

Wilfrid Laurier University



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Jan. 25, 1991
04-1991

Laurier to host math and science conference for young women

Young women are being invited to attend workshops entitled Catching Some Rays, Gaining Exposure, and Looking Better All The Time: you might think they're going to hear about typical teenage interests....

Instead, participants will explore cosmic and gamma rays, photography, computer imaging, and 15 other topics from the sciences.

wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo will host a three-day conference from May 22 to 24 to encourage more young women to pursue advanced studies in mathematics, science, or technology. The event is called PROWIS '91, which stands for Promoting women in Science.

The university is now inviting applications from young women in Grade 10 at 120 selected high schools in the counties of Brant, Dufferin, Oxford, Perth, and Wellington; and the regions of Halton, Peel, and Waterloo.

Forty will have the opportunity to become better acquainted with careers and research in science and mathematics through workshops presented by WLU faculty.

Dr. Rick Elliott, WLU's assistant dean of arts and science, said there is a great need to encourage more young women to continue their studies in science and mathematics.

"We want to show them the possibilities of science and help them discover their own potential," Elliott said of those who will be conference participants. "We want them to meet women who are making dynamic contributions in these fields."

During a banquet, the students will be able to talk with area women whose careers are in fields related to mathematics or science.

Keynote speaker will be Dr. Inge Russell, who is research manager of the brewing research department of John Labatt Limited in London. Russell, who earned her doctorate in bioscience and biotechnology, is the first female president of the American Society of Brewing Chemists and holds two patents for yeast strains she developed.

Dr. Nora Znotinas, chair of the physics and computing department, said it's important for young women to have role models who demonstrate that a career in science is a normal and unremarkable option for them.

But, she added, they need to know a career in science can be exciting. "For too many high school students, studying science means memorizing periodic tables and dissecting frogs pickled in

formaldehyde.

"We want to break down those negative stereotypes about science. We want to broaden students' definition of science and expose them to some interesting applications," Znotinas said.

During the conference, the students will participate in four, two and a half-hour workshops of their choice.

Topics will include: human contamination of the fresh water environment; human metabolic rates; lasers and integrated circuits; astronomy; pulse mode circuit design; computer graphics; gas chromatography; spectroscopic analysis; the brain, drugs, and behavior; thinking and learning from infancy through adulthood; the natural environment; electrical activity in the human body; and learning problem-solving techniques through mathematics.

Application forms will be distributed to the heads of science departments and guidance counselling departments at area high schools. Applicants must supply a letter of reference from a teacher and compose a 200-word essay outlining their interest in the conference. Applications must be postmarked by March 15.

At Laurier, about 110 of the 341 science and mathematics students are women. The university offers science programs in biology, chemistry, computing and computer electronics, geography, mathematics, physics, and psychology.