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## Laurier-led symposium to discuss women's roles in regional innovation ecosystems

WATERLOO – An international group of women scholars and leaders is coming together June 15-16 at [Communitech](#) in Kitchener for a two-day, Wilfrid Laurier University-led symposium on women in entrepreneurship and regional innovation.

The symposium, entitled “**From Exception to Rule: Advancing the Role of Women Innovators and Entrepreneurs in Regional Innovation Ecosystems**,” is being organized by **WEiRED (Women Entrepreneurs, Innovators, and Regional Ecosystem Development)**, a research group led by [Josephine McMurray](#), an assistant professor in [Business Technology Management](#) at the [Lazaridis School of Business & Economics](#) on Laurier's Brantford campus. The goal of the project is to understand how women entrepreneurs impact and are impacted by regional innovation ecosystems.

“Entrepreneurship is a well-researched topic but the gendered nature of entrepreneurship has led to systematic disadvantage for women,” said McMurray.

“The generally small size, slower growth and lower profitability of women's businesses even has its own theory known as the ‘female underperformance’ hypothesis. To counter that, considerable research supports the need to develop regional capacity to support women in entrepreneurial activities that lead to industry and sectoral transformation.”

The first day of the symposium will focus on the latest research in women's entrepreneurship and innovation. The second day will delve specifically into the health and age-tech industry – technologies that can help manage daily life and care for seniors and people with various health conditions.

Although the WEiRED project is not restricted to any particular sectors or disciplines, a major portion of its research focuses on the health and aging sector. “The adoption of consumer and health tech faces stiff headwinds from regulatory issues, sectoral and professional silos, and weakened consumer power,” said McMurray.

The group of participants includes seasoned academics, emerging researchers, practitioners and clinicians hoping to train other professionals in the art and science of innovating.

Speakers include:

- Professor **Susan Marlow**, Nottingham University Business School, who holds the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise Promotion and is a prolific author in gender and entrepreneurial financing.
- **Danielle Brewin Graham**, Women in Tech program manager at Communitech.
- Professor **Anne Snowdon**, Odette School of Business (University of Windsor), chair of the World Health Innovation Network and former chief nursing officer at Windsor Regional Hospital.
- **Usha Srinivasan**, vice-president of venture programs at the MaRS Discovery District in Toronto.
- **Rebecca Love**, director of nurse innovation and entrepreneurship at Northeastern School of Nursing, Boston.

Members of the media who wish to attend portions of the symposium should contact [Josephine McMurray](#).