the Canadian Centre for Behavioural Neuroscience.

All through high school, Woodman enjoyed the sciences and his interest in plants, animals and the environment led him to study environmental science at the U of L. Alongside his studies, Woodman continued to build his research resume every summer. He's a three-time recipient of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council's Undergraduate Student Research Award.

Before setting foot on the Cambridge campus, Woodman hopes to get a head start on some field work for his PhD by conducting research in Sudbury, Ont.

“Broadly speaking, my interest is in terrestrial-aquatic linkages, or how changes in the forests in riparian areas impact the aquatic system,” he says.

Woodman wants to examine how land disturbances by insects or invertebrates affects how nutrients enter and are processed in the aquatic system. For example, clear cutting eradicates leaves that would have fallen into a river, thereby decreasing the organic matter that could subsidize the food web. Woodman is particularly interested in the effects of an outbreak of gypsy moths, which can defoliate many trees.

Since earning an honours bachelor of science in 2015 (great distinction) and the Faculty of Arts and Science Gold Medal, he’s worked in research at the U of L and built up enough experience to qualify him for entry into a doctoral program at Cambridge. He’s studied plant physiology with Rood, looked at the effects of pharmaceuticals in the water on the behaviour of crayfish with Dr. Greg Pyle, studied riparian ecology under Dr. Trent Hoover and examined the behaviour of [zombie ants](#) with Dr. Cam Goater.

“This University, given its size, is fantastic for getting students involved in academia and research if they want to,” says Woodman. “I’ve been exceptionally lucky but there is the opportunity, if you are a keen student and you’re invested and interested, to work under a professor conducting research, be it an independent or applied study or honours thesis. The U of L has given me and many other students a head start on research and I wholeheartedly believe that it’s my research experience that has allowed me to get accepted to Cambridge.”

To view online: [U of L research experience prepares alumnus for PhD studies at prestigious University of Cambridge](#)

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