

# FFRASA

INTERNATIONAL  
WOMENS DAY

# SCIENCE BUILDS

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ILLUSTRATION:  
PAUL SIZER

STELLAR  
MINDS BELONG

THE NEXT GENERATION OF

SCIENTISTS BEGINS WITH YOU

# AMONGST THE STARS

# THE FUTURE



# OUR HEROES

*WHY THE WOMEN WHO SURROUND YOU ARE SOME OF THE MOST PERSEVERING PEOPLE YOU'LL EVER KNOW.*

## DR ANDREA PEPPER

*H.BSC., MSC., PH.D.*

Auditory Brainstem Responses, action potentials, – those were my “babies”. So Imagine my surprise when two years into my Ph.D. research in Neurophysiology, I found out that I was pregnant. My daughter Zara (a current 1st year student at Laurier, and 1st year FOSSA rep), likes to joke that she was an accident. I say she was a happy, unplanned surprise.

While I was very excited, the reality of being a woman in STEM and in school set in. Since I was a full-time student and relied primarily on scholarships (like OGS - Ontario Graduate Scholarships) for my living expenses, being able to take a full maternity leave was not going to be feasible for me. My life involved working in a lab and I didn't have the hours required from a “normal” day-to-day job that would enable me to qualify for EI and collect maternity benefits. OGS was only paid out if I was in school so that meant I was going back into full-time research with a two and a half month-old daughter.

Though women in the United States are often faced with the harsh reality of leaving such a young child in the care of others, we are fortunate in Canada to not often be faced with this decision. I however, did.

The University I was at did not have a daycare on campus, let alone one for infants. I commuted an hour to school each way. Zara, at 2.5 month, was now going to be left at a home daycare for up to 8 hours a day. Let me tell you, the mom guilt was real, but I couldn't give up on my dream.

**“AND TRUTH BE TOLD, THERE WERE A FEW DAYS WHEN ZARA SIMPLY HAD TO COME TO THE LAB WITH ME. I WOULD SET UP HER PLAYPEN AND PUT ON BARNEY WHILE I RAN AN EXPERIMENT.”**

During the next two years, while I finished my experiments and writing my Ph.D. dissertation, I relied immensely on my family to help when Zara was too sick to go to daycare or when I needed to stay late (because you never leave an experiment when you are getting great results!). I had an amazing PI who allowed me some flexibility to adjust my hours when I needed to. And truth be told, there were a few days when Zara simply had to come to the lab with me. I would set up her playpen and put on Barney while I ran an experiment.

In the end, when I crossed the stage to receive my degree, Zara was front, and center and I could hear her yell “Yeah mommy!” from her seat. She is the reason I never gave up. I had to show her that being a woman in STEM was important.

Fast forward 18 years and Zara is now following in my footsteps. She is a woman in STEM and I couldn't be more proud (we even have matching neuron tattoos!). I'd like to think the time I spent reading physiology papers to her instead of children's books help to set her on her path. I'd also like to think that there are fewer obstacles for her to face but the reality is, only time will tell.



# WinSights

Explore WinSights, the Laurier Centre for Women in Science's premier platform for inclusive science communication. Offering research-backed insights and news, WinSights celebrates and amplifies the role of women in science, aiming to break down barriers in STEM. Curious minds and aspiring sci-comm writers are invited to dive into our collection on Medium and contribute to our mission. For more information or to join our community of contributors, reach out at [wins@wlu.ca](mailto:wins@wlu.ca). Join us in championing women in science with every article.



# FOSSA FORMAL

MARCH 9TH | 8PM-12PM | THE TURRET  
TICKETHOLDERS ONLY | VISIT @WLU\_FOSSA  
FOR MORE INFO

READY FOR THE MOST MEMORABLE NIGHT OF  
THE YEAR?





# WOMEN IN STEM

## AISHWARYA PENUMAKA

### FIRST YEAR HEALTH SCIENCE

As a woman in stem, I have to begin by saying I'm extremely grateful for the opportunities I have been provided and my experience thus far. However, I do also have to say that being a woman definitely played a factor in shaping that experience. A distinct memory that sticks with me to this day is my highschool calculus class. How easy it was for my male peers to use subtle digs at me, disregarding and disrespecting my efforts in this class to favour my best friend who happened to be a guy. The differences in our interactions definitely acted as a rude reminder of how women in all fields have to work harder to earn a fraction of the respect and acknowledgement as more privileged groups get automatically.

These barriers do act as tools of discouragement, but to end on a more positive note, being a woman in STEM you meet amazing, supportive women who make your experience memorable. As we love and bond over our common experiences you truly feel like you are not alone in this journey, shoutout to my FOSSA girlies!

## HUMJIT KAUR

### FIRST YEAR HEALTH SCIENCE

For as long as I can remember, I've always had a strong fascination for STEM related subjects, choosing to read books about astronomy, geography, and the inner workings of the body and the world. I remember when I was in the first grade and first started learning science, topics like buoyancy and the planets had me hooked!

## ...HIGHLIGHTING THE UNIQUE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN AT LAURIER

However, as a shy young girl, I felt like I had to keep my fascination to myself. I chose to get lost in books for hours reading about the things that interested me rather than expressing them to those around me. It was difficult to do so when science felt like such a "boy" subject.

For instance, in the sixth grade, I remember wanting to join our school's new robotics club so badly but getting too intimidated to do it since I would be one of the only girls on the team. Furthermore, as someone who used to be soft spoken, during group projects in science and math I was ignored by my male peers. This created feelings of anxiety surrounding the courses I loved.

However, going into high school allowed me to meet so many amazing women who helped me break out of my shell in my science and math class, encouraging me to explore more STEM subjects, such as computer science and anatomy classes, which helped me make the decision to pursue science in University. I am forever grateful for the girls who made me realize that I should strive for my goals and follow my interests, regardless of the opinions of others. The community of women in STEM is so amazing and supportive. Despite being underestimated by my male peers, I learned that others' preconceptions about my gender should never prevent anyone from losing their confidence or failing to follow their passion.

# Tie-Dye LABCOAT



JOIN US FOR AN ELECTRIFYING EVENING OF CREATIVITY AT FOSSA'S LAB COAT TIE DYE NIGHT. BRING YOUR OWN LAB COATS AND TRANSFORM THEM INTO A VIBRANT MASTERPIECE! IT WILL BE A NIGHT TO UNWIND, EXPRESS YOURSELF, AND BOND WITH YOUR LAB MATES OUTSIDE THE CONFINES OF THE LABORATORY. DON'T MISS OUT ON THIS UNIQUE AND MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE TO MAKE A FASHION STATEMENT IN THE LAB LIKE NEVER BEFORE!

MARCH 28TH | 7PM-9PM | THE ATRIUM



# LAURIER CENTRE FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE

The Centre for Women in Science (WinS) at Laurier aims to build a vibrant community in science through research, action, and communication. The Centre – the first of its kind in Canada – was founded in 2012 by Laurier Professor Dr. Shohini Ghose. It brings together women researchers in science, as well as social scientists with expertise in gender issues, education,

psychology and public policy in order to develop evidence-based actions for social change and promote the participation of individuals of all genders in science. Since our inception, we have grown to become a nationally recognized hub for innovative research-based initiatives to prom-

ote awareness and start conversations about gender issues in science, celebrate women scientists, empower young researchers, and develop best-practice policies. At WinS, our annual photo-research exhibit which combines empirical studies with powerful images of women in fields like plumbing to draw attention to representation and gender equity in skilled trades. Reach out to us for more info!



 @LAURIERWINS

 @LAURIERWINS

 [WLU.CA/WINS](http://WLU.CA/WINS)







# FURC

## THE 4TH ANNUAL FOSSA UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

DR. MELANIE RATNAM | DR. ANN MARIE  
BEALS | DR. ALLISON MCDONALD | CHRIS  
HADFIELD

**March 19–21**  
**Science Atrium**

USING THE LINK IN FOSSA'S LINKTREE, STUDENTS CAN SIGN UP TO PRESENT THE RESEARCH THEY'VE BEEN WORKING ON THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. THOSE WHO PRESENT WILL HAVE THEIR POSTER PAID FOR BY FOSSA AND AN OFFICIAL SIGNED CERTIFICATE TO CONFIRM THEY HAVE PRESENTED AT A FORMAL UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE. FURC PRESENTS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE ONGOING RESEARCH AT LAURIER AND DISCUSSING RESEARCH INVOLVEMENT.





# MENSTRUAL EQUITY

## *SURVEY*

The purpose of this study is to gain insight on a project supporting Menstrual Equity (i.e., the affordability, accessibility, and safety of menstrual products) at Wilfrid Laurier University





# Paul Sizer

Paul Sizer, who generously allowed us permission to use his art for this month's cover, is a graphic designer, comic artist, educator and DJ who lives and works in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He's worked with local, national and international clients, rock stars and electronic musicians, scientists and roller derby champions. You can check out his work at [www.paulsizer.com](http://www.paulsizer.com) and follow his work on Instagram (@paulsizerdesign).



Save The Date  
May 16th, 2024

## Building Equitable Trades

Photo-Research  
Exhibit Launch!