

**For immediate release**

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**Coca-Cola Foundation Provides Major Support to the Saint Mary's  
Liberated Learning Initiative**

Making education accessible to all students has not only been a hallmark of Saint Mary's since it's founding in 1802, but also for the Coca-Cola Foundation who are providing major financial support to the University's Liberated Learning Initiative (LLI).

Today, officials the Coca-Cola Bottling Company came to campus to present their \$25,825.75 (USD) gift for the LLI. This adds to the nearly \$100,000.00 (USD) in support that the Coca-Cola Foundation has provided to the Atlantic Centre of Research, Access, and Support for Students with Disabilities since the mid 1990s.

"Coca-Cola has had a long history of working with Saint Mary's University and we look forward to a continued partnership," says Jeff Brown, Sales Centre Manager for Nova Scotia for the Coca-Cola Bottling Company. "As a company we are so pleased to be associated with a cutting-edge research initiative here in Halifax. Supporting post-secondary institutions has been a long tradition with Coca-Cola and it is very exciting for us to be able to come to Saint Mary's and see first hand the positive impact we can have."

The Coca-Cola Foundation prides itself on community outreach and support for higher education world-wide.

"Saint Mary's is grateful to receive continued support from the Coca-Cola Foundation," says Dr. J. Colin Dodds, President of Saint Mary's. "It is through their generous donations that not only help students with disabilities, but also positively impacts our partner institutions in an effort to bring speech recognition into classrooms worldwide."

Saint Mary's University, via the Atlantic Centre of Research, Access, and Support for Students with Disabilities, has been pioneering the internationally acclaimed LLI since 1998. The \$1.2 million project through the McConnell Foundation uses speech recognition technology to deliver multimedia classroom lecture notes.

In Liberated Learning courses, professors use specialized speech recognition technology developed by IBM and Saint Mary's to display spoken language as text. Students access a lecture by hearing and/or reading the words in real time. After class, all students have access to speech recognition generated notes, accessible over the internet in various multimedia formats.

"Coca-Cola's support will greatly assist Saint Mary's in our continued focus on accessibility, while at the same time encourage students with disabilities to stay in school and achieve a higher level of education," says Dr. David Leitch, Director of the Atlantic Centre of Research, Access, and Support for Students with Disabilities.

As the Atlantic Centre of Support for Students with Disabilities embarks on the next generation of the LLI, objectives will include: Advancing speech recognition technology, tools and techniques; expanding the use of speech recognition in educational institutions world-wide; and educating stakeholders about the benefits of the LLI approach through comprehensive information programs.

Partner institutions involved in the development of the LLI include: IBM; Purdue University, United States; Australian National University, Australia; California State University Northridge, United States; Cambrian College, Ontario; Central TAFE College, Australia; Messiah College, United States; Murdoch University, Australia; Trent University, Ontario; University College of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia; and the University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia.

***Saint Mary's University, founded in 1802, is home to one of Canada's leading business schools, a Science Faculty widely known for its cutting-edge research, a comprehensive and innovative Arts Faculty and a new Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.***

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