

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier University



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

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37-95

Laurier hosts mathematics and science conference for young women

Waterloo, Ont. (April 25) — Although women now comprise more than half of all undergraduate university students in Canada, they are still in the minority in most science and mathematics programs.

The numbers are improving, but changing society's view as to what women can or can't do, or should or shouldn't do, is a slow process.

"In my mother's day, there were only a few choices for most women: nurse, hairdresser, secretary, teacher or cashier," says Ashlee Cunsolo, a Grade 10 student at Centennial Collegiate and Vocational Institute in Guelph.

"I feel privileged to grow up in a time of equality where women are encouraged to pursue non-traditional interests and careers," she adds.

Ashlee is one of 40 young Ontario women who will participate in PROWIS '95, a mathematics and science conference at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo from May 9 to 11.

The students, drawn from 146 high schools within 100 km of Kitchener-Waterloo, will participate in science and math-related workshops and hear women talk about their careers in mathematics and science-related fields.

The workshop on astronomy, called Look Up . . . Look Way Up, should be of particular interest to Leigh Hunsinger, who attends Milton District High School.

"My ultimate goal is to someday become an astronaut," Leigh wrote in the essay she submitted as part of her application for PROWIS '95. "To venture into the unknown

(more)

where very few have ever gone, to try to enhance the quality of life on earth and possibly to create life in space is an exciting prospect for me."

Many young women are interested in science but aren't sure what they can do with that interest beyond high school, says Mary Ann Fieldes, assistant dean for science at Laurier.

For example, Samantha Coulter-Galbraith of Centre Dufferin District High School in Shelburne wrote: "What is beyond Grade 10? What does the future hold for women like me who wish to endeavor in these fields? How easy can it be for women to step into a once male-dominated territory? These are questions I hope to find the answers for."

"That's what PROWIS '95 is all about," says Fieldes, "to let these students see some of the possibilities that exist for research and careers based on science and math."

During the conference, the students will participate in four 2-1/2 hour workshops, ranging from how to detect radon gas by playing squash, to using discrete mathematics to solve puzzles and games, to studying electrical activity in the human body, to learning how beaches and sand dunes are formed.

The workshops will be held in the new \$15-million science building, which was opened in January.

For Michon Williams, of Iroquois Ridge High School in Oakville, attending PROWIS '95 is a stage in a process that will ultimately allow her to work for the survival of our world.

"Hunting animals used to be the most important aspect of survival," Michon wrote in her essay. "Now it is hunting for information. Science and research will help us to rectify the damage we have done to our earth and help us cure the sicknesses that plague us. I need to help find ways of ensuring this world's survival. I want to pacify the fears of my peers, as we as my own."

PROWIS '95 is sponsored by Bell Canada.

Laurier has about 450 undergraduates majoring in science and offers science programs in biology, chemistry, computing and computer electronics, geography, mathematics, physics, and psychology .

Wilfrid Laurier University



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PROWIS '95 Participants

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Baden

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Bolton

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Brampton

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