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International Laurier conference to focus on recruitment, retention and promotion of women police officers

BRANTFORD – Women are under-recruited by police services and, once they are hired, they quit at higher rates and are promoted less than men. Wilfrid Laurier University researchers are trying to improve matters by bringing together an international group of scholars to come up with concrete recommendations for change.

The conference, [Recruiting, Retaining, and Promoting Women Police Officers: An International Comparison of Challenges and Opportunities for Change](#), will be held at Laurier's Brantford campus on **April 29-30**. In addition to researchers from Canada, the U.S., U.K. and Australia, representatives of dozens of policing organizations are registered to attend. The first day of the conference is open to the media and interviews can be arranged upon request.

"Research has been quite clear that women are underrepresented at all levels of police organizations and that they face challenges including sexual harassment, lack of mentorship and exclusion from the 'boys' club,' especially if they become mothers," said [Debra Langan](#), who, with fellow Laurier associate professor of criminology [Carrie Sanders](#), has been researching [women's experiences in police organizations](#) since 2013.

"The goal of the workshop is to work with researchers to identify how we can transform the rich literature on the barriers faced by women police officers face into actionable recommendations. Our ultimate goal is to improve the overall experience in the workplace for women and also for men."

The conference is supported by the new Laurier-based [Centre for Research on Security Practices](#) and is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Langan, Sanders and **Julie Gouweloos** of McMaster University are leading both the conference and the effort to produce a practical report, which the researchers plan to distribute to policing organizations in Canada and internationally following the conference.

"We want the voices of women who work within services to be heard and we're also responding to what services have told us – that they're interested in bringing about progress and change," said Langan.

The researchers plan to collaborate on a co-edited book focusing on international issues of gender and policing.

"Organizations are healthier and function better when gender inequality is addressed and women are a part of the fabric of the organization," said Langan. "Everyone in policing is serving the public, so if you have a happier and healthier organization, you can theorize that you're going to provide an even better service to the communities you serve."

Members of the media interested in attending the first day of the conference or interviewing participants should contact Langan at dlangan@wlu.ca.