



University of
Lethbridge

NEWS RELEASE

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Agriculture research, innovation and training earns RDAR support, extending three important faculty positions

A trio of term-limited University of Lethbridge researchers in the Department of Biological Sciences have secured nearly \$700,000 in funding support from Results Driven Agriculture Research (RDAR) that will allow their important agriculture portfolios to continue through 2027-28.

Drs. Michele Konschuh, Shelley Hoover and Kim Stanford, who originally joined ULethbridge as part of the Agriculture Research Transition Project in 2020, have enhanced the University's capacity in agricultural research, innovation and training while expanding partnerships with the Alberta agri-food industry. Extending their faculty positions for an additional five years opens even greater opportunities for their respective research programs.



“The impact of their work has been substantial both on and off campus,” says Dr. Dena McMartin, ULethbridge’s vice-president (research). “With this five-year extension, it allows them the opportunity to take on longer-term research projects, apply for federal funding programs and train more students for our region and beyond. This arrangement also ensures that we continue to grow the University’s partnerships with local and global agri-food industries.”

Working out of Science Commons, one of the most advanced transdisciplinary science facilities of its kind in Canada, Konschuh, Hoover and Stanford will utilize the RDAR support to enhance research programs that are closely aligned with the challenges and needs of local producers.

“RDAR is pleased to support the good work that these scientists are pursuing,” says RDAR Chair, Dr. David Chalack. “We cannot see great results for Alberta’s producers without investing in the people and building capacity for those who are driving positive change for the province. These scientists are leaders in their field, managing research

and extension programs that are producer-led, outcome-driven, and industry-supported, filling a much-needed gap in the agri-food research ecosystem.”

One goal of Korschuh’s research is to improve the sustainability of crops given a changing climate. Her work in this area can help evaluate new crops and lead to the selection of new varieties. Current crops like potatoes, sugar beets and seed canola will remain as research focuses. This research also has implications for regenerative agricultural practices such as no-till farming, planting cover crops and rotational grazing.

“I’ll be working with local producers and agri-businesses like the Potato Growers of Alberta, Farming Smarter and Galaxy Ag Ventures,” says Korschuh. “It’s important to identify the priorities of crop producers and help them transition to more sustainable practices while reducing risks associated with climate change.”

Stanford continues to build on her research that investigates cattle feed and food-borne pathogens. She’s examining ways to improve the detection and control of pathogenic E. coli, as well as building knowledge of the factors that can lead to toxicity in cattle feed.

“Along with minimizing the negative effects on animals, my research aims to identify sustainable feed sources for producers, such as creating silage using food waste from grocery stores,” says Stanford.

Her research also examines pathogens that can transfer from cattle to humans or vice-versa to improve detection and prevent future outbreaks of foodborne disease. Several partners, such as Alberta Beef Producers, Beef Cattle Research Council, Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development and individual producers and feedlot owners, are involved to ensure the research supports the beef industry.

Whether it’s producing feed for cattle or bountiful crops, pollinating insects are an essential component. Hoover’s research into honeybees covers the gamut from nutrition, parasites and viruses to their management and economics. Hoover concentrates on honeybee health, commercial beekeeping and their work as pollinators. Her work aligns with the Alberta Beekeepers Commission’s emphasis on the health of honeybees, the honey industry and pollination.

“My work with various partners, locally, nationally and internationally, is aimed at ensuring our honeybees are healthy, not only for their important role as pollinators but also as producers of honey,” says Hoover.

RDAR is an arm’s length, non-profit corporation designed to enable Alberta producers to determine priorities and lead agriculture research. By collaborating with scientists and researchers, RDAR taps into existing talent and funds ideas generated by innovators to push the boundaries of Alberta’s agriculture potential.

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/agriculture-research-innovation-and-training-earns-rdar-support-extending-three-important>

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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.