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New EDI Scholars represent broadening of important University of Lethbridge program

An unprecedented number of applications has created the broadest representation of disciplines for the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Scholars program yet, with six new scholars named by the University of Lethbridge today.

Drs. Dawn Burleigh, Sean Fitzpatrick, Kara Granzow (BA '99), Jason Laurendeau, Rhiannon Mesler and Tracy Oosterbroek (BN '95, MSc(N) '09) were named EDI Scholars for 2023-24, committing to engage in projects that advance the University's EDI priorities. When complete, they will then share the information with the campus community.

"We are excited to broaden the pool of EDI champions across the institution," says Hernando (Nando) Ortega Arango, project manager, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. "Congratulations to our 2023-24 EDI Scholars and thank you to all who applied. This was a highly competitive process, and we look forward to working with this exceptional group of scholars to build EDI capacity together."

The EDI Scholars program began in 2021, and for the 2023-24 intake, the application process was expanded with the intention to broaden the capacity for EDI work across campus. This resulted in applications from a variety of faculties, departments and backgrounds. Each project for 2023-24 is uniquely different with representation from the Faculties of Arts & Science, Education, Health Sciences and the Dhillon School of Business.

"It is a collective responsibility to champion EDI initiatives, and we all can play a role in facilitating inclusion and belonging," says Ortega. "Through the efforts of the EDI Scholars, we hope to reach diverse audiences and broaden the capacity of EDI work across campus."

Three EDI Scholars will undertake their projects beginning in the Fall 2023 Semester, and three in Spring 2024.

Fall 2023 EDI Scholars

Dr. Sean Fitzpatrick (Mathematics & Computer Science – Faculty of Arts & Science) plans to work with undergraduate student assistants to ensure that the open textbooks for many mathematics courses are fully accessible for all students, including those who require screen reader technology. Part of this work will include ensuring that all images have alt-text descriptions, and that all features of the textbook can be accessed using keyboard navigation.

“I am excited to receive this award because it will enable me to complete some long-overdue work on accessibility,” says Fitzpatrick. “I hope that the status of EDI Scholar will help me to promote the importance of selecting accessible course materials, and to remind people that our commitment to EDI must include accommodations for those with disabilities.”

After attending the [Walls to Bridges](#) instructor training this summer, Dr. Kara Granzow (Sociology – Faculty of Arts & Science) will work with colleagues and the community to bring the program to ULEthbridge. Walls to Bridges is an internationally renowned initiative, offered through post-secondary institutions, that provides for-credit courses to incarcerated and non-incarcerated students together to learn as peers.

“Without the support of the EDI Scholars Program, this project would not be possible,” says Granzow. “Programs like this give much needed time and support for the work necessary to further open doors to post-secondary education.”

Dr. Rhiannon Mesler (Management (Marketing) in the Dhillon School of Business) will undertake a series of studies with the goal to better understand when and why individuals choose to support, or not to support, organizations, causes and policies that create more equity, diversity and inclusion.

“I am very grateful to undertake this research with the support of the University of Lethbridge EDI Scholar program,” says Mesler. “This project will help understand the ways that fundamental beliefs about social structures shape support for charitable causes, and in particular those that serve people in need.”

Spring 2024 EDI Scholars

Dr. Dawn Burleigh (Indigenous Education – Faculty of Education) will focus on establishing a sustainable pathway for indigenization in the Faculty of Education that will build faculty, staff and student capacity for years to come.

“Considering the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action in education, and a newly revised teaching quality standard in Alberta, all teachers are required to integrate Indigenous perspectives into their classrooms. This means faculties of education must do the same to ensure pre-service teachers are prepared,” says Burleigh.

“Being an EDI Scholar will afford me the opportunity to work with the amazing members of faculty and staff in education to create service opportunities that could connect with community, build relationships, support instructional capacity and meet the emerging needs of the field.”

Dr. Jason Laurendeau (Sociology – Faculty of Arts & Science) aims to contribute to the work of kinesiology departments and faculties as they work to indigenize course offerings, teaching practices and curricula.

“My goal is to shed light on the processes by which individual faculty members engage in this work – the barriers, challenges, and/or opportunities they experience,” says Laurendeau. “More broadly, I plan to contribute to vital conversations at the University of Lethbridge about what it means to reckon with the University as a colonial institution.”

Dr. Tracy Oosterbroek (Nursing – Faculty of Health Sciences) will examine the impact of a pilot implementation of CASPer, an online situational judgment test intended to expand the assessment and evaluation of applicant suitability and capacity for ethical caring that extends beyond standard admission metrics. Historically, nursing program admission processes have relied predominantly on GPA which restricts ethnic and cultural diversity among students.

“This resulting lack of diversity among health-care providers has been shown to have a negative impact on the quality of care received by patients of minority or underrepresented groups,” says Oosterbroek. “My project will examine and compare historical and post-implementation applicant and admission data to determine whether these strategies have a positive impact on the diversity of the student body, or further perpetuate barriers to application and admission for minority, underrepresented or marginalized applicants.”

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/new-edi-scholars-represent-broadening-important-program>

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Contact:

Trevor Kenney, News & Information Manager
403-329-2710
403-360-7639 (cell)
trevor.kenney@uleth.ca
@ULethbridge

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.