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High school student will be Laurier's president for a day as part of Plan International Canada initiative

WATERLOO – What's it like to be Wilfrid Laurier University's president and vice-chancellor? On Oct. 1, thanks to [Plan International Canada's Girls Belong Here campaign](#), one lucky teenager will get a chance to step into the president's shoes for a day.

Charlotte Peng, a Grade 12 student from Wolfville, Nova Scotia, will join Laurier President and Vice-Chancellor Deborah MacLatchy in important discussions and meetings, including with Senator Peter Boehm and City of Waterloo Councillor Tenille Bonogurore. She will also receive a music lesson from Kimberly Barber, a professor and associate dean in the Faculty of Music, and a tour of a lab — with [synthetic cadavers](#) — used by Health Sciences and Kinesiology and Physical Education students.

"I'm proud to welcome Charlotte to the position of president and vice-chancellor for the International Day of the Girl," said MacLatchy. "It is critically important for young women to see themselves reflected in senior leadership positions. Every person's leadership journey is a series of opportunities."

The Girls Belong Here initiative, now in its fourth year, is designed to show girls that they can achieve anything. Each year, ahead of International Day of the Girl on Oct. 11, CEOs, presidents and business leaders from across the country share their seats with young women, aged 14 to 24. Laurier is one of 30 participants, including Loblaw Companies Ltd., the Royal Bank of Canada, ET Canada, Hospital for Sick Children and the Canadian Ambassador to the UN, and the only academic institution participating.

Besides inviting Peng in for the day, Laurier was also involved in training each of the young women participating in the initiative before they step foot into their offices. Laurier career consultant Susan Malcolm gave a one-hour crash course, part of a day-long training session at Plan International Canada's office in Toronto, on business, meeting preparation, networking and leadership skills.

The activities at Laurier on Oct. 1 were planned with Peng's interests in mind. She is a talented percussionist, playing in her school's band and playing first chair in Acadia University's Orchestra. She has also accompanied her school's choir and played at church services, benefit concerts and in seniors' homes. She's a top student too, completing Grade 11 with the highest average of her class, 98 per cent, and winning the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia's Education Medal. In the future, she hopes to join the medical field, either as a pediatrician or OB-GYN.

"President MacLatchy inspires me greatly," said Peng. "She is incredibly successful in her field and creates waves of positive change. I am excited to see how she defies gender stereotypes every day. My seat-share will be an inspiring affirmation that women and girls continue to shatter glass ceilings, and that we truly belong in leadership positions."

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The media is welcome to attend several events throughout the day:

8:30 to 8:45 a.m.: Deborah MacLatchy welcomes Charlotte Peng

- President and Vice-Chancellor's office: 202 Regina Street, 2nd floor

10 to 10:30 a.m.: Music lesson with Kimberly Barber, professor and associate dean of the Faculty of Music

- John Aird building, room 420

1 to 1:50 p.m.: Lunch with Councillor Tenille Bonogouore and Dr. MacLatchy

- Veritas Café

2 to 2:30 p.m.: Meeting with Canadian Senator Peter Boehm and Dr. MacLatchy

- President and Vice-Chancellor's office: 202 Regina Street, 2nd floor

2:45 to 3:15 p.m.: Tour of synthetic cadaver lab with lab coordinator Kristen McFall and Dr. MacLatchy

- Athletics Complex

Visit [Laurier's interactive map](#) for directions.

Laurier is committed to fostering an equitable, diverse and inclusive community. Over the past year, Laurier was selected to participate in the Government of Canada's [Dimensions: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Canada program](#), designed to increase equity, diversity and inclusion in research, and secured a [FDI Institutional Capacity-Building Grant](#) through the program. President MacLatchy is one of the founding members of the Laurier Centre for Women in Science, which aims to build a strong community for women in science through research, communication and action. Laurier also received funding through the [Women Entrepreneurship Strategy Ecosystem Fund](#) to support women entrepreneurs at the start-up stage and those looking to accelerate their businesses.

In addition to President MacLatchy, the university has many strong women at the helm, including Board of Governors Chair Lynda Hawton Kitamura, a business executive; Chancellor Eileen Mercier, a business leader, corporate director and governance expert; and Interim Provost and Vice-President: Academic Maureen Mancuso.

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