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MEDIA RELEASE

All in the family

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Photo: <http://at.sfu.ca/nXHNZs>

Growing up near the capital city of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, Michelle Chen always understood that she'd be attending SFU after high school.

Her parents, Mark Fun Chong Chen and Kathleen Swee Yin Loh, had earned their undergraduate and graduate degrees at the university in the 1970s and '80s, and expected their six children to do the same.

So when Michelle Chen crosses the convocation dais this month, the master's degree she receives will be the eighth SFU degree in her family.

Three of her sisters have already earned undergraduate SFU degrees and one of them, Joanna, will begin a master's in education this fall.

A younger sister, Kristi, began undergraduate studies at SFU last year, and Chen expects her 14-year-old brother Jonathan will also come to SFU.

Only her youngest sister, Basileia, plans to break with family tradition to study law in England.

"My parents told us stories about SFU and how much they enjoyed it and that it was a really good school for them," recalls Chen. "We didn't even apply to any other university when it was our turn."

She recalls her mom talking about her English professors, and found that several were still working in the **English department** when she arrived.

"The professors I had were all just tremendous, too," she says.

Chen and her siblings grew up speaking English at home, and now she plans to use her master's research into both rhetoric and writing pedagogy to teach first-year English literature classes in Malaysian universities.

Chen's research grew out of her interest in making English literature relevant in today's world.

"My thesis argues that one way to make English literature relevant is to re-think the process of writing," she says.

"This is where rhetoric comes in, addressing both the matter of effective and ineffective writing as well as the issue of relevance for 'real-life' readers."

Simon Fraser University is Canada's top-ranked comprehensive university and one of the top 50 universities in the world under 50 years old. With campuses in Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey, B.C., SFU engages actively with the community in its research and teaching, delivers almost 150 programs to more than 30,000 students, and has more than 120,000 alumni in

130 countries.

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