

## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

- TO:** Assignment Editors/News Directors
- WHAT:** St. Mary's graduates will celebrate their remarkable accomplishments with family, friends, faculty and staff on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at St. Mary's Convocation held at St. Mary's Cathedral.
- WHERE:** St. Mary's Cathedral, 219 18 Avenue SW, Calgary, Alberta
- WHEN:** **Friday, June 13, 2014, Ceremony at 2:00pm**
- Why:** A total of 90 St. Mary's University College graduates will receive university degrees at a convocation ceremony at St. Mary's Cathedral on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Degrees will be conferred by the university's Chancellor, His Excellency Most Reverend Frederick Henry, Bishop of Calgary.

"Graduation is arguably one of the most exciting days in a person's life, and we are delighted to be celebrating this day with a record number of St. Mary's University College graduates," said Dr Gerry Turcotte, President of St. Mary's University College. "Convocation is a day where we celebrate the achievement of our students, but also where families have a chance to congratulate their sons and daughters, and where we also have an opportunity to thank the great many professors who have worked so hard to provide a memorable educational experience. To all of them I say, 'Thank You!'"

St. Mary's is proud to name Mr. Joseph Ladouceur as this year's Honorary Fellow. Mr. Ladouceur is the eleventh recipient of this designation which recognizes individuals for exemplifying the values, principles and vision of St. Mary's University College. Mr. Ladouceur's involvement with the university began in 1996, and he occupied many voluntary roles in the organization over the years including Treasurer and Vice-Chair. He became Chair of the Board of Governors in 2005, a position which he held for seven years.

"I am extremely pleased to support this honour to our longtime St. Mary's Board of Governors Chair, someone who has helped to build our wonderful institution over more than a decade of service," said Dr. Turcotte. "Mr. Ladouceur is a person of vision, of impeccable moral character, and of savvy intellect which has helped us to grow as a university on many fronts. On a personal note, Mr. Ladouceur not only became a close personal friend, but he was also the Board Chair at the time I was recruited for this position. So I am grateful to him on many levels."

Each year, the graduating student with the highest cumulative Grade Point Average is awarded the Gold Medal. This year, Aaron Ellsworth will be awarded the Gold Medal during the Convocation ceremony. Aaron is graduating with a Bachelor of Arts with a Major in English, and a perfect 4.0 GPA. Aaron attributes his outstanding academic success to St. Mary's small, caring environment. At the age of fifteen, Aaron was diagnosed with severe depression and anxiety. The challenges he faced pursuing an academic career while struggling with a mental illness were often debilitating. The biggest struggle he faced was coping with his negative view of himself. However, it was through the supportive and encouraging relationships with his professors, and the close-knit community of St. Mary's students, that he began to perceive himself the way his professors and classmates do: intelligent, capable and compassionate. "The faculty and staff at St. Mary's create an environment of support and encouragement, and the students flesh it out," said Aaron.

Aaron will be continuing his academic journey this fall when he begins studies towards a Master's Degree in English. He wants to continue on to obtain his PhD and one day become an English Professor, so that he too can support future students' academic careers, the way he was supported at St. Mary's.

St. Mary's began offering degrees in 2004 and is a proud member of the Campus Alberta system, offering affordable and fully accredited degrees in Liberal Arts and Education, as well as University transfer programs in Science and Business.

St. Mary's is a dynamic university with competitive tuition rates, including free on campus parking, and degrees that are fully accredited by the Government of Alberta. Students who attend St. Mary's receive high quality teaching in small classes with personalized attention where professors know them by name.

Dr. Turcotte and Aaron Ellsworth will be available for interviews.

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