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Laurier explores the impact of computational and design thinking at its first annual Ignite Your Teaching event

WATERLOO - Wilfrid Laurier University is offering its first annual Ignite Your Teaching event, a professional development opportunity for instructors at Laurier and surrounding educational institutions on Aug. 21 at the university's Waterloo campus.

Ignite Your Teaching 2018, a partnership between Teaching and Learning and the Faculty of Education at Laurier, will bring faculty, industry leaders, and professional staff together. Using active and innovative methods, attendees will explore the importance and implementation of computational and design thinking in higher education and why they are essential skills for student success while in university and in their careers.

Computational thinking describes the process of formulating and solving problems using the principles of computer science to arrive at an efficient solution. Design thinking presents a way to tackle complex problems by reframing them in a human-centric way, and finding solutions through hands-on testing and prototyping.

"The concepts, skills, and perspectives that are important to design and computational thinking cross disciplines and contexts," said **Julie Mueller**, associate professor in the Faculty of Education and recipient of the 2018 Donald F. Morgenson Award for **Teaching Excellence in Innovation**. "We will define the constructs, examine current and possible connections within courses, and actually utilize design thinking in an example of course design."

Benjamin Alarie (BA, '99), Osler Chair in Business Law at the University of Toronto and affiliate faculty member of the Vector Institute for Artificial Intelligence, will kick off the program. Alarie is the CEO of **Blue J Legal**, a company using machine learning and artificial intelligence to make the law more transparent and accessible. Alarie draws on these next-generation technologies to foster student learning and insight in his tax courses at the law school.

Following Alarie's presentation, a panel of Laurier faculty members will discuss the ways computational and design thinking could be employed in their classrooms, along with the potential developmental benefits to students' problem-solving and creative-thinking skills.

Partners from **Google**, **SAP**, **Voltera**, and the **Laurier Archives** will headline the afternoon industry panel.

"It is important that instructors at all levels and disciplines pay attention to these ways of thinking within their courses," said Mueller. "Graduates of post-secondary education, regardless of career goals, should be developing a suite of skills that includes computational and design thinking as ways of solving problems."

Ignite Your Teaching runs **Aug. 21-22** at Lazaridis Hall. Aug. 21 is open to Laurier instructors and interested higher-education professionals from other institutions. Aug. 22 features an active learning workshop open to Laurier instructors only. [Register](#) by August 16.