



University of
Lethbridge

News Release

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Social sciences and humanities researchers secure greater than \$1.175 million from SSHRC

The breadth of research excellence at the University of Lethbridge is reflected in the latest funding announcement from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), with 10 ULethbridge researchers representing four Faculties and one School all earning support for their work.

On behalf of the Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Karim Bardeesy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, [announced in Edmonton Tuesday](#) more than \$289 million in support for 1,788 social sciences and humanities research projects and partnerships across Canada. The funded projects span a diverse range of topics — including climate change adaptation, economic recovery, social justice and impacts of emerging technologies on society — that will generate new knowledge and enable partnerships to help translate insights into solutions for people and their communities.



“Research in the social sciences and humanities is the cornerstone of a resilient, forward-thinking society,” says Bardeesy. “This announcement reflects our deep commitment to Canadian research. By supporting these projects, we are empowering scholars to develop the vital insights and collaborative solutions needed to build a more resilient, equitable and innovative future for everyone.”

The ULethbridge Faculty of Fine Arts, Faculty of Education, Dhillon School of Business and Faculty of Arts & Science, along with the School of Liberal Education combined to earn \$1.175 million in SSHRC funding support through Insight Grants, Insight Development Grants and Partnership Engage Grants.

“This funding announcement really highlights the excellent work being done throughout the University,” says Dr. Dena McMartin, ULethbridge Vice-President Research. “When students come to study here, they are being educated and work alongside nationally funded researchers

across multiple disciplines, many of which lead their fields in research initiatives. Congratulations to those who earned this valuable support from SSHRC for their respective projects.”

McMartin also notes that Faculty of Education Dean, Dr. Lisa Starr’s project, was the top ranked SSHRC project in Canada, followed closely by Faculty of Fine Arts Dean, Dr. Heather Davis-Fisch, and her drama project.

Insight Grants

Dr. Heather Davis-Fisch’s (Drama, \$413,116) project addresses the problem of English-Canadian theatre historiography’s reliance on textual analysis, scripts, and print documents, which has marginalized historically significant practices, particularly from underrepresented communities. Her research team will partner with galleries, archives, and museums to explore how alternate performance histories emerge from the analysis of archival objects and materials.

Dr. Kaylan Schwarz (Liberal Education, \$69,014) is investigating the construction of feminist identities, and the social contexts which inform them. Combining visual methods, participatory methods, and intergenerational approaches, her project seeks to develop understandings of feminist representation and placemaking in the Canadian Prairies.

In Sierra Leone, girls and young women are often trapped in a cycle of dependency, health complications and poverty. **Dr. Lisa Starr’s (Education, \$368,933)** project is aimed at reshaping gender dynamics for young female teachers in Sierra Leone by redistributing resources, expectations and responsibilities among new teachers. The intent is to study the impact of an integrative approach on Gender Transformation in teachers’ personal lives and teaching practice, including their sense of professional identity and agency.

Insight Development Grants

Dr. David Balcarras (Philosophy, \$26,354) seeks to address a fundamental question in philosophy of language: how words come to have meaning. By combining historical perspective with technical analysis, his project aims to clarify how best to explain the unbounded nature of linguistic meaning in finite human terms. If successful, it promises a deeper understanding of what linguistic meaning really is and how language and thus inquiry itself are possible.

Dr. Katharina Stevens (Philosophy, \$41,957) proposes a project that will establish the foundation for developing a normative theory of voice allocation in interpersonal argumentation. Decisions on whom we give voice to argue with us, who we listen to and to whom we respond meaningfully significantly impact the way in which deliberation in the private and civic sphere proceeds. Normative argumentation theory aims to provide guidance to everyday arguers that will enable them to argue well in all senses of the term, and in all contexts.

Dr. Abdlmutaleb Boshanna (Dhillon School of Business, \$51,253), whose expertise includes corporate governance, corporate disclosure, sustainability, natural language processing (NLP), textual analysis, and machine learning, proposes a project investigating whether firms use tax sustainability disclosure (TSD) as a strategic communication mechanism to navigate fiscal uncertainty and signal investment intentions after major tax reform.

Dr. Rhiannon Mesler (Dhillon School of Business, \$77,198) is delving into the world of AI-mediated systems, noting that everyday customer service decisions — such as refund approvals, late-fee enforcement, fraud flags, and service recovery responses — are increasingly shaped by these systems. The project advances the concept of moral outsourcing: the displacement of responsibility for unfavourable but procedurally defensible outcomes from human decision-makers onto AI systems.

Dr. Monique Giroux (Music, \$34,275) is examining intergenerational music teaching and learning through an in-depth qualitative case study of the Kenosee Lake Kitchen Party and Fiddle Camp (KLKP), an intentionally intergenerational, community-centred fiddle camp in Saskatchewan. The central research question asks how intergenerational teaching and learning are enacted at KLKP, and how these practices may support both continued musical engagement and the care and continuity of traditions.

Academic Freedom (AF) is the focus of **Dr. Dan O'Donnell's (English, \$75,000)** project. Academic Freedom, as it is currently understood from a legal and policy perspective, assumed its current form in statements written in late 1960s and early 1970s. This model has recently struggled to accommodate a broader and more contested set of expectations surrounding freedom of expression and inclusivity — his project proposing to address contemporary questions by contextualizing the debate, intellectually, historically, and from a legal and policy perspective.

Partnership Engage Grant

Dr. Andrea Cuéllar's (Anthropology, \$48,825) project will support the Oldman Watershed Council's (OWC) development of an updated State of the Watershed (SOW) assessment to inform watershed planning across the Oldman watershed. The Oldman watershed was last assessed in 2010, and consistent with historical SOW reporting across Alberta, focused primarily on environmental indicators. Since then, the watershed has experienced significant environmental and social change, including intensifying drought and industrial development. The updated SOW is therefore structured around three complementary pillars — Environmental, Socioeconomic, and Indigenous — to better capture the interconnected ecological and governance dynamics shaping watershed conditions.

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/social-sciences-and-humanities-researchers-secure-greater-1175-million-sshr>

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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.