



For immediate release — Wednesday, April 13, 2022

Donation provides more work-integrated learning opportunities for University of Lethbridge students

Expressions of interest from local organizations are now being accepted

A \$1-million gift from Art and Mary Jane Crooks will help University of Lethbridge students apply what they learn in the classroom to a paid-work setting.

The Crooks Work-Integrated Learning Program in Liberal Education will give students the opportunity to critically examine the world around them and obtain practical hands-on experiences, whether in research, volunteer or community roles, that allow them to develop their professional skills and prepare to enter the world of work after graduation.

“Today, more than ever, it is essential that graduates have skills and experience to go along with their classroom learning,” says Art Crooks. “We are pleased to be able to support this innovative and integrated approach.”

The School of Liberal Education will oversee the program, with priority given to learning opportunities in community projects in business, non-profit or other organizations. The program is open to undergraduate students from any discipline and will be run in collaboration with the University’s Career Bridge Centre. Students undertaking these internships will be supervised by a ULethbridge professor and a business or community supervisor. Suitable projects will be eligible for Independent or Applied Study credit or Co-op designation and can be full- or part-time.

“We are so grateful to Art Crooks and his family for providing this support for students, in addition to their donation that founded the Evelyn Hamilton Chair in Liberal Education,” says Shelly Wismath, dean of the School of Liberal Education. “This program will provide students with practical hands-on experience in way that allows them to analyze and apply the knowledge they’ve gained in the classroom.”

At ULethbridge, liberal education focuses on breadth, connections across disciplines, critical thinking and citizenship. This approach exposes students to the arts, humanities and social and natural sciences and helps them develop problem-solving skills, social responsibility and become global citizens who are engaged in their communities.

“We know from years of students participating in co-op work terms or other research or job opportunities, that they’re more professional in their student work and they’ve seen the reason why they’re learning theoretical knowledge,” says Wismath. “They see where it’s used, what it’s good for and how it matters in the community.”

Community organizations with a potential project are invited to submit an expression of interest by email to Wismath at wismaths@uleth.ca by Friday, April 29. Students interested in a paid internship are invited to apply with a cover letter and resume to Wismath at wismaths@uleth.ca by Friday, April 29. For more details visit the [Crooks Work-Integrated Learning Program](#).

About the donors

Art Crooks attended Amherst College in Massachusetts and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1961. He pursued a Masters of Business Administration at the then-University of Western Ontario, now Western University. Following graduation, Art took a job in sales and quickly rose through the ranks to become a regional and then national sales manager.

Mary Jane Crooks, although she was accepted at McGill University, chose to pursue a career in advertising. She started at Eaton’s in Toronto and later worked with advertising agencies, where she won a copywriting award for her series on the carousel slide projector.

In 1971 when he was 30, Art interviewed for a Canadian Tire franchise and was approved to purchase his first store in Blenheim, Ont. As the couple worked to establish the business, Art and Mary Jane did the jobs of three people to save money on a salary. While Art placed orders, worked at the parts counter, unloaded trucks and stocked the store, Mary Jane did the books. Profits were modest in the beginning, but they persisted. A year later, they purchased the Pembroke store in the Ottawa Valley and, in 1979, they jumped at the chance to open the first store in Lethbridge. The business succeeded and grew, as did their family of three children. In recent years, Art and Mary Jane have turned their focus to giving back to the community that provided so much to them and their family over the last 40 years.

This news release can be found online at [work-integrated learning](#).

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