

# NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier  
University



## **Internationally known researcher named graduate studies dean** *Developing new programs, expanding support to grad students priorities for Joan Norris*

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WATERLOO –Joan Norris, the University of Guelph’s associate dean of graduate studies and a psychologist with an international reputation in the field of adult development and aging, has been appointed Laurier’s new dean of graduate studies. Norris’s five-year term begins July 1.

“Joan Norris has excellent credentials based on her success over the past five years as associate dean and acting dean at an institution with more than 50 graduate programs and 2,000 graduate students,” says Laurier’s vice-president: academic, Dr. Sue Horton.

“Her experience in managing program appraisals and reviews, providing minimum guaranteed funding for graduate students, and the strategic development of graduate studies will be invaluable in achieving the aims of Laurier’s Century Plan,” the five-year strategic plan that will take the university to its centenary in 2011.

“This is a real opportunity to help Laurier with its transition from a primarily undergraduate institution to a comprehensive university,” says Norris, “and dean of graduate studies is an ideal position to hold if you want to have an impact.”

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Norris, who has been at Guelph for 25 years, is no stranger to Laurier. She has collaborated with Laurier social work professor Marshall Fine and with Michael Pratt of psychology, who is her “longest-standing collaborator.”

Norris received her education – BA through PhD – at the University of Waterloo. Her area of specialization is gerontology and she is the author or co-author of three books, 11 chapters in books, 26 refereed journal articles, five papers in refereed conference proceedings and nine technical reports, and has read more than 80 papers or abstracts at scientific meetings. She has received research funding every year since 1980, with a career total of more than \$550,000.

Norris says she became interested in the administrative aspect of academia several years ago, when she became graduate co-ordinator in her department.

“It was exciting and rewarding,” she says. “I had never seen myself as an administrator before, and I thought I’d like to do more of that.”

Norris is now in her second term as associate dean in Guelph’s faculty of graduate studies, and has also served as acting dean.

“I was given responsibility for the initial phases of all graduate planning at Guelph,” she says. Last year, Norris drafted a five-year enrolment plan for all graduate programs at Guelph, which included consultation with various academic units and consideration of issues such as student funding, meeting the needs of international students, finding adequate physical space and maximizing provincial funding.

At Guelph, Norris has also been responsible for advocating on students’ behalf and co-ordinating workshops that prepare graduate students for life outside academia.

“I value these contacts with students, and believe that my experience in the day-to-day management of dozens of graduate programs and 2,000 graduate students will contribute significantly to my future administrative roles,” Norris says.

At Laurier, Norris wants to build a sense of community among graduate students because, just as with undergraduates, a sense of community combined with quality education helps to draw more students.

She also intends to make sure that graduate students receive strong support so they know what to expect as students and are prepared to move along, either into more graduate studies or into the workforce.

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“Students want terrific advisors with great research resources,” she says. “Students need very strong mentorship” from advisors who will push them to attend conferences and publish.

Norris says all of the more than 25 master’s and doctoral students she has supervised over her career have been co-authors on at least one of her publications or presentations.

Norris also plans to consult departmental chairs and program co-ordinators to determine where graduate programs could be developed, to “find niches we could fill.”

“Laurier,” she concludes, “has a great reputation. My colleagues are really excited about it (her appointment.)”