



Dr. Deborah MacLatchy, Provost and VP: Academic  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
519-884-0710 ext. 2859 or dmaclatchy@wlu.ca

Kevin Crowley, Director: Communications & Public Affairs  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
519-884-0710 ext. 3070 or kcrowley@wlu.ca

MARCH 28, 2016 | 069-16

## Laurier earns prestigious Changemaker designation

WATERLOO - Wilfrid Laurier University has been designated a Changemaker Campus by Ashoka U for being a global leader in social entrepreneurship and social innovation education.

Laurier is only the second Canadian university to join the Changemaker Campus consortium, an international network of 37 colleges and universities that support one another in making the world a better place through social entrepreneurship and social innovation.

The Changemaker designation applies to all of Laurier's locations, including the Waterloo and Brantford campuses, the Faculty of Social Work in Kitchener, and the Toronto office and weekend MBA program.

"We are honoured to receive this important designation," said Deborah MacLatchy, provost and vice-president academic. "Laurier has a long history of integrating academic excellence with experiential learning, social purpose and community engagement. These values are expressed in our university's guiding statement — *Inspiring lives of leadership and purpose* — and they align closely with the aspirations of Ashoka U."

Ashoka is a respected international association dedicated to the belief that individuals and organizations can be true "changemakers" — agents for creating positive social change in the world. Ashoka U is a global network within Ashoka that strives to foster a culture of social innovation in higher education.

The Ashoka philosophy is based on two related concepts: "social entrepreneurship" and "social innovation." Social entrepreneurship takes practices that are often associated with business — innovation, goal setting, the measurement of results, financial sustainability, and the creation of systems that can be scaled or extended — and applies them to address social needs and challenges. Social innovation involves the development of new strategies and novel approaches to addressing social needs and sustainability issues.

"Laurier seeks to foster cultural exchange and understanding between the university, the Kitchener-Waterloo and Brantford communities, and Indigenous communities," said Sarah-Marie Hopf, partnerships manager with Ashoka U. "During our site visit, we were particularly excited to learn about Laurier's innovative partnerships with the City of Brantford and community organizations. We were also very impressed with how Laurier was integrating Indigenous Issues and knowledge systems into a variety of experiential programming and physical spaces on campus."

For years, Laurier has strategically pursued an "integrated and engaged" approach to linking academic and experiential learning, while also "instilling the courage to engage and challenge the world in all its complexity," as the university's vision statement says.

... more

From co-op academic programs to community service learning, Laurier has created a wide range of innovative learning opportunities for students. Some of the more recent initiatives include:

- The LaunchPad entrepreneurship program, which is offered across all Laurier faculties and campuses and includes space at the Communitech Hub in Kitchener and on the Brantford campus. This program encourages students, faculty, staff, alumni and members of the community to collaborate and share venture-creation knowledge.
- A Social Entrepreneurship Option, which is the first Canadian undergraduate social entrepreneurship program grounded in the liberal arts.
- A Social Innovation and Venture Creation strategy to forge links between Laurier's entrepreneurship and innovation activities, and to provide structure and resources to ensure their success.
- The creation of "social innovation zones," such as the Purpose Lab, which provide collaboration space for students, faculty and staff to work together on social innovation projects.
- The Community Engagement Option, a unique partnership with The Working Centre in Kitchener that provides experiential learning opportunities designed to help students explore the concepts of social inclusion, local democracy, and community enterprise.
- A Master of Arts program in Social Justice and Community Engagement.
- A growing range of Aboriginal academic programs and support initiatives, including the innovative Master of Social Work Aboriginal Field of Study program and Indigenous "circle rooms" at both the Brantford campus and the Kitchener-based Faculty of Social Work.

Laurier owes much of its success to the generous support of external partners, including Bob and Myrna Schlegel, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, and the Wilfrid Laurier University Alumni Association, among others. Laurier's Ashoka change leader for this important project is Joanne Benham Rennick, associate professor, Global Studies (Social Entrepreneurship), director of Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship, and director of Laurier's RECODE initiative.

Laurier's longstanding commitment to social innovation can be seen in the work of many alumni – one example being Ashoka Fellow Mike Morrice. It was at Laurier that Morrice wrote the business plan for a new way of engaging industry in measuring their climate impact, setting goals to reduce it and celebrating progress made. From the halls of the Lazaridis School of Business & Economics, Sustainable Waterloo Region was formed in 2008 to bring the idea to life. Morrice was named an Ashoka Fellow in 2012 in recognition of the potential for this idea to scale, and launched Sustainability CoLab in 2014 to support organizations across Ontario to launch and grow similar innovations in their communities.

"The Changemaker Campus designation puts Laurier on the map globally on social innovation," said Morrice. "It unleashes the university's potential to be a breeding ground for the next crop of Ashoka Fellows, armed with the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit needed to inspire widespread adoption of sustainable solutions to our society's most complex problems."

More information about social entrepreneurship and social innovation can be found on the [Laurier website](#).