

Wilfrid Laurier University



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**A list of participants by
community is enclosed.**

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Laurier to host math and science conference for young women

Waterloo (May 1) — In the words of a young woman in Grade 10, "Most people's first image of a scientist would be of a man, in a white lab coat, slightly mad of course, who's mixing chemicals together...."

That young woman and some of her peers will have the opportunity to challenge such images at a three-day conference beginning Wednesday, May 20, at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo.

Forty-two young women selected from 135 area high schools will be encouraged to pursue advanced studies in mathematics, science, and technology at PROWIS '92, which stands for Promoting Women in Science.

Mary Ann Fieldes, assistant dean for science at Laurier, says today's young women should be emboldened to shed the limiting stereotypes they may have of science and scientists. "As women, they need to know that they can put themselves in the picture and that science is relevant and exciting — it's as varied and changing as a kaleidoscope."

During the conference, the students will participate in four, two and a half-hour workshops they have selected from a smorgasbord of 23 topics designed to further whet their appetite for the sciences: for example, fresh water contamination; human metabolic rates; the brain, drugs, and behavior; learning problem-solving techniques through mathematics; the biomechanics of walking; soils' buffering effects against acid rain; electrical activity in the body; and darkroom photography.

(MORE)

At a banquet on Thursday, May 21, participants will be able to talk with area women whose careers are in fields related to science, mathematics, and technology.

Keynote speaker will be Janet Halliwell, chair of the Science Council of Canada from August 1990 until its federally directed demise this coming June. Prior to her current post, Halliwell served as director and director general (research grants) of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council. She was with NSERC and its parent agency, the National Research Council, for 15 years.

There were more than 150 applicants from high schools in the counties of Brant, Dufferin, Oxford, Perth, and Wellington; the regions of Halton, Peel, and Waterloo; and Hamilton. The participants were selected on the basis of a written application and teacher's reference.

In essays that accompanied their applications, many of the young women acknowledged that women were not generally encouraged to enter the fields of science or mathematics but they asserted that they could, indeed, make a contribution. "Although men have dominated the math and science fields in the past, the future holds many opportunities for women as well as men," wrote a participant from Shelburne.

The students told of a range of experiences that sparked their interest in the sciences. A Kitchener student, who is a competitive skier, became interested in sports medicine after having arthroscopic surgery to reconstruct her knee.

At Laurier, there are about 305 science majors. The university offers science programs in biology, chemistry, computing and computer electronics, geography, mathematics, physics, and psychology.