

UNIVERSITY INSIDER

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GLOBAL STUDIES

Like most first-years, I had apprehensions about starting my university career, but I quickly found it's hard not to feel a part of something special at Wilfrid Laurier. School spirit is rampant, and you'll be welcomed with wide, gold-and-purple-decked arms the moment you step out of the car on your first day. But if over-the-top enthusiasm doesn't appeal to you, you'll likely find a home in one of the many campus groups. With a multitude of ways to get involved, it was easy to find my niche among the 19,000-plus students. While the university has attempted to maintain its small-campus feel, the burgeoning population has made it difficult to keep class sizes small, and you'll fight to find somewhere to crack open your books from midterms to finals. Lines are extensive at most food outlets, e.g., half an hour long for a coffee at Tim Hortons. Thankfully, the surrounding area offers many options for food or your caffeine fix. Wilfrid Laurier is not primarily known for academic prestige, but the school offers a well-rounded experience and is rife with opportunities—provided you're willing to expand your horizons and look outside the confines of the classroom.

EXTRAS

Creative outlets at WLU are more likely found in your extracurricular activities than in class. Without a fine arts, creative writing or drama program, it's best to situate yourself in the

arts-based campus clubs. Laurier Musical Theatre or Fashion 'N Motion are good places to start. Because of the large student population—Waterloo houses two major universities and a college—the nightlife is better than might be expected from a city of more than 300,000. While big-city veterans might scoff at the selection, you'll have multiple options for drinking or dancing any day of the week.

CITY VIBE

Outside of its post-secondary institutions, Waterloo is mostly known for two things: its small-town feel and as a technology and innovation centre. The area considers itself the Silicon Valley of the north, but it still maintains a sense of community with local staples like the St. Jacobs Farmers' Market. Strangely, these two aspects of the city complement, rather than contradict, each other. A walk to the developing uptown area gives a sample of each, where small boutiques and an outdoor rink are neighbours with world-renowned think tanks such as the Perimeter Institute and the Centre for International Governance Innovation.

THE 411

Check out the website for the on-campus newspaper at thecord.ca, which provides daily updates on university and Waterloo happenings.