

**MEDIA RELEASE**

September 30, 2016  
 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
 MR16-049

**NIC Online Science Lab Wins Silver in International Competition**

North Island College’s online science and technology lab received its second international medal this week – winning silver at the World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics Awards of Excellence in Vitória Brazil.

NIC’s Remote Web-Based Science Lab (RWSL) placed second in the Access to Learning and Employment category -- topping a vocational college in China, which placed third.

“It was a very difficult task to assess all the excellent nominations,” said Denise Amyot, World Federation Chair and President of Colleges and Institutes Canada. “North Island College’s expertise and innovation in this field is world class. It has provided educational opportunities for hundreds of students who may not otherwise have access to such high-quality science equipment and learning.”

The International Awards of Excellence were presented at the World Congress in Vitória, Espírito Santo, Brazil from September 23-25. Twenty-one recipients from Canada, the United Kingdom, China and USA were recognized for innovative and inspirational projects.

NIC’s RWSL gives any student with an internet connection access to high-quality science labs in real time.

It was invented by NIC employee Albert Balbon in 2003 to offer more relevant science education to students in the tiny coastal village of Bella Bella. Since then, the labs have grown to give postsecondary students around the world collaborative, social and affordable access to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) learning, without leaving their communities.

“My motivation has always been about finding new ways to improve students’ access to education,” said Balbon. “It doesn’t matter if students are in Alaska, Turkey or here on Vancouver Island, everyone should have the same learning opportunities.”

Balbon’s work has won international recognition before, placing second at the Wharton School of Business’ Reimagine Education Awards in 2014. He has presented the technology to the White House and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, shared programming with the European Space Agency and NASA, and received funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the US Department of Labor.

“We’re extremely proud of Albert’s innovation,” said NIC President John Bowman. “The RWSL is one of many research, technology and innovation projects under development at NIC, in partnership with local and international educators, businesses, post-secondary institutions and individuals.”

The World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics (WFCP) is an international network of colleges and national and regional associations of colleges. Members share leading-edge education strategies and best practices to increase workforce employability around the world.

Visit <http://wfcpc.org/2016/09/wfcpc-recognizes-excellence> or [www.nic.bc.ca/rwsl](http://www.nic.bc.ca/rwsl) for more information.

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Dr. Alan Davis, left, President of Kwantlen Polytechnic University received NIC’s silver award at the Awards of Excellence in Brazil from WFCP Vice President Dr. Michael Chipps. Kwantlen students will have access to NIC’s online labs in the Winter 2017 semester.