

President's Report to Senate June 20, 2023

Time goes quickly! It's hard to believe that it's already the final Senate meeting of this academic year, and that it's Midsummer Day tomorrow. I hope everybody has plans for at least some form of downtime over the summer, and a chance to enjoy a break from normal routine.

Operational Transformation

The operational transformation, with support from Deloitte, is well into its data gathering phases, and consultations are also well underway with more to come over the summer months. Please participate in any consultations that you can, and remember that you can always write to transformation@laurentian.ca with your comments, questions, and suggestions. If you so indicate, the comments will be anonymized before being passed along – the only person to see the name associated with the comment is Jody Tverdal.

Strategic Planning

The strategic planning process, with support from StrategyCorp, has also begun, and will continue with increasing intensity over the summer. Again, please participate in any consultations that you can. The e-mail address strategicplanning@laurentian.ca has also been set up for comments, questions, and suggestions, and again suggestions can be anonymized.

Board

As has been announced, Jeff Bangs is stepping down from the position of Chair of the Board, and in fact entirely off the Board, as of June 30, after incredible, volunteer, service and many hours devoted to Laurentian. The new Chair of the Board, as already announced, will be Vernon (Vern) Cameron. The new vice-chair of the Board was elected on June 16, and is James (Jim) Gallagher. As anticipated in my May Senate report, the Board had its first in-person meeting in well over 3 years late last week, June 15 and 16. June 15 was devoted to various educational activities (on the Robinson-Huron treaty, a 2-hour governance workshop), a faculty and staff barbeque, a faculty recognition event for those who had been promoted, received merit, or obtained research grants, and generally networking with each other and being on campus. June 16 was dedicated to regular Board business. The Board is also starting to restructure its committees – to modernize and become more efficient by reducing the number of committees, and be more in line with other University boards around the province. Some of these actions stem from the NOUS Governance report of January 2022.

Update on Senior Administrative Searches

The Dean of Arts search has resulted in the appointment of **Dr. Jennifer Johnson** effective this coming July 1. She is currently an adjunct faculty member in the School of Liberal Arts and Manager of Laurentian Online with the Centre for Continuing Learning. She previously served as Chair of the Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Thorneloe University from 2007 to 2021. She has a BA (Hons) Women's Studies and Philosophy from Queen's, an MA in Women's Studies from St. Hilda's College (Oxford), and a Ph.D. in Women's Studies from York. Her research is based in qualitative interdisciplinary approaches to the study of gender including feminist and critical pedagogies, and community-based research.

The searches for the Dean of Education & Health, the University Librarian, the Dean of Management, and the Associate VP Francophone Affairs are at various stages. Provost Brouwer can give details.

The searches for Legal Counsel and Associate University Secretary will resume shortly. The search for the Provost and VP Academic continues (the ad and position profile are being constructed); and the search for the VP Finance & Administration is at the stage of preliminary interviews. The ad for the President has been issued, and has been circulating in various places.

Real Estate Term Sheet/Green Space

Laurentian University now has a signed “term sheet” with the province for the potential sale of some real estate assets. The proceeds (up to \$53.5m) will be used to pay creditors as set out in the CCAA Plan of Arrangement. More detail can be read here: [Laurentian University | Terms for the sale of Laurentian University’s real estate assets are established](#). One of the most important things here is the preservation of the green space. Since January, I’ve received many letters about this – first letters of worry and now letters of relief. One was particularly interesting and have permission to share: a staff member in Architecture, Emilio Portal, is also an award-winning experimental musician and producer, and he has just released (June 16) an album supported by the Ontario Arts Council, with 27 performances inspired by the Bennett Lake area, which is part of Laurentian’s green space ([eau bénite | emilio portal \[bandcamp.com\]](#)).

Enrolments

Recently, the Ontario Universities’ Application Centre (OUAC) published data on the incoming undergraduate fall entry class. The data reinforces what we’ve seen as trends for some time – we have reason for cautious optimism as the volume of incoming high school student confirmants has increased relative to last year. There continue to be positive signs within international applications as well, though our rate of converting those confirmants into students is much lower. In more detail... For our domestic 101 pool this cycle, we are seeing improvements at all stages of the funnel, so are hopeful that our numbers will be as predicted. Currently this is standing at +14% compared to last year at this same time. Additional confirmations will come in through the summer, but the bulk should already be confirmed. (“101” refers to undergraduate applicants who come directly to university from an Ontario high school, via OUAC.) For our domestic 105 cycle, the bulk of these come between now and September, so it’s still early days. (“105” refers to undergraduate applicants who either come from high school but not directly, or come directly from high school but from another province, or come some other route, typically from a community college.) International student confirmations come throughout the summer, and can always be affected by a variety of factors, many outside of our control, including the speed at which Canada issues visas compared to other countries. Graduate students, whether domestic or international, also confirm throughout the summer. Undergraduate registration opened on Tuesday, June 6.

Convocation

Seven convocations took place from Tuesday, May 30 through to Friday, June 2. As convocations always are, it was a time of celebration, with many smiling faces among the graduating class, their families and friends, and the faculty and staff who have supported them through their degrees. This class more than any others has had to demonstrate resilience – the normal resilience that it takes to get through any rigorous degree program, but in this case coupled with the pandemic causing the sudden switch to remote learning as well as the University’s financial problems. They really do deserve our heartiest congratulations! The Environmental Sustainability Committee gave out over 900 Nature Positive Pins, to students committing to improve and appreciating their relationships with Nature. Many tree seedlings and wildflower seeds were also given out to graduates and their families and friends. One surprising fact for me was three sets of twins spread over two convocations on the same day. I have attended well over two hundred much bigger convocations at York University, and to be sure, there have occasionally been twins, but never more than one set in any convocation season. And remember, to actually spot the twins, they have to have also been in the same program and graduating at the same time. That certainly made for some great family photos! As I mentioned in May’s Senate report, I hope to get a call out in the near future for suggestions and nominations for a new Chancellor and for recipients of honorary degrees for October convocation.

As some of you may know, **Dr. Jane Goodall** was in Sudbury, at Science North, for the release of an iMax film, *Reasons for Hope*, drawing on decades of her work. The Sudbury greening story was part of the film. She recorded a video of congratulations for our graduates. Two awards were made in conjunction with this visit. **Dr. Jackie Litzgus** has been chosen as the first recipient of the Jane Goodall Research Fellowship in Conservation Biology, in honour of Dr. Litzgus’s groundbreaking work in safeguarding endangered species, particularly the reptiles facing critical challenges in Ontario. In recognition of exceptional dedication to biodiversity conservation, PhD candidate **Tharusha Wijewardena** will be the recipient of a Jane Goodall Student Scholarship, an award made possible by Laurentian faculty and staff, the first of its kind at Laurentian University.

Patrick Cavaliere, School of Liberal Arts, has been awarded the Gitlin Literary Prize for his article "Thomas Wolfe’s 'I Have a Thing to Tell You': Narrative Discourse, Metaphor Transference and German National Socialism," which appeared in *Law Art, Rivista di Diritto, Arte Storia, Journal of Law, Art and History*, 2 (2021), pp. 1-48. This is an annual prize, adjudicated by a committee of the Thomas Wolfe Society, in association with the University of North Carolina Asheville, for the best scholarly article on Thomas Wolfe published in the preceding calendar year.

The **Goodman School of Mines** has been awarded \$448,550 from the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN) and the Ontario Centre of Innovation (OCI) to develop activities with local partners for the Regional Future Workforce (RFW) program, which will help introduce students to careers within Ontario’s automotive & mobility sector. The funds will be used to fund a project called “Electrifying the Future,” which consists of three components: “MineOpportunity: the automotive and mobility edition”; bilingual summer camps; and an education campaign.

The Micro-credential and Non-credit Programming department in the Centre for Continuing Learning has partnered with the Rick Hansen Foundation to deliver their 48 hours RHFAC Training Course to provide learners “with the knowledge and practical skills needed to rate a building for its overall accessibility under the **Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification program.**” Tuition for learners who qualify is fully subsidized by a grant from the provincial government and the course will be offered synchronously over 6 weeks. The first offering will start at the end of June 2023; applications are now being accepted from prospective learners. For more information contact continuinglearning@laurentian.ca.

Many community members participated in the Every Child Matters and Pride Crosswalk paintings the afternoon of June 14 – thanks to the many volunteers who organized this annual event, and ordered the perfect weather! Sudbury Pride Week will be July 9 - 16; you can follow social media (@fiertesudburypride) as events continue to be added.

Finally, a reminder that tomorrow, June 21, is [National Indigenous Peoples Day](#). As you will have seen in the announcement that went out on Monday, there will be a smudging ceremony on campus at 10 a.m., where an elder will impart their wisdom on the significance of this national celebration. This will be followed by events and cultural celebration at Bell Park, celebrating the spirit of unity and community.