

THE U OF M PUTS DOWN ITS FOOT ON THE LOSS OF RIVERBANKS

EVELYN KAYAGA

Two professors and a graduate student from the University of Manitoba are heading a research project aimed at stabilizing the riverbanks in Winnipeg more effectively.

The history of the city's riverbanks has shown that its clay soils, precipitation and water movement have resulted in unstable sections, which in turn has led to loss of private and public property.

The research project is headed by Marolo Alfaro and James Blatz, associate professors in the department of civil engineering. Blatz is also the associate head of the department. The two are working with Kendall Thiessen, a graduate student in civil engineering.

"We are excited to do research in which all parties are involved. We have policy-makers, city consulting engineers, designers, contractors, site and academics researchers," said Alfaro.

In the current stage of the proj-

ect, rock-fill columns attached with instrumentation have been installed on a section of riverbank on city property with the aim of monitoring how rock-fill columns perform under loading in real time.

Initial research for the project was done a couple years ago. Laboratory testing and numerical modeling were performed on different types of material for rock-fill and clay samples to study their strength, according to Alfaro.

Because of the combination of laboratory and field tests "engineers will be able to predict more accurately the performance of rock-fill columns in future design of riverbanks," said Alfaro.

In addition, loss of habitats will be more effectively controlled, and the safety of persons and property will be upheld.

Don Kingerski, a city engineer and riverbank manager, said, "Monitoring of a full-scale test on rock-fill columns to stabilize riverbanks may possibly be one of the first

in Canada and the rest of the world."

The technology of using rock-filled columns to stabilize riverbanks has been in use for a number of years, but it has not always been effective in stabilizing the city's riverbanks. Kingerski noted that the current cost of stabilizing city property is estimated at about \$150 million.

The projects findings are expected to produce more cost-effective methods of stabilizing riverbanks.

The total amount of funding for this research project is \$225,000, with the city contributing \$80,000 and three consultants providing the rest, according to Kingerski.

Kingerski said the city is "looking forward to the results of the research" as previous partnerships have derived "a lot of public benefits."

He added, "The City of Winnipeg has partnered with the University of Manitoba on a number of research projects dating back to the mid-'80s and have been very happy with the partnership."

The U of M researchers hope that their findings will be implemented in the province, Canada and the world, not just for riverbank stabilization, but also other applications like highway slope construction.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KENDALL THIESSEN

TWO NEW AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES OPEN FOR U OF M EXCHANGE STUDENTS

JOANNA BHASKARAN, STAFF

The U of M has added two new student exchanges at one of its most popular destinations: Australia.

Beginning in September, U of M students can exchange to University of Sydney and Flinders University, in addition to four other Australian universities.

Robin Dirks, student mobility and exchange co-ordinator for the university, said that, already in 2007-08, 13 U of M students enrolled in student exchanges in Australia. In the 2006-07 school year, eight students chose to study at the partner institutions.

"The universities are popular because of the language component and they are also, for the most part, larger universities, so there are more courses to choose from. The weather is also a factor that most students consider, and also it's not a huge culture shock."

Students in the Faculty of Arts can participate in an International Studies BA at the University of Sydney. At Flinders University, a university-wide exchange means that U of M students can transfer into any faculty or school.

There will be more exchange agreements to come because U of M president Emöke Szathmáry recently signed an additional four memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with the vice-chancellors of the University of Adelaide, University of South Australia, Monash University and Flinders University, which are all in Australia. Szathmáry attended the trade mission in Australia in February along with Premier Gary Doer.

The MOUs, according to the president in her bulletin report, mark the establishment of formal relationships between the institutions that will help "facilitate the undertaking

of joint research and the exchange of professors and students."

Robert Kerr, vice-president (academic) and provost, visited a number of Australian institutions in the fall of 2006 with Christine Blais, director of University 1, and Rhonda Friesen, co-ordinator from the Office of International Relations for international co-operation agreement, to evaluate the suitability of establishing exchange programs with the institutions.

The province of Manitoba and the Australian states of South Australia and Victoria signed MOUs in 2006. Recently, exchanges between the two countries have been encouraged on a government level, as the Province of Manitoba and the state of South Australia have agreed to provide \$1.8 million over a three-year period to support research and exchanges between the two countries.

This funding will primarily encourage exchanges for graduate students, according to Kerr.

Choosing the universities to partner with depends on many factors, Kerr said. The factors include whether the specific university is willing to invest some funds into the exchange, which faculties at both universities could benefit from the exchanges, and whether there is a need at that institution for exchange partners.

"The University of Manitoba has historic relations with a couple of Australian universities, and, now that the MOUs have been signed, details have to be worked out between the faculties," Kerr added.

Kerr went to say that the U of M "should see the establishment of some more exchange programs about 18 months from now."

The specific programs are still undergoing planning, so Kerr said that the specific faculties involved have not yet been decided.



WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR.

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