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University of Lethbridge appoints Dr. Erasmus Okine as new Vice-President (Research)

One of the country's top agricultural researchers and a proven cultivator of undergraduate and graduate student research is coming to the University of Lethbridge.

Dr. Erasmus Okine is the University's new Vice-President (Research) after being approved by the U of L's Board of Governors earlier today. His appointment is effective July 1, 2015.

Okine joins the University of Lethbridge from the University of Alberta, where he has served most recently in a dual capacity as the Associate Vice-President (Research) and Associate Vice-President (Academic).

"We are very excited to have Dr. Okine join our leadership team," says University of Lethbridge President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Mike Mahon. "As the University has evolved from its primarily undergraduate focus to that of a comprehensive academic and research institution, the leadership of our Vice-President (Research) has been essential. Dr. Okine's proven strengths will be a great addition to our team and help us continue to move forward."

Okine's research interests focus on topics relevant to Canadian agriculture, including: elucidating the roles of the key enzymes involved in marbling and synthesis of subcutaneous adipose tissue in beef cattle; providing insights into mechanisms controlling glucose and starch utilization for increased animal productivity; and residual feed intake (RFI), methane emission and mitigation in the ruminant animal, especially in beef cattle.

"One of the main factors that really makes me want to come to Lethbridge is the leadership team that is in place," says Okine. "The visionary leadership the University has is incredible, and the fact the U of L has a very collaborative and multi-disciplinary research focus is also a very attractive feature."

Okine is excited about the development of the Destination Project and its focus as a hub for scientific discovery.

“The fact that the campus is committed to the Destination Project, and how it involves community engagement, undergraduate and graduate research opportunities as well as commercialization and knowledge transfer, for me, it makes the University of Lethbridge the place to be.”

A native of Ghana, Okine completed his Bachelor of Science (1978) and Master of Science (1981) in Animal Science at the University of Ghana in Legon, followed by his PhD (1990) at the University of Alberta. He served as a lecturer at the University of Ghana from 1983 to 1985, after which Okine came to Edmonton to complete his PhD under Professor Gary Mathison in Animal Nutrition and Digestive Physiology. From 1990 to 1994 he was a sessional lecturer/research associate and postdoctoral fellow in what is now the U of A’s Department of Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Science (AFNS). Okine then served as a senior research scientist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development at the Lacombe Research Centre from 1994 to 2001. He joined the University of Alberta as an associate professor and Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development Chair in Ruminant Nutrition and Metabolism in AFNS in 2001, was promoted to full professor in 2007, and he served as Chair of the department from 2005 to 2014.

Okine has received a number of awards over the course of his career, including the Alberta Premier’s Silver Award for Excellence in Agricultural Research (2000), being named a Fellow of the Canadian Society of Animal Science in 2009 and Fellow of the International College of Nutrition (2006).

Having seen the tremendous growth in research at the U of L from afar, Okine is enthused about the opportunity to take the University to another level. The recent launch of AGILITY is another example of the U of L moving forward, and Okine looks forward to contributing to the initiative.

“I believe the University of Lethbridge is in a position to be relevant, to be responsive and to further increase its reputation,” he says. “What has been achieved so far has been incredible. Working to expand research through innovation and entrepreneurship will become one of my priorities and something I’m really excited about.”

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