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Summer research programs for youth expand at University of Lethbridge

It's a model proven to be successful, leading the University of Lethbridge to expand its annual [High School Youth Researcher Summer](#) (HYRS) program and add a complementary cohort for 2022 — the Indigenous Summer Research Academy (InSRA).

The HYRS initiative, now in its fifth iteration, is a summer research program for students who have just completed Grade 11. Offered at the Universities of Lethbridge, Calgary and Alberta, it provides students with a stipend of \$3,000 over six weeks and the opportunity to work on multidisciplinary, hands-on research projects in fields such as genetics, neuroscience, bioengineering, molecular imaging, recreational therapy, health-care policy and more.

“To see this program expanding and involving more students is outstanding,” says Zaynab Enayetullah, a third-year public health student, program coordinator and HYRS graduate from 2018. “The new InSRA program is distinct from HYRS but also complementary and the students will be doing many of the same activities and have access to the same guest speakers. Adding InSRA is about creating opportunities for Indigenous students specifically and providing pathways to post-secondary studies.”

Students are required to apply to the program, provide references and write an essay on their areas of interest. Once accepted, they are matched with faculty mentors participating in the program. A total of 10 students have been accepted to HYRS for 2022, with two students debuting the new InSRA program.

“In my experience, high school youth participating in the HYRS program are full of curiosity and are open to learning. If directed properly, we can attract students to STEM fields and open their eyes to the wonders of nature and provide the tools and experience necessary to be successful at research,” says Dr. Borries Demeler, Canada 150 Research Chair for Biophysics and director of the Canadian Center for Hydrodynamics at ULethbridge. “I enjoy being able to help a student open the door to research and science and help them on their way to a successful post-secondary career.”

Demeler came to ULeithbridge from the University of Texas (San Antonio) where he participated in a similar program, which also had a focus on underserved minority populations. InSRA, funded by the MasterCard Foundation and EleV, looks to create similar opportunities.

“Many of the high school students I worked with in San Antonio ended up with publications in scientific journals and prestigious scholarships to attend some of the finest colleges in the U.S. and abroad,” says Demeler, who will be participating in HYRS for the second time. “Opening the doors for students to such opportunities is highly valuable to them, and deeply satisfactory to us who helped them. The HYRS and InSRA programs are crucial steppingstones along this path.”

This year’s program runs from July 8 to August 19, with a final poster presentation of the students’ work to be held August 18.

This news release can be found online at [HYRS & InSRA](#).

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