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## High school students gain exposure to University of Lethbridge research programs through HYRS initiative

Second-year public health student Zaynab Enayetullah knows first-hand the value of the annual [Heritage Youth Researcher Summer \(HYRS\) program](#). As COVID restrictions continue to lift, a hybrid HYRS model will once again allow a select group of area high school students in-person access to University of Lethbridge faculty members and facilities when the program kicks off July 9.

“We’re so happy to be able to offer this model to our students this summer,” says Enayetullah, a former HYRS student and now the program’s coordinator. “The networking opportunities will be a blend of in-person and virtual, but the students will have the chance to work in the labs and as far as tours, we’ll do as many in person as we can.”



HYRS offers invaluable opportunities for students at the Universities of Lethbridge, Calgary and Alberta to participate in hands-on research activities with Alberta Innovates-funded research groups. They get the chance to work in a post-secondary setting alongside PhD, master’s and bachelor students on multidisciplinary projects that include everything from genetics to neuroscience, bioengineering, molecular imaging, health-care policy, recreational therapy and more.

Enayetullah was a Grade 11 student at Chinook High School when she was accepted into the program three years ago. She says it was an eye-opening experience that set her on a path to success for when she began her post-secondary studies.

“It was so important for me in getting accustomed to the university environment,” she says. “Even simple things like how to properly write emails to your professors, how to use the library database, or how to properly reference papers and utilize journals.”

Networking was also a key advantage to the program, as many of her peers ended up continuing their research interests with the professors they had met through HYRS as undergraduate students.

“We’re so fortunate that the U of L is a smaller university, and we can make these connections. We’ve had a strong group of professors who have supported HYRS for many years and are so helpful to our students.”

Dr. Stacey Wetmore, a professor in the Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry and the U of L’s 2021 Speaker Research Award winner, has long supported HYRS.

“As a faculty member, introducing students to research is my biggest passion,” she says. “It is especially rewarding to be involved in this step very early in a student’s academic career, which is why participating in the HYRS program is so important to me. The quality of students who participate in the HYRS program is particularly outstanding, making this initiative even more fun as a mentor, as the students challenge the way we think about our own research questions.”

A total of eight students will take part in this year’s program, which runs for six weeks. Dr. Trushar Patel, a Canada Research Chair in RNA and Protein Biophysics, says HYRS acts as a gateway for some of our brightest students to find their passion.

“High school students are often faced with the challenges of deciding their career paths and the discipline they would like to engage with at the University,” says Patel. “HYRS provides them opportunities to visit different labs, engage with researchers with a wide range of backgrounds and perform experiments. As researchers, one of our objectives is to train the next generation of talented individuals. HYRS connects researchers with outstanding students, promotes dialogues between students and researchers, provides an opportunity to discuss the impact of research and innovation, and stimulates student interest in scientific research. It is always fun to be a part of this exciting journey.”

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/high-school-students-gain-exposure-university-lethbridge-research-programs-through-hyrs>

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