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Sudbury

## Laurentian to offer master's of science communication for Fleming environmental grads

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A new post-secondary school partnership will allow grads from Fleming College's environmental visual communication program to pursue a masters degree in science communication from Laurentian University. (Erik White/CBC )

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Laurentian University in Sudbury has teamed up with Fleming College in Peterborough to provide higher learning for science communicators.

Sometimes when researchers try to relay science-related details to others it comes across complicated or confusing to the average person. Science communicators have backgrounds in both science and communication, and can translate complex science details into plain language.

The university recently signed an agreement with the college that allows graduates from Fleming's environmental visual communication (EVC) program to pursue a master's degree in science communication from Laurentian.

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According to Chantal Barriault, director of master science communication at Laurentian, the idea surfaced a few years ago when a Fleming graduate inquired about the master's program.

That's when Barriault and her team discovered the two programs had similarities.

"Fleming College's program is partnered with the ROM, the Royal Ontario Museum; our program at Laurentian is partnered with Science North," she said.

"So we're very similar in that we use these informal learning institutions as the laboratory for our students where they actually can go practice what they're learning in theory."

Fleming graduates from the environmental visual communication program, who want to pursue the masters in science communication at Laurentian, will get 21 credits for their education already completed. They just must complete 12 more credits in university.

They must already have an undergraduate degree, in addition to their Fleming certificate.

Barriault says usually Laurentian gets 40 applications in March for the master of science communication program, which is the first of its kind in Canada. The team then has to narrow the field down to the 15 available spots for the fall.

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Barriault says graduates with a Masters in Science Communication are in high demand by employers. They are qualified to work at science centres, zoos, aquariums, as well as non-profit or non-governmental organizations that focus on environmental issues or science.

With so many environmental issues making headlines, Barriault says science communicators help explain complicated science in plain-language.

"All of those hot button issues are rooted in science," she says.

"People that have a science degree — like our students — then go on to do a Masters in communication [and] are really well-equipped to be able to explain and make that information accessible for different audiences."

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*With files from Angela Gemmill*

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