Diversity champion and earth sciences researcher honoured for contributions to science

Professor Kurt Konhauser named a fellow of the American Geological Union

By Katie Willis on August 19, 2019

Earth scientist Kurt Konhauser has been named a fellow of the American Geophysical Union (AGU), the largest geological organization in the world, in recognition for his visionary leadership and scientific excellence in the field of earth science.

"Receiving this award is a tremendous honour for me because the award is a recognition by my peers for my research over the course of my career," said Konhauser, professor in the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences and McCalla Professor. "It is very gratifying that the work of my research group, past and present, is considered valuable to the scientific community."

Konhauser’s research investigates the evolution of early life on Earth, beginning with understanding how and when our planet first became rich in oxygen. Over the last few years, he has examined banded iron formations around the world, as well as further honed techniques for his fellow scientists to study early life in ancient rocks.

"My research will continue to focus on the co-evolution of life and the environment through time, specifically understanding how oxygen first evolved on our planet and how its invention changed the conditions of Earth’s surface," said Konhauser.

**Champion for diversity**

Konhauser is also a dedicated advocate for inclusivity and diversity in the field of earth sciences. Earlier this year, he was awarded the 2019 McCalla Professorship for his work to foster connections between traditional Indigenous knowledge and earth science research. The pilot project, called the Geosciences Education Outreach Program, is designed to inspire and encourage enthusiasm about earth sciences among Indigenous students.

"Students in the Faculty of Science, and in earth sciences in particular, will benefit not only from sharing classrooms with Indigenous students and learning about their experiences, but gaining a better understanding of the importance of all peoples’ interconnectedness with the land and our shared responsibility for its stewardship," said Konhauser.

And, as founder and president of the Geobiology Society, Konhauser will continue to focus on building diversity in his field. "In this role, I have the ability to promote the work of early career researchers and foster a sense of inclusivity in my field," he said.

Congratulations, Kurt.

Source: Faculty of Science