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Alberta RNA Research and Training Institute welcomes Gairdner Award winner for public lectures

Dr. Rodolphe Barrangou will be available for media interviews Monday, Nov. 14 at 11:15 a.m. in room E868

The Alberta RNA Research and Training Institute (ARRTI) is delighted to host Dr. Rodolphe Barrangou, recipient of the 2016 Canada Gairdner International Award, for a public speaker event on Monday, Nov. 14, 2016.

This is the fourth consecutive year that the University has had the opportunity to partner with the Canada Gairdner Foundation, bringing to campus some of the world's top research minds.



“The Canada Gairdner Awards are Canada’s most prestigious medical awards, exceeded in prestige by only a few international science awards, including the Nobel Prize in Medicine,” says University of Lethbridge Vice-President (Research) Dr. Erasmus Okine. “We’re thrilled to be able to bring these people to campus to speak about their research and how they are solving some of the world’s most pressing medical questions.”

Barrangou, an Associate Professor in the Department of Food, Bioprocessing and Nutrition Sciences at North Carolina State University, is renowned for his work in establishing and characterizing the CRISPR-Cas bacterial immune defense system.

“Through his research, Dr. Barrangou has paved the way for numerous exciting applications ranging from medicine to agriculture and basic research using so called gene scissors,” explains Dr. Hans-Joachim Wieden, director of ARRTI. “The CRISPR-Cas system allows for the precise and fast manipulation of genetic material with the long-term potential to cure genetic diseases. Already, this system has initiated a revolution in generating new and better crops and testing the function of numerous genes in plants and animals in the research lab. CRISPR-Cas system technology has already made a huge impact on the global economy and it was developed from basic research that took place only a decade ago.”

During his two-day visit to southern Alberta, Barrangou will share his scientific insight through lectures at the University of Lethbridge and the Agriculture and Agri-Food Research Centre. Monday's lecture at the U of L is at 1 p.m. in the Students' Union Ballroom (SU300B) and is open to the public. Barrangou will explain his research as well as the far-reaching implications of these CRISPR-Cas systems, or gene scissors, for society.

Barrangou will also seek to inspire the next generation of young scientists by presenting a lecture, *The Many Hats Scientists Wear*, to students at Lethbridge Collegiate Institute and École La Vérendrye, in English and French respectively.

"It is an important responsibility of the Gairdner Award winners to share their personal career story and passion for research with youth," says Dr. Ute Kothe, faculty supervisor of the University's Let's Talk Science Program. "Thereby, the students are getting inspired to pursue scientific careers and learn to appreciate the far-reaching impact of scientific discoveries."

Barrangou's busy schedule will also see him join ARRTI researchers for a scientific symposium on Tuesday, Nov. 15. Barrangou will share his expertise and career advice with U of L student researchers who are working in related fields. The symposium has a special focus on young investigators and is supported by the Alberta Epigenetics Network.

"RNA is a central molecule in all cells. Dr. Barrangou's work exemplifies the importance of RNA research that can lead to innovations in medicine, agriculture and biotechnology," says Wieden. "We are proud to have a strong RNA research cluster with ARRTI at the University of Lethbridge."

The Canada Gairdner Awards are Canada's most prestigious medical award, recognizing and celebrating the research of the world's best and brightest biomedical researchers. Established in 1959, more than 320 Canada Gairdner International Awards have been given to scientists from 15 countries; of these recipients, 83 have subsequently won the Nobel Prize in Medicine.

To view online: <http://www.uleth.ca/unews/article/alberta-rna-research-and-training-institute-welcomes-gairdner-award-winner-public-lectures>

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