

FLARE

Fostering Liberal Arts
Research Excellence



**2026 Multidisciplinary Symposium:
Charting Your Own Path**

FRIDAY, APRIL 17		University of Lethbridge, Alberta
8:00 – 9:00	Registration – Atrium, Science Commons	
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome Address	
9:20 – 11:00	Oral Platform 1:	
9:20	KEYNOTE: Madison Abar, University of Lethbridge <i>Turning Uncertainty into Opportunity: Reflections One Year Post-grad</i>	
10:00	Shona Mitchel, UofL - How To Present So That People Will Listen...and Buy!	
10:15	Sierra Duncan, UofL - The Highs and Lows of Working in a Research Lab as a First-Year Student	
10:30	Harsh Vardhan, UofL - Security, Power, and War: A Structural Realist View of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine	
10:45	Taiah Krivoshein, UofL - Meaningful by Design: Student Experiences in Cooperative Student/Staff SoTL Research	
11:00 – 12:00	Off-Stage Presentation Session	
12:00 – 12:45	Catered Lunch Break	
1:00 – 2:45	Oral Platform #2	
1:00	KEYNOTE: Syndey Shapiro, University of Lethbridge <i>Designing Your Own Path: Careers, Curiosity, and the Future of Work in an AI World</i>	
2:00	Alex Gavey, UofL - A New Checklist of Bryophytes in Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, Canada	
2:15	Austin De Vos, UofL - The Effects of Affective States on Fidgeting-Like Object Manipulation	
2:30	Ife Chukwuelue, UofL - Closing the Gap: Addressing Cervical Cancer Disparities in Alberta	
2:45 – 3:00	Networking / Break	
3:00 – 3:45	Multimedia Platform	
3:00	Ayra Rahman, UofL - Ancestral Echoes	
3:15	Prerak Patel, UofL - Chaos Monkey Simulator: Modeling Cascading Failures in Distributed Systems	
3:30	Ramneek Singh, UofL - Deadliner	
3:45 – 4:45	Oral Platform #3	
3:45	Alssa Thomas, UofL - Machine Learning for Forecasting Chinook Winds and Crop Stress Risk	
4:00	Clayton Coulthard, UofL - Beaver Browsing Bot: Blending Bounding Boxes with Boreal Builders	
4:15	Danny Jacobs, UofL - Municipal Green Infrastructure Development Plan	
4:30	Seth Villamil, UofL - The Role of Psychoacoustics: Auditory Illusions as Tinnitus Therapy	
4:45 – 5:00	Closing Remarks	
5:30 – 7:30	Celebration Reception – Zoo Ballrooms, Students' Union Building	
5:30	KEYNOTE: Brendan Cummins, University of Lethbridge <i>More Than a Degree: Education as Growth and Transformation</i>	
6:30	Awards	

Message From Our Directors

Welcome to FLARE's Inaugural Multidisciplinary Symposium

Dear FLARE Symposium 2026 Attendees:

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to our inaugural multidisciplinary symposium. We are delighted to host this exhilarating program at the University of Lethbridge, Alberta.

FLARE is built on the belief that meaningful work takes many forms. This symposium welcomes undergraduates from all disciplines, whether they are presenting a polished research project, an early draft, a creative work, or a service initiative. In doing so, it supports liberal education by creating a space where students can share their work, and engage with perspectives beyond their own.

This year's inaugural program showcases a wide range of presentation styles and disciplines, reflecting the diversity of student inquiry and expression. Attendees will experience oral and multimedia presentations and displays, each highlighting different ways of communicating ideas and impact. By intentionally welcoming different modalities, FLARE aims to broaden what counts as valuable undergraduate contribution and create an inclusive space for students to present work in ways that best suit their projects and perspectives.

We are also honoured to feature keynote speakers whose journeys and insights speak directly to the spirit of FLARE. Madison Abar, Special Project Assistant in the Office of Accessibility, Belonging and Community, will reflect on her academic and post-graduate journey and the value of adaptability in finding success beyond university. Dr. Sidney Shapiro, Assistant Professor in the Dhillon School of Business, will explore careers, curiosity, and the future of work in an AI-shaped world, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary thinking and openness to emerging opportunities. Brendan Cummins, Instructor in the School of Liberal Education, will speak to the idea of education as a process of growth rather than simple completion, encouraging students to see their academic journeys as opportunities to transform both their thinking and their worlds. Together, these speakers highlight that there is no single path to meaningful work, and that discovery often happens through embracing uncertainty.

Thank you for being part of this inaugural event. We hope today's symposium inspires new ideas, new connections, and a deeper appreciation for the numerous ways undergraduate students contribute to research, creativity, community, and innovation. Welcome to FLARE.

Sincerely,

Flare Executive Team
flarejournal.ca



Rylee Mae
Editor-in-Chief (EIC)



Brannon Sumner
Director of Technical
Operations (DTO)



Kimoya Edwards
Director of Symposium
& Academic Events
(DSAE)



Alejandro Figueroa
Director of Finance &
Grants (DFG)

Charting Your Own Path: Keynote Speaker

Atrium, Science Commons, 9:20am

Madison Abar

Special Project Assistant, Office of Accessibility, Belonging and Community, University of Lethbridge

Turning Uncertainty into Opportunity: Reflections One Year Post-grad

Biography

I am a recent graduate from the University of Lethbridge, completing my Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology in the spring of 2025. After leaving the city for the summer, I found myself back in Lethbridge in October 2025 and back at the University in my current position as a Special Project Assistant for the Accessibility, Belonging and Community Office. I have worked a variety of unique jobs during my studies and post-grad, taking full advantage of every opportunity that came my way, all of which has contributed to succeeding in the position I am in today.

Abstract

In my talk, I will be discussing my academic and job search journey, and the ways I have been able to utilize all my experiences as a student to find success post-grad. I hope that through sharing my journey from applying to ULeth as an Education student (and promptly switching out after one practicum!), to being an Honours Anthropology student, to working in marketing and communications for a retailer, to finding my way back to the University, I can highlight that your education and post-grad path is not always predictable and straight-forward. It is through the turns, the failures and the jobs where you think “What am I even doing!?” that you develop adaptability, grit, and a new perspective on what your degree can do for you.



Notes: _____

Charting Your Own Path: Oral Platform #1 Session

Atrium, Science Commons, 10:00am



How To Present So That People Will Listen...and Buy!

Shona Mitchell Monforton, University of Lethbridge

Shona has a diverse background that ranges from being a professional musician to a computer technician; somewhere in there she learned about marketing, sales, and social media. She holds advanced speaking and leadership awards from Toastmasters, and used to host an open mic night. Shona has served in the Canadian Armed Forces Army Reserves for 21 years and is the first female Armoured sergeant in the King's Own Calgary Regiment, after transferring from a support trade in 2021. She is completing her first year in the Dhillon School of Business' BBA General Management as a Second Degree program and is interested in being involved with entrepreneurial start-ups following graduation.



The Highs and Lows of Working in a Research Lab as a First-Year Student

Sierra Duncan, University of Lethbridge

I am in my first year at the University of Lethbridge and currently pursuing my Bachelor's of Science degree in Psychology. Throughout my first year, I have assisted PhD Candidate Sydney Chertoff in the Leca Lab on multiple studies focused on fidgeting behavior. I hope to continue to advance in this field of research throughout my academic career.



Security, Power, and War: A Structural Realist View of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

Harsh Vardhan, University of Lethbridge

My name is Harsh Vardhan, and I am a fourth-year Political Science student at the University of Lethbridge, minoring in Sociology, currently in my final semester. My academic interests focus on international relations, global governance, and diplomacy. I plan to pursue a master's degree in International Relations, with a focus on global affairs.



Meaningful by Design: Student Experiences in Cooperative Student/Staff SoTL Research

Taiah Krivoshein, University of Lethbridge

Taiah Krivoshein is a second year undergraduate student at the University of Lethbridge. As a double major in anthropology and education she has a passion for education and rethinking pedagogical practices in the classroom. Working with principal investigator Makita Mikuliak and supervisor Jeff Meadows she has spent the last two semesters, Fall 2025 and Winter 2026, working with past Uleth students to better understand how collaborative student-staff research benefits students.

Charting Your Own Path: Off-Stage Session

Atrium, Science Commons, 11:00am

Presenter

Title

Artistic

Shea Gregson Between Forgetting

Man Fel Wong Cycles of life and decay

Poster

Kathleen Turner Inter-Brain Synchrony in Gender-Matched Friend Dyads During Cooperative Bar Game

Aadi Patel A Review of the Historical and Experimental Foundations of Relativity

Camryn Munchrath Manipulating and Measuring Pupillary Responses for Experimental Purposes

Hailey Iwaasa Pandemic Babies: Developmental Outcomes in Preschool-Aged Children Born During the COVID-19 Era

Priyanka Silhi Policy Brief: Youth Homelessness in Canada

Emma Hynes ChassisCraft: Co-Culture Chassis Engineering for Natural Product Synthesis

Dawson Kennedy Taxonomy of dwarf dogwoods (subgenus *Arctocrania*) using digitized herbarium specimens

Nitya Gehalot Bio-Inspired Neural Network Models

Thisali Gunawardana Improving Referral Efficiency: Reducing Medical Delays Through Registered Nurse - Led Coordination

Thisali Gunawardana Addressing PTSD in Indigenous Adolescents Through Ethical & Knowledge-Based Frameworks

Rodas Tesfamicael Bacterial Ribosome Variation Guides Tetracycline Susceptibility in *E. coli*

Tarlan Goharian Disruption of spatial memory by reversible inhibition of medial septum interneurons with DREADDs

Emily Samuel Assessing the Accuracy of AI In Coding Transformational Behaviours Within the FRLM

Multimedia

Matthew MacMaster iGEM 2026

Ayra Rahman Ancestral Echoes

Prerak Patel Chaos Monkey Simulator: Modeling Cascading Failures in Distributed Systems

Evan Saunders Starscape (tech demo)

Notes: _____

Charting Your Own Path: Keynote Speaker

Atrium, Science Commons, 1:00pm

Sydney Shapiro

Assistant Professor, Dhillon School of Business, University of Lethbridge

Designing Your Own Path: Careers, Curiosity, and the Future of Work in an AI World

Biography

Dr. Sidney Shapiro is an Assistant Professor of Business Analytics at the University of Lethbridge's Dhillon School of Business and an expert in AI and data analytics. His work focuses on the intersection of artificial intelligence, business analytics, and education, with extensive experience in both academic and industry settings.

Abstract

This talk explores how careers are increasingly shaped by change, rather than defined by fixed paths. When I began university, the field I work in today did not yet exist, and my trajectory emerged through exploring different disciplines that initially seemed unrelated but ultimately connected. That experience reflects a broader shift in the future of work, where advances in AI, evolving economic conditions, and changing employment structures are redefining how careers develop. I will connect these ideas to the role of student research as a space for experimentation, creativity, and skill-building that extends beyond traditional boundaries. The talk emphasizes that interdisciplinary thinking, adaptability, and a willingness to pursue uncertain directions are not just acceptable, but essential for navigating and shaping emerging opportunities in a rapidly changing world.



Notes: _____

Charting Your Own Path: Oral Platform #2 Session

Atrium, Science Commons, 2:00pm



A New Checklist of Bryophytes in Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, Canada

Alex Gavey, University of Lethbridge

Alex Gavey is a 4th year undergraduate environmental science student and researcher at the University of Lethbridge Herbarium. For the past year, Alex has been heavily involved with researching the mosses and liverworts of Alberta as well as other groups of plants both in the field and using past occurrence records.



The Effects of Affective States on Fidgeting-Like Object Manipulation

Austin DeVos, University of Lethbridge

I am in my 4th year pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. I am currently working on an honour's thesis in Dr. Jean-Baptiste Leca's lab under the supervision of PhD candidate Sydney Chertoff. I am studying fidgeting behaviours, and how they are affected by various factors such as emotional states and personal space.



Closing the Gap: Addressing Cervical Cancer Disparities in Alberta

Ife Chukwuelue, University of Lethbridge

Ife Chukwuelue is a 3rd-year Public Health student and the Incoming Calgary Campus Representative for the ULSU. Drawing on her professional experience as a Licensed Practical Nurse, she advocates for trauma-informed policy changes and equitable access to preventative health services. Her work bridges the gap between clinical practice and health promotion, with a focus on improving health outcomes for marginalized populations in Alberta.

Notes: _____

Charting Your Own Path: Multimedia Platform Session

Atrium, Science Commons, 3:00pm



Ancestral Echoes

Ayra Rahman, University of Lethbridge

Ayra Rahman is a fourth year New Media and Computer Science student. She is interested in user experience, visual design, and visual storytelling. She has a human-centric approach to design and is passionate about developing digital experiences that are functional, accessible, and impactful.



Chaos Monkey Simulator: Modeling Cascading Failures in Distributed Systems

Prerak Patel, University of Lethbridge

I am an undergraduate Computer Science student at the University of Lethbridge with an interest in software development and practical applications of technology. I enjoy building projects that combine backend systems and real-world problem solving.



Deadliner

Ramneek Singh, University of Lethbridge

I am a fourth-year Computer Science student at the University of Lethbridge and the Website Development Officer for FLARE. I built Deadliner, a free web app that automatically extracts deadlines from course outlines and exports them directly to student's calendars. The project was awarded a \$1,000 Quality Initiative Program grant through the ULSU, recognizing its potential to benefit the broader student community.

Notes: _____

Charting Your Own Path: Platform #3 Session

Atrium, Science Commons, 3:45pm



Machine Learning for Forecasting Chinook Winds and Crop Stress Risk

Aissa Thomas, University of Lethbridge

My study investigates the phenomenon of inter-brain synchrony, the way two brains may align in time when responding to a shared experience or environment. To examine this, we used a method called hyperscanning, which involves recording the brain activity of two people at the same time through EEG (electroencephalography). By analyzing this data, we aim to better understand how the brain supports social connection and coordination during shared tasks.



Beaver Browsing Bot: Blending Bounding Boxes with Boreal Builders

Clayton Coulthard, University of Lethbridge

Clayton Coulthard is a bilingual (English/French) BSc student at the University of Lethbridge, originally from the Okanagan, whose work applies remote sensing and GIS to landscape processes and environmental change. A multiple award recipient for geospatial innovation, his research spans mapping for beaver rewilding, invasive species detection, and AI-driven aerial image analysis. He is also a 2024 Esri Canada GIS Scholar and Ambassador.



Municipal Green Infrastructure Development Plan

Danny Jacobs, University of Lethbridge

I am Danny Jacobs, an Honours Political Science Student graduating this April. Through my work with the City of Lethbridge's Waste & Environment Department and various clubs, I have experience in youth engagement, water conservation, environmental policy, municipal governance, and sustainable building practices. I hope to continue to work as a policy analyst, later attending law school or a graduate program in public policy.



The Role of Psychoacoustics: Auditory Illusions as Tinnitus Therapy

Seth Villamil, University of Lethbridge

Seth Villamil is 2025-2026's winner of the Joyce and Ron Sakamoto award for his interests in audio perception research and tinnitus during his capstone. Seth's studies in the Digital Audio Arts continues to offer him opportunities to network and collaborate. He invites you to follow my research on these interactions in hopes of seeing Auditory Illusions as a non-invasive solution for Tinnitus therapy.

Notes: _____

Charting Your Own Path: Keynote Speaker

Zoo Ballrooms, Students' Union Building, 5:30pm

Brendan Cummins

Instructor, School of Liberal Education, University of Lethbridge

More Than a Degree: Education as Growth and Transformation

Biography

After a false start to my university education in 1989, I came back 30 years later and completed my Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in history, 2016 and 2018 respectively at the U of L. Currently, I am in the final leg of a PhD in Cultural, Social, and Political Thought, hoping to finish summer 2026. I am currently an instructor in the School of Liberal education teaching courses focused on developing critical thinking about knowledge and ourselves.

Abstract

My talk will focus on something that has become a bit of a mantra this year; embracing our education as a process of growth, not just completion. I will touch on thinking about our academic journeys as something more than a credential; it is an opportunity to change our minds and our worlds.



Notes: _____

The Symposium would not be possible without our incredible volunteers, judges, and team members. Thank you all!

Team Members:

Ramneek Singh: Web Developer

Wahhaj Gillani: Graphic Design

King Mahata Trezor: Submissions Coordinator

Kathleen Turner: Submissions Coordinator

Summer Crosson: Assistant Program Coordinator

Arik Wold: Undergraduate Review Coordinator

Princess Abitoye: Symposium Validator

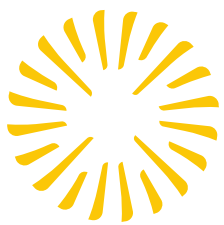
Bnisha Kaushik: Volunteer Coordinator



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**We would like to thank the partners who
have helped make our vision possible!**



University of
Lethbridge



**Thank you for attending the 2026
Multidisciplinary Symposium**