UAlberta glaciologist awarded Killam Annual Professorship

Martin Sharp’s research on glacier-climate interactions recognized with prestigious award.

By Andrew Lyle on October 16, 2019

World-renowned glaciologist Martin Sharp has been awarded a Killam Annual Professorship, recognizing his decades-long study of glaciers—and the far-reaching implications on the ecosystems that surround them in the face of climate change.

“I’m honoured to be recognized with this award and that our team’s work resonated with the evaluation committee,” said Sharp, professor in the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences. “It means a great deal to know our contributions are being felt—and helps to bring attention to the issues our work is focused on.”

Sharp is one of eight researchers at the University of Alberta to be recognized with 2019 Killam Annual Professorships, including fellow Faculty of Science scientist Wolfgang Jaeger, professor in the Department of Chemistry.

“We’re in a period of time when glaciers around the world are changing more rapidly than they have been at any point in the time that people have been studying them,” said Sharp. “There are a lot of impacts of these changes on human populations, and it’s important to study what those changes will be and how quickly they might arise.”

Changing sea levels are a well-known and major concern around the world, but Sharp points to other challenges such as impacts on freshwater resources and the release of pollutants accumulated in glaciers.

“When glaciers melt, accumulated material is deposited into the ecosystem and has an effect on everything downstream,” said Sharp. “Irrigation-based agriculture here in Alberta is fed by glacial runoff. There are a lot of dimensions to this challenge.”

In addition to recognizing the achievements of Sharp and his team, the award will help fund new research in this area. “One of our current subjects of study is deposition of ash and smoke from wildfires on glaciers, and how that change in absorption of energy from the sun is influencing melt rates,” said Sharp. “This award gives us opportunities to further explore these questions, as well as to do new things.”

Congratulations, Martin.

Source: Faculty of Science