

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Practitioner-turned-academic will lead social work in Kitchener

Lesley Cooper will replace Luke Fusco as dean as the faculty moves into St. Jerome's

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WATERLOO – An Australian social work practitioner-turned-academic with a strong record of research, teaching, administration and community service will lead Laurier's faculty of social work as it moves into a new campus in downtown Kitchener.

Laurier's board of governors has approved the appointment of Lesley Cooper as dean of the faculty of social work. Cooper will leave positions as department head and director of a research centre at Flinders University, in Adelaide, South Australia, to assume her new decanal position on July 7.

"Dr. Lesley Cooper emerged as the top candidate at the end of an international search and we are very pleased with the results," said Sue Horton, vice-president: academic. "She offers significant experience in social work, including 10 years of full-time work between her undergraduate degree and doctorate, which is important in a professional faculty like ours."

Cooper was selected for the appointment because of the well-rounded nature of her experience. She completed a bachelor's degree in social work at the University of Queensland in 1970 and earned a doctorate from the same institution in 1987.

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In between, she held a number of positions, beginning as a social worker in the commonwealth civil service and rising to the position of chief social worker at The Alfred hospital in Melbourne. She was also a community social worker for a Sydney municipal council, a part-time marriage counsellor, a social planner for the Far North Queensland Regional Council for Social Development, and director of welfare services for a city council in Melbourne.

She joined Flinders as a lecturer in 1985. In 2002, she was appointed head of the school of social administration and social work as well as director of the Australian Centre for Community Services Research.

Cooper sees parallels between Flinders and Laurier. She believes that her combined experience as a practitioner and an academic will benefit staff and faculty members as they settle into their new facilities and integrate into Kitchener's downtown community.

"I had heard only good things about Laurier, primarily from two colleagues and a graduate student who I supervised, and I was impressed by the university and its people when I visited," said Cooper. "I'm looking forward to helping develop a research and teaching program that's even more fully integrated into the community."

Cooper begins a five-year appointment just as the faculty of social work is moving into new facilities in a renovated, Catholic high-school building in downtown Kitchener. With substantial support from the City of Kitchener, the university purchased the historic St. Jerome's building last year and is renovating it to meet contemporary needs. The faculty of social work will move into the new facilities just before classes begin in September 2006.

Cooper will succeed Luke Fusco, who was to have retired last year but agreed to remain while the renovations to St. Jerome's are underway.