

Laurier Milton: A decade in the making

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It's big news that has been a decade in the making. Wilfrid Laurier University is opening a campus in Milton.

Laurier and the Town of Milton have been working together to bring post-secondary education to the community since 2008. In 2014, the town agreed to give Laurier 150 acres of land, valued at \$50 million, if the province approved a campus in Milton. Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning came on board as a strategic partner to broaden the academic offerings.

Since the successful funding announcement, Laurier has been eagerly planning the academic programming for this fast-growing, forward-looking community.

"Milton is an ideal location for a Laurier campus," says Deborah Dubenofsky, Laurier's vice-president: finance and administration, who is serving as senior project lead for the

Milton campus. "Situated midway along the Toronto-Waterloo innovation corridor and not far from Laurier's existing campuses, it's a young, fast-growing, diverse, prosperous and well-educated community."

A Comprehensive Education Village

The new Laurier campus will be the crown jewel of a 400-acre "Milton Education Village" (MEV), where students and community members can live, work, play, study, stay healthy and enjoy nature.

Located adjacent to the Niagara Escarpment, between Tremaine, Derry and Britannia roads, the site will eventually include a research/business park, retail amenities, residential developments, pedestrian-friendly urban streetscapes, natural trails and bike pathways, as well as a transit hub. The existing Mattamy National Cycling Centre — the velodrome built for the Toronto 2015 Pan Am and Parapan Am Games — will be among the athletic



The Mattamy National Cycling Centre (velodrome) located on the site for the future Milton Education Village



Fans cheer inside the Veldrome during the 2017 Tissot UCI Track Cycling World Cup.



Laurier President Deborah MacLatchy speaks during an event announcing Laurier's new Milton campus at the MEV Innovation Centre.

and recreational facilities available to students, faculty and staff.

As part of the larger site plan, the Milton Education Village (MEV) Innovation Centre, currently located on Industrial Drive, will also be relocate to the new site.

Milton students can begin their Laurier studies in September 2019 at a temporary location within the Milton Education Village Innovation Centre.

As permanent facilities are built, the campus is expected to grow to 2,000 Laurier students within five to 10 years,

with additional intake for Conestoga students. The first permanent campus building is expected to open in 2021/22 on the MEV lands, in time for the first cohort of students to complete their degree in the new facility.

"From our successes in Brantford, we know how to build a university site from the ground up and share the skills and knowledge of our faculty and staff across campuses to create truly collaborative, multi-campus environments," says Deborah MacLatchy, Laurier's president and vice-chancellor.

A fresh academic vision

Milton's new campus will focus on STEAM – science, technology, engineering, arts and math.

In the first few years, Milton campus students will have a choice of four programs: Computer Science, Data Science, Environmental Science and Honours Science.

Plans are also in the works to start Laurier's first engineering programs, a milestone for the university. For Laurier, one of the most exciting things about the new campus is developing programs in environmental engineering and software engineering.

"They're nice offshoots of computer science, data science and environmental science and these areas are predicted to have a job surplus in the next five to 10 years, meaning that there will be more jobs than job seekers in these fields," says Laurier Associate Professor Bruce McKay, who was recently named the academic lead for the development of programs in Milton.

Hands on learning

Right from the campus's beginnings, there will be a strong emphasis on experiential learning. Some opportunities will develop from the interim location in the MEV Innovation Centre, where a number of tech startup enterprises are incubating.

"These businesses are already interested in partnering with Laurier and providing placements for students,"



Elite athletes hit the track during the 2017 Tissot UCI Track Cycling World Cup inside the Mattamy National Cycling Centre in Milton.

says Dubenofsky. "It'll be a wonderful, synergistic opportunity to mix with students and hear from the best and brightest. In return, our students are going to get to learn from leading-edge, trailblazing businesses."

The experiential learning opportunities may include field trips, community service-learning, co-op placements and a range of types of classroom-workplace partnerships. Student entrepreneurship and social innovation projects may also be supported.

With its location in a stunning natural area recognized as a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, the Milton campus will put strong emphasis on sustainability and the environment.

"Imagine a student interested in environmental engineering who has an opportunity to work and study in the pristine Greenbelt in Milton and then go to Waterloo or Brantford to study urban environmental issues – you can just see the advantages for students in our multi-campus offering," says Dubenofsky.

The strong scientific focus doesn't mean the A in STEAM – arts – will be neglected.

"There will be a core of arts courses that will foster the development of communication skills, critical thinking skills, cultural competencies – transferable skills that are in high demand by employers," says McKay.

Indigenous learning

Another priority for all Laurier's campuses is to enhance Indigenous education. To that end, the university has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

"Our goal is to establish a centre of excellence for Indigenous-based learning and sharing," says Dubenofsky. "We're very excited to have our Indigenization goals brought to Milton and to consider how we can integrate them comprehensively into science-based programs."

Alumni and the first cohort

The first cohort of students beginning studies in Milton in September 2019 will be unique. Though they will have access to a full range of services, they will be a smaller group with a chance to put their stamp on the new campus.

"This is going to be of particular interest to trailblazing, pioneering students who are interested in creating a vibrant new approach," says Dubenofsky. "In return, they're going to have an innovative, intimate program designed with them in mind."

"This will be transformational both for Laurier and for Milton," says Dubenofsky. "We're so excited to be moving forward, making our big dreams into reality."

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An aerial view of the Mattamy National Cycling Centre (velodrome) located on the site of the future Milton Education Village (MEV) in Milton, Ontario.