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University of Lethbridge’s Dr. Claudia Gonzalez renewed as Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in Sensorimotor Control

University of Lethbridge kinesiology professor Dr. Claudia Gonzalez is among a group of 150 new and renewed Canada Research Chairs (CRC) announced this week by the Government of Canada.

The Honourable Ed Holder, Minister of State (Science and Technology), unveiled a \$139-million investment, with an additional \$7.6 million in infrastructure support from the Canada Foundation for Innovation, in the Canada Research Chairs program. The University of Lethbridge is one of 36 post-secondary institutions in the country to receive funding.

“Through our government’s updated science, technology and innovation strategy, we are making the record investments necessary to push the boundaries of knowledge, create jobs and opportunities, and improve the quality of life of Canadians,” says Holder. “Our government’s Canada Research Chairs Program develops, attracts and retains top talent researchers in Canada whose research, in turn, creates long-term social and economic benefits while training the next generation of students and researchers in Canada.”

Gonzalez, a Canada Research Chair in Sensorimotor Control, has had her Tier 2 Chair renewed for 5 years with an investment of \$500,000. She was initially named a CRC in 2009. An accomplished researcher, her latest work on hemispheric differences in sensorimotor control encompasses behavioural, neuropsychological and developmental domains.

Some of her recent research has focused on hemispheric lateralization for grasping and linking those findings to the development of Executive Function (EF) and language. Gonzalez worked closely with U of L neuroscientist Dr. Robbin Gibb on several studies that showed that a more lateralized brain supports the development of EF – a blanket term that is considered to include self-regulation, working memory and planning. They have shown that children who used their right hand more often to pick up objects demonstrated better executive function and speech production proficiency.

“Our results suggest that EF enjoys privileged support from the left hemisphere, which also controls the right hand. More likely, however, the results indicate that greater degree of lateralization (either to the left or right hemisphere) supports better behavioural control,” says Dr. Claudia Gonzalez, a Canada Research Chair in Sensorimotor Control, and an associate professor in the Department of Kinesiology.

Along this research line, her lab is currently exploring different motor-based training programs to enhance EF and language development in typically-developing and clinical populations of children.

Gonzalez is one of 10 Canada Research Chairs on campus, spanning disciplines as diverse as psychology, neuroscience, history, economics, sociology, physics and biological sciences.

The Canada Research Chairs Program was created in 2000. It is an ongoing annual program designed to attract and retain some of the world’s most accomplished and promising minds by helping to promote research and development and supporting top-tier talent at Canadian post-secondary institutions.

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