



News Release

November 29, 2005

U of G Grad Named Rhodes Scholar

Arani Kajenthira, a 2005 engineering graduate of the University of Guelph, has won a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship to pursue graduate studies in earth sciences at the University of Oxford.

She is one of two students from Ontario — and 11 nationwide — to receive a Rhodes Scholarship this year. The award, which covers tuition, fees and provides a living allowance, is worth about \$35,000 US per year.

“I have always wanted to go to Oxford; it’s been a dream of mine since high school,” Kajenthira said. “I just didn’t think it would ever be financially feasible.”

President Alastair Summerlee said he is “delighted for Arani. This will make her dream of studying at Oxford a reality. She will be an excellent ambassador for the Rhodes Scholarship program, the University of Guelph and Canada. The Rhodes Scholarship committee has recognized and rewarded the talents of a remarkable young person.”

Kajenthira hopes her graduate work in earth sciences will lead to her developing cost-effective remediation technology to remove contaminants from soil and groundwater in Third-World countries. She became interested in the subject while conducting a research project as a U of G student with Engineers Without Borders. “I was working on introducing a clean water supply to a rural community in Tanzania,” she said. “It really opened my eyes.”

Her long-term career goal is to work as a liaison between industry and non-governmental organizations. “I’d like to connect the experience of people in industry with the passion and contacts that NGOs have. We need to bring them together to create a greater impact.”

Kajenthira is currently a staff scientist with GeoSyntec Consultants, performing environmental field sampling, data analysis and engineering and earth science calculations.

While a U of G student, she won prestigious Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council awards in 2004 and 2005 that allowed her to work in research laboratories in the Department of Plant Agriculture. There she collaborated with scientists from the California Institute of Technology to study the behaviour of E. Coli bacteria. She also expanded on research she began in 2002 on the role of hormones in wound-induced stem cell regeneration. In 2003, she worked at Mount Sinai Hospital as a Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute summer intern conducting research on the effect of antibiotics on the development of osteoarthritis.

The recipient of a U of G entrance scholarship and an Ontario Aiming for the Top Tuition Scholarship, Kajenthira was on the dean’s list her entire career at Guelph. She was an active member of Women in Science and Engineering, Engineers Without Borders, the National Agriculture and Biotechnology Council, and Professional Engineers of Ontario. She also served as an academic cluster leader, mentoring a group of 20 first-year engineering students, and volunteered for Habitat for Humanity, the YWCA, Relay for Life, the Dunara Dufferin-Wellington Homes for Psychiatric Rehabilitation and the Onward Willow Centre.

Students from about 20 countries compete annually for 90 Rhodes Scholarships. Created in 1902 and named for Cecil Rhodes, the scholarships recognize “high academic achievement, integrity of character, a spirit of unselfishness, respect for others, potential leadership and physical vigour.”

Past recipients have included country presidents, Supreme Court justices, poets, writers, scholars, politicians, Olympic athletes and Nobel Peace Prize winners. Among them are former Canadian governor general Roland Michener; astronomer Edwin Hubble; Fulbright Fellowship founder J. William Fulbright; actor Kris Kristofferson; former U.S. president Bill Clinton; feminist social critic Naomi Wolf; Canadian commentator Rex Murphy; and former Ontario premier Bob Rae.

For media questions, contact Communications and Public Affairs: Lori Bona Hunt, (519) 824-4120, Ext. 53338, or Rebecca Kendall, (519) 824-4120, Ext. 56982.