

For immediate release — Tuesday, August 1, 2023

## **Dr. Michelle Helstein appointed Provost and Vice-President (Academic) at the University of Lethbridge**

Accomplished researcher and senior administrator, Dr. Michelle Helstein, has been appointed Provost and Vice-President (Academic) by the University of Lethbridge's Board of Governors, another significant addition to a leadership core that has seen a dramatic influx of new perspectives in the past six months.



Helstein, who most recently served as ULethbridge's Interim Deputy Provost, will be a key voice on President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Digvir Jayas's senior leadership team. Jayas assumed the University's presidency on July 1, 2023, and in addition, four new academic deans began their roles at the University.

"Throughout my introduction to ULethbridge and over the first few weeks of my time here, I see how respected Dr. Helstein is by faculty members and others within the senior leadership team," says Jayas. "I am very impressed with how she is able to articulate the University's mission and am excited to work with her as we look forward and begin to develop, along with our internal and external stakeholders, the next ULethbridge strategic plan."

Helstein's role as interim deputy provost offered her the opportunity to work within the senior leadership structure and build on her vast experience as an administrator and academic. Helstein has explored multiple administrative opportunities from her first days at ULethbridge and been eager to lend her voice to the institutional narrative. She has taken on several significant roles characterized by increasing levels of scope, complexity and responsibility. These include oversight of Academic Advising, the Indigenous Student Success Cohort and Cooperative Education, as well as serving as co-Chair in the Department of Kinesiology & Physical Education and as both Associate Dean and Acting Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Science.

“You can already see a sense of her leadership tenacity,” says Dr. Olu Awosoga, professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences. “She co-chaired the COVID-19 management team and worked through approving Navitas at the General Faculties Council, amongst others. Her stance on governance is focused on transparency, collaboration and a practical approach to decision-making.”

He adds that Helstein is a respected voice throughout the institution and will provide invaluable support to Jayas in his early days as president.

“Dr. Helstein has promised a more transparent, collaborative and effective governance approach with the ability to carry the students (ULSU, GSA), staff (APO, AUPE), and faculty (ULFA) associations along in the decision-making process,” says Awosoga. “She brings a matchless knowledge and a fantastic understanding of the governance structure of the U of L into the job. This will minimize the transitional hurdles, and she will be able to guide the new president in navigating the system with minimal stress.”

Emma Scott, professional librarian in the University Library, says Helstein is sincere in raising those around her.

“Alongside a wealth of institutional knowledge, Dr. Helstein brings a passion for supporting all units across the University and a desire to see students, staff and faculty succeed,” says Scott. “I am excited to see Dr. Helstein bring her servant leadership style to her new role.”

With several new perspectives coming to campus this summer, Helstein is enthused about the opportunity to connect those voices and help shape the future of the University.

“It’s an exciting time on campus,” she says. “We have a host of new programs and areas of study, we have great interest in terms of both domestic and international student applications, and we have new faculty members and administrators across the institution who are bringing so much energy with them — it’s an invigorating atmosphere.”

Helstein is confident in the collective strength of the campus community.

“I believe strongly that a university is its people. This role allows me to support the important efforts of faculty, staff, and students and to build contexts that facilitate their teaching, research, and learning so that our university, its people, and the communities we serve, can thrive.”

Jaxon Reiter, president of the Graduate Students’ Association, is excited about the opportunity to work with Helstein.

“I look forward to Dr. Helstein’s initiatives to support undergraduate and graduate students at our University,” he says. “I am excited to work with her in creating an environment within

which our students, current and future, as well as alumni, can realize success and foster a sense of great pride in our institution.”

Helstein earned a Bachelor of Arts from Augustana University College and a PhD in Physical Education and Recreation from the University of Alberta. She began her ULeithbridge academic career in 2003, focusing her research on breaking down the notion of sport and popular culture as simply innocent, playful, and not worthy of study by highlighting the significant impact and use of popular sporting culture within larger social, political and economic processes.

Her research has been recognized through funding support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and a number of other internal and external research funds, allowing her to explore questions related to representations of female athletes, the complex intersection of public and private sector funding within Canadian sport, and most recently, perspectives of labour within the concussion crisis in sport. Through her research she has actively supported both undergraduate student research and graduate education at ULeithbridge.

Her term as Provost and Vice-President (Academic) commences September 1, 2023.

This news release can be found online at [Provost and Vice-President \(Academic\) appointment](#).

—30—

**Contact**

Caroline Zentner, public affairs advisor  
University of Lethbridge  
403-394-3975 or 403-795-5403 (cell)  
[caroline.zentner@uleth.ca](mailto:caroline.zentner@uleth.ca)

*Our University’s Blackfoot name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University is located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy territory. We honour the Blackfoot people and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Indigenous Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.*