



# News Release



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## **University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge College collaborate to further enhance agricultural programming in southern Alberta**

The University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge College signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) today designed to further linkages between the southern Alberta institutions in the delivery of agriculture-related programming.

The agreement is a commitment between the university and college to collectively advance learning and research opportunities in agriculture and agribusiness, including the development of the Centre for Agricultural Research and Agribusiness Innovation (CARAI) and the implementation of the Cor Van Raay Southern Alberta Agribusiness Program. It also calls for the formalization of initiatives that will bring together the mandates of other agencies and organizations in the region, such as Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry as well as relevant producer and agriculture industry companies and organizations.

The two institutions announced the new partnership at a ceremony at Lethbridge City Hall today, surrounded by a crowd of students, staff, community partners and elected officials.

"I would like to congratulate the leadership of President Mahon and President Burns for helping to bring your institutions together in a way that will strengthen both of them and our region," says MLA Lethbridge-East Maria Fitzpatrick. "The Government of Alberta is pleased to support this partnership and has invested \$5 million towards this new program. Today's announcement shows that working together we can accomplish great things to benefit students and our region."

Agriculture is one of the key pillars of our region's economy. Last year agriculture represented over 20 per cent of the region's economic output with a value of over \$1 billion.

"I want to acknowledge the generous support of Cor Van Raay which has been instrumental in today's announcement, as well as the Government of Alberta for its strategic investment in this initiative," says Lethbridge Mayor Chris Spearman. "I also commend Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge for their collaboration in the best interests of the students they serve. This educational partnership will enhance our region's agricultural expertise, but the biggest winners will be the students who will enjoy enhanced opportunities for learning and research in the fields of agriculture and agribusiness."

The agreement has major implications for both institutions.

"We are very pleased to enter into this agreement as a means to enhance the many agriculture and agribusiness-related activities with which we are currently engaged in at the university," says University of Lethbridge President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Mike Mahon. "We are eager to further the relationship we have with Lethbridge College and our area partners as we look to enhance research and academic programming in agriculture and agribusiness."

The memorandum of understanding highlights the development of a single and collaborative network for agriculture and agribusiness research in the region through CARAI, building upon the strengths of the university, the college, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Alberta Agriculture and Forestry.

"We've had a strong agriculture program for over 50 years and this agreement further solidifies the options our students have to continue their education upon graduating from the college," says Lethbridge College President and CEO Dr. Paula Burns. "This partnership with the University of Lethbridge is a great opportunity to enhance the strengths of our programming and our collaborative relationships with our community partners."

The Cor Van Raay Agribusiness Program, initially announced in June 2014, is a key aspect of today's MOU, encouraging seamless transfer of credits between the college and the university, and building upon the elements of a traditional 2+2 education model. The program will enhance student engagement, create opportunities for the sharing of resources between the two institutions and be designed to maximize flexibility for students by creating new learning pathways for a diverse group of learners.

The goal of the Cor Van Raay Agribusiness Program is to develop graduates who reflect the dynamic and changing careers within the agricultural industry. Graduates will possess the entrepreneurial spirit, coupled with the necessary skill set to realize leadership roles and successful outcomes within the agricultural sector.

“We want to thank the generosity of Cor Van Raay for supporting this initiative and are extremely grateful for the vision and passion he has towards agriculture and ensuring its viability for future generations here in southern Alberta,” adds Mahon.

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