



OCT. 15, 2020 | 084-20

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Laurier economics professor receives provincial Award of Excellence

WATERLOO – In recognition of his dedication to supporting Wilfrid Laurier University students, the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities has awarded [Ken Jackson](#), associate professor and undergraduate program director in the Department of Economics at the Lazaridis School of Business and Economics, with a Minister’s Award of Excellence.

Jackson was one of 39 selected out of more than 260 submissions in the areas of digital transformation and community impact. The Minister’s Awards of Excellence highlight the work done by professors and instructors on campus, online and in the community during these extraordinary times.

When the pandemic hit in March and Laurier moved classes online, Jackson knew students would need help adjusting. He invited students to meet with him on Zoom every night to hear their feedback about courses and scheduling and to provide support. Once students had adjusted to their new routines, he reduced the frequency of the meetings to once a week.

“These sessions provided me with insights into students’ key concerns, as well as possible solutions,” said Jackson. “I used that insight in the re-design of my course this fall and for my Sports Economics course in the upcoming winter term.”

In addition to supporting students, he also offered advice and suggestions to colleagues in the Department of Economics. He also learned from his staff and faculty across the university in order to improve his own teaching.

“I joined sessions on teaching in large classes that were organized through Teaching and Learning and run by Dr. Louise Dawe in Chemistry. They were fantastic and gave me insight into some of the options that I had available,” said Jackson.

In a webinar on Oct. 14, Jackson shared strategies for ensuring students understand how to engage in remote learning and behave appropriately.

“This is a different setting for everyone, so the social norms of professional behaviour that exist on campus need to be reset for the remote setting,” said Jackson. “In this new environment, faculty need to be very intentional about defining and encouraging the behaviour that we need for classes to be successful.”

Jackson is currently teaching more than 1,800 students in a first-year introductory microeconomics course. He continues to host meetings with students online every week.

Jackson is the second Laurier professor to receive the Minister’s Award of Excellence this year. Bruce Gillespie, an associate professor and coordinator of Wilfrid Laurier University’s Digital Media and Journalism program, [received the award on Oct. 7.](#)