

Media Release

Olds College Turfgrass Research Program Receives \$2.3 Million Grant

Olds, Alberta, April 28, 2014 – The turfgrass research program within the Olds College Centre for Innovation (OCCI) has been awarded a \$2.3 million grant over 5 years through the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC).

OCCI submitted a proposal entitled ‘Sustainable Turfgrass Management in Canadian Prairie Provinces’, along with key stakeholders, Canadian Turfgrass Research Foundation, Eagle Lake Turf Farms Ltd., Alberta Golf Superintendents Association, City of Lethbridge, Alberta Turfgrass Research Foundation, LANTA- Sod Growers commodity Group, Manderley Turf Products, and Glendale Golf and Country Club. This group submitted the proposal as part of the Community College Innovation Program Grant (CCIP) and were recently notified of the successful application.

“Olds College continues to develop and adapt to the ever-changing demand from the marketplace and this funding helps to cement Olds College as the leader in turfgrass research and education,” says Tanya McDonald, Associate Vice President of Research and Learning Enterprises.

Daryl Asher, President of the Alberta Turfgrass Research Foundation (ATRF) adds, “This is tremendous news! We will now be able to move forward on our plans to expand our research program in Alberta and western Canada.” The ATRF has been a partner with Olds College since 1989 and has been the major industry supporter of turfgrass research.

“One of the reasons for the success of this grant was the high level of industry support,” stated Asher. “We were able to secure more than \$100,000 from industry in year one and we expect that this will grow over the next five years.”

As a result of this grant, one of the first tasks will be to begin a search for scientific staff that includes a lead scientist and a research associate. Both positions will require individuals that have considerable knowledge of the challenges faced by growers in western Canada. They will join instructors, Dr. Darrell Tompkins, Dr. Ken Fry, Jason Pick and Research Manager, Jim Ross, as part of the research team. This group is charged with the responsibility of integrating student research projects into the turfgrass curriculum at Olds College.

The focus of the research will be on: strategies to reduce winter injury, biotic stress management in sod, recreational turf and lawns, species/biotype selection for alternative turf uses, and water quality and conservation. This research grant will allow for significant expansion of the research that is already taking place in these areas.

“The goal of the research program has always been to develop information on emerging issues for the turfgrass industry,” added Ross. “This funding will contribute to a significant expansion of our research and this information will be passed on, not only to the industry, but also to students within the turfgrass program.”

Some of the grant funding has already been received and the planning and implementation of the various research projects will take place over the next few months.

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