OTTAWA, ON (March 25, 2014) — The U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities has joined the pre-eminent global network of leading research universities from America, Europe, Asia and Australia to tackle challenges facing research-intensive universities around the world.

U15 joins the Association of American Universities (AAU), League of European Research Universities (LERU), The Russell Group, the China 9 grouping of leading Chinese universities (C9) and the Australian Group of Eight research-intensive universities (Go8) as signatories of the Hefei Statement On The Ten Characteristics Of Contemporary Research Universities. Together, these organizations make up the global network of research universities.

“Solutions to global challenges require the efforts of the best and brightest minds,” said Amit Chakma, chair of the U15 and president and vice-chancellor of Western University. “Today, Canadian research intensive universities took another step towards attracting and retaining these individuals by increasing our collaboration with universities around the world that are at the forefront of discovery and innovation.”

The U15’s inclusion in this group coincides with the government of Canada’s recent re-investments in supporting research excellence.

“Canadian research excellence pushes the frontiers of knowledge and innovation,” said Minister Ed Holder, Canada’s Minister of State (Science and Technology). “We welcome the partnership between Canada’s U15 research universities and the world’s best research universities to propel Canadian research excellence further. Our government is committed to world-leading Canadian research as demonstrated by the new Canada First Research Excellence Fund, a fund that will embrace the scientific principles of competition, independence and peer review.”

The global network was formed to tackle what research intensive universities see as the challenges facing institutions around the world. Some of its initial tasks are to:

- help universities create common metrics to determine capacity and performance for universities across the globe;
• establish a joint statement on the roles and importance of contemporary research universities; and,
• unite established groups of research-intensive universities to better engage with the global research council.

“Our invitation to join this vital global network reinforces something that we have known and celebrated for a long time: that Canadian research-intensive universities are recognized as world-class institutions,” said Feridun Hamdullahpur, vice chair of the U15 and president and vice-chancellor of the University of Waterloo. “It is critical that Canadian research-intensive universities have a strong voice amongst their global peers as we work together to find solutions to global challenges and shape the direction of funding agencies.”

The global network invited the U15 to join the organization during Feridun Hamdullahpur’s recent trip to Europe. The U15 will be represented at all future meetings of the Global Network.

“We welcome the U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities into the global network,” says Kurt Deketelaere, secretary general of LERU and coordinator of the global network of research universities. “We look forward to including the U15 in our discussions about the status of global research direction and funding. Canadian universities are recognized around the world as centres of research excellence and the Network is proud to have them on board.”

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U15 institutions undertake 80 percent of all competitive university research in Canada, rank among the world’s premier institutions, and represent a research enterprise valued at more than $5 billion annually. Together, they contribute upwards of $36 billion to the Canadian economy every year. Collectively, they produce more than 75 percent of all doctorates awarded in Canada. They help the Canadian economy to grow, and the students and faculty in our institutions generate the ideas and life-changing policies and innovation that improve lives in Canada and around the world.

The Association of American Universities is an invitation-only association of 62 top public and private research universities in the United States and Canada that employ some 680,000 staff. Federal grants total more than US$20 billion, with a further US$5 billion provided by the institutions. They enrol more than 1.1 million undergraduates and 550,000 graduate students.

The League of European Research Universities is an association of 21 leading research-intensive universities founded in 2002. It includes the universities of Barcelona, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Heidelberg, Milan, Oxford, Paris-Sud and Zurich. In total, the universities employ 55,000 academic and 55,000 professional staff and enrol more than 550,000 students. Their collective annual research budget exceeds €5 billion (US$6.5 billion).

The Russell Group represents 24 leading UK universities that are committed to maintaining the very best research, an outstanding teaching and learning experience and unrivalled links with business and the public sector.

The C9 League of Chinese Universities formed themselves in October 2009 as China’s equivalent to the US Ivy League. This followed the Chinese government’s decision in May 2009 to select the nine universities for additional funding for an initial period of three years. The universities include: Fudan, Nanjing, Peking, Shanghai Jiao Tong and Tsinghua. Collectively, the nine absorb about 10 percent of China’s R&D expenditures and generate more than 20 percent of the nation’s output of journal articles.

The Australian Group of Eight is a coalition of eight research-intensive universities that began in 1994 as an informal network of vice-chancellors and was then formally incorporated in 1999. With a total of 24,000 academics, 24,000 professional staff and a student enrolment exceeding 250,000, the group collectively has an annual research income of more than US$2.2 billion and plays a significant role in the educational and political life of the nation.