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Destination Exploration earns Mentorship Award

Destination Exploration, the University of Lethbridge's youth science program, netted a Mentorship Award at the Actua awards banquet in Ottawa recently. Actua is a Canadian charitable organization delivering science and technology experiences to youth, with membership that spans 36 colleges and universities.

"We were very excited to be nominated for this award through Actua," says Valerie Archibald, director of youth outreach for the Faculty of Arts & Science. "We do a large amount of work with mentoring and connecting mentors into our programming, so to be acknowledged for that work is just phenomenal."



Photo 1 - Left to right are Jennifer Flanagan, president and CEO of Actua, Valerie Archibald, director, youth outreach, Cassandra Allenby (BFA '14), Codemakers coordinator, and Dr. Laura Keffer-Wilkes (MSc '12, PhD '16), program coordinator. Submitted photo.

Archibald says Destination Exploration programs operate under the belief that youth can't be who they don't see.

"If a young girl can see a strong, female engineer working in an engineering role, then she knows that's something she can aspire to," Archibald says. "We want to be able to provide a whole spectrum of people and jobs and opportunities in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields and have kids see that those are real jobs, careers and life choices that are available to them."

Destination Exploration programs connect youth with both graduate students and professional people in the workforce. By inviting mentors to the programs, youth get the opportunity to learn about the educational paths they've taken and the work they do every day.

“Providing role models of what young people can do and be in the future is paramount to the programming that we do. This award solidifies that the work we’re doing is on the right track,” says Archibald. “It’s nice also to be acknowledged amongst the network and across the country for the work that we do with our mentorship program and to hopefully assist others that may be struggling with that.”

Destination Exploration started in 2002, running a week of science camp in the summer and doing some workshops in schools. Today, the programs reach more than 4,500 youths through workshops, summer camps, school visits and general outreach programming. This year, the focus is on adding coding and digital literacy into science programming.

“Moving forward, we’re really excited to be reaching the young people of Lethbridge and southern Alberta, providing them with STEM opportunities and encouraging them to keep going with their studies,” says Archibald. “We’re preparing the next generation of the workforce and making sure that they’re critical thinkers and problem solvers and high-functioning members of society.”

Archibald also received a Service of Excellence award, which is reserved for directors with five or more years of service.

This news release can be found online at [Mentorship Award](#).

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