

Royal Society celebrates five Western scholars

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New Royal Society of Canada honours go to Western scholars Lisa Saksida, Jing (Jin) Jiang, Peter Jaffe, Slobodan Simonovic and Jessica Grahn.

For many Canadian scholars, being elected into the Royal Society of Canada is a crowning achievement of their careers.

To neuroscientist Lisa Saksida – newly honoured into the into RSC, along with four other Western scholars – it is also a reminder of the teamwork that takes place in any successful research program, and that their collective work has only just started.

“These people inspire me every day, and make it clear to me that, although it may not always be apparent, the real breakthroughs are achieved by diverse and collaborative teams,” she said.

Saksida and her team are deciphering how healthy human brains work and figuring out what is happening when those brains don't work as well in people with, for example, Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease.

"What I'm trying to understand is how different aspects of cognition – for example, learning, memory or attention – are achieved by the brain," said Saksida, the Canada Research Chair in Translational Cognitive Neuroscience and scientific director at BrainsCAN.



Professor Lisa Saksida is a world leader in neuroscience research.

"If we can understand the neurobiology underlying cognition in a healthy brain, we can apply that knowledge to understand the neurobiology of a brain where there is impaired cognition, which will help us eventually to develop badly needed new treatments for brain disorders."

Saksida, also a professor of physiology and pharmacology at Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry and a scientist at Robarts Research, has made many theoretical and experimental contributions to understanding the neurobiological basis of cognition. She is a world pioneer in developing touchscreen technology that helps researchers test cognition in mouse models of brain disease in a way that is relevant to human patients.

The work has led to Saksida's being named a fellow of the RSC, commonly recognized as the country's top honour in the arts, humanities and sciences. She is joined in receiving the honour alongside long-time Western researchers Peter Jaffe, Jin (Jing) Jiang and Slobodan Simonovic.

Jessica Grahn was elected to the society's College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists, which represents the next generation of excellence in Canada.

Founded in 1882, the RSC recognizes research and scholarly excellence, advises governments and organizations and promotes a culture of knowledge and innovation in Canada and with other national academies around the world.

The announcement brings Western's all-time total to 75 Fellows, including 20 during the past five years. An additional 11 Western researchers have been named to the College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists during the same timeframe.

"We are extremely proud of the Royal Society of Canada's recognition of research and scholarly excellence at Western," said Vice-President (Research), Lesley Rigg. "It's a testament to sustained impact and reflects our growing community of leaders who are actively improving our health, culture, arts, technology, and environment."

Western professors Jeremy McNeil and Joanna Quinn currently serve as presidents of the RSC and the College, respectively.

In addition to Saksida, Western's new Fellows of the Royal Society of Canada are:

PETER JAFFE

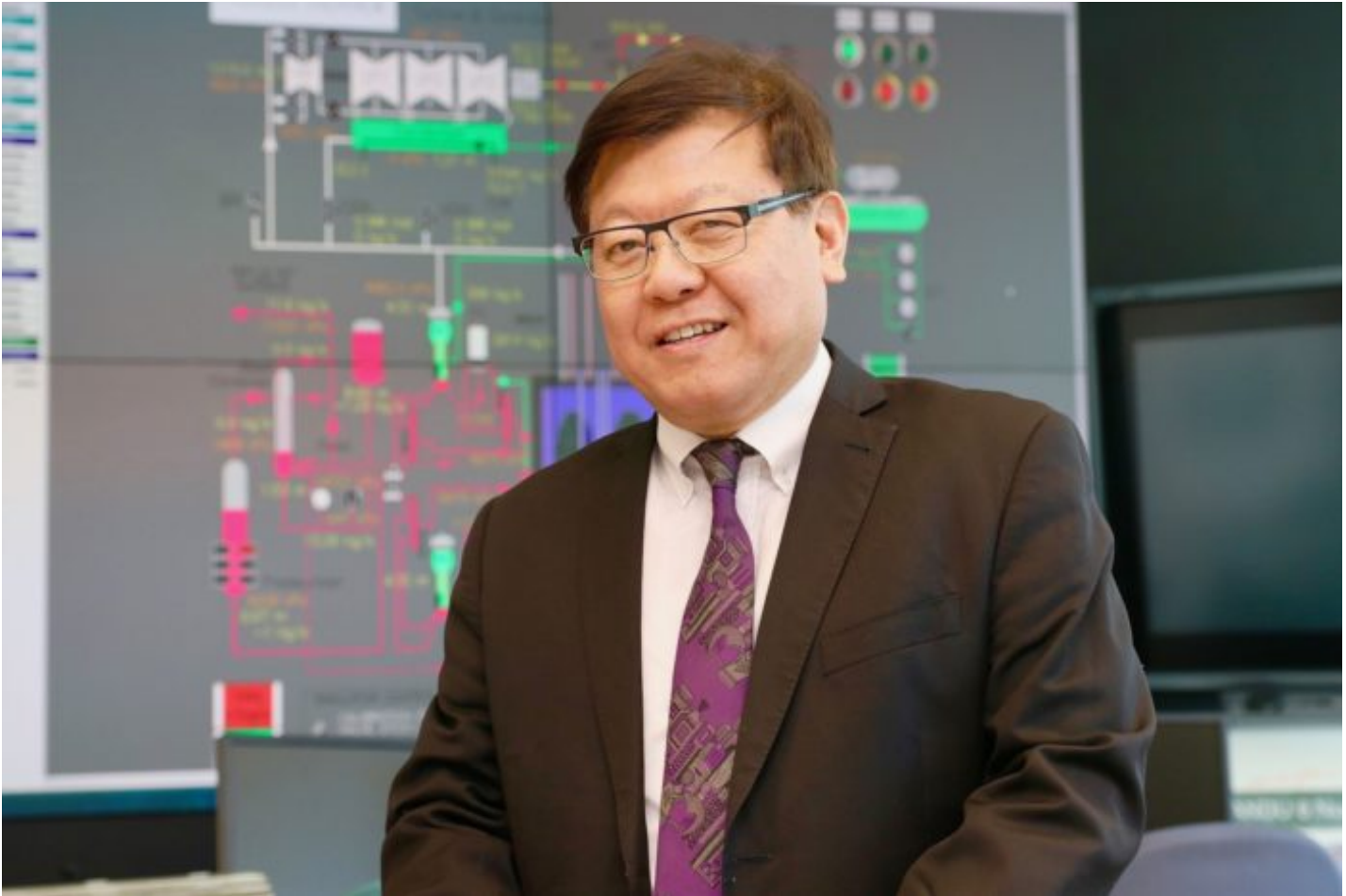


Paul Mayne // Western News

Professor Peter Jaffe is a renowned voice in research about gender-based violence.

A psychologist, professor and academic director of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women & Children, Peter Jaffe has more than 45 years of experience in research on domestic violence and its impact on women and children. Jaffe's award-winning work, recognized by the Governor General of Canada, has had great impact on research, clinical practice, government policy and on the well-being of vulnerable community members in Canada and internationally.

JING (JIN) JIANG



Engineering professor Jinn Jiang's research has improved safety measures at nuclear power plants.

A Distinguished University Professor and NSERC Senior Industrial Research Chair, Jing Jiang is an internationally renowned Canadian expert in fault-tolerant control, instrumentation/control systems for nuclear power plants and renewable energy microgrids. Jiang's pioneering works have fundamentally revolutionized approaches to achieving high reliability in safety-critical systems, safer nuclear power plants and more effective use of renewable energy. His contributions have had impact in academic communities and industry worldwide.

SLOBODAN SIMONOVIC



Special to Western News

Slobodan Simonovic is a world leader in applying systems analysis to water management.

Engineering professor Slobodan Simonovic is universally acknowledged as one of the world's leading authorities on applying systems analysis to water management. His approach has helped provide decision-makers with tools to support their sustainable management. His main research contributions include modelling risk and resilience of complex systems, for flooding in particular. His work is providing the world with tools for collaborative, industrious and just management of the Earth's water resources.

His work models everything from the simple – such as the optimal size of drainage pipes under a city street – to the intricate, such as floodplain mapping and flood resiliency for entire regions and countries. “Models are simplifications of reality,” he said. “However, I think I can brave to say they are useful to understanding the complexities of the real world and possibly improving resiliency in the real world.”

Simonovic, who has been awarded numerous industry accolades, said he is more than honoured to be elected an RSC Fellow and be recognized among the top scientists in the country.

The RSC also recognized one Western professor as a member of the College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists:

JESSICA GRAHN



Neuroscientist Jessica Grahn is a world leader in the cognitive neuroscience of music.

Jessica Grahn is a world leader in the area of cognitive neuroscience of music. She investigates why we move to rhythm and how movement and rhythm may be connected in the brain. Her brain scanning studies examine how different motor areas in the brain respond to different types of rhythm. She also examines how rhythm and music may be processed in the brains of those with dysfunction in movement areas, such as Parkinson's disease.

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