

## **President's Report to Senate February 13, 2024**

The last month seems to have been a bit of a whirlwind, and apparently I'm not the only one feeling that way. Through the hard and concentrated work of many people, including many in the room today, the progress on major items such as Transformation, Strategic Planning, Budget Planning, and recruitment / enrolment for the fall 2024 semester has been very encouraging. My sincere thanks go to all those who are making this happen. And on another positive note – the hours of daylight are getting longer!

### **Operational Transformation**

The Ministry of Colleges & Universities has provided written [approval of our Transformation Plan, as announced previously](#). Last month, I reported that the choice of [ERP \(Enterprise Resource Planning\)](#) system was about to go to the Board; it was approved. Currently the work revolves around populating the four workstreams (Information Technology, Financial Services, Human Resources as well as Registration Services and Student Affairs [RSSA]) with those who will do the detailed work of transformation, and we will need to hire or second for an office to actually run this whole project on the ground, in the day-to-day roles, e.g. project director, etc. As this takes shape, we hope to be able to provide more details on this next month.

### **Strategic planning**

As you know, the Strategic Plan is here today at Senate for endorsement, and will go to full Board for approval this Friday, February 16. This is the culmination of a huge amount of consultation, and many opportunities to discuss and review. According to StrategyCorp, who supported this process, more than 2500 community members provided input across the various engagement channels, from July to December 2003, with 20 one-on-one interviews, 15 focus groups, 20 group interviews, four drop-in engagement sessions, and 3 surveys.

All universities have strategic plans, typically for 5 year spans, and it is often a rather routine business to construct them, but definitely not so for this plan for Laurentian, as it represents a unique opportunity to shape the future of the university at a time of transformation and renewal. The Plan is of course not intended to merely sit on the shelf, and the version of the slide deck here shows some of the accountabilities and stewardship for moving the Plan forward and reporting on progress, by giving initial goals for the first year or two. Simply getting started is often where strategic plans in universities fail. Out of the strategic plan will also follow the more detailed academic and research plans. Provost Brouwer and VPR Eger respectively will be leading those according to the normal processes followed at Laurentian University. The committee guiding the academic plan has been selected and is beginning to meet, and the research planning is also beginning shortly, with the process to be followed on today's Senate agenda. I urge you to participate as much as you can in the discussions surrounding both the academic and research plans, as it is these plans that really bring many aspects of the overall strategic plan to life, especially in the areas of Senate's greatest responsibility.

Once both the Strategic Plan and the Operational Transformation Plan are approved (this latter already done of course), Laurentian will have passed two major mandated milestones on our path forward.

### **Board of Governors**

As has become practice, the Board is having an Education session this Thursday afternoon February 15. The first topic is an overview and some details of the procurement process in the Broader Public Sector, which seemed timely given the beginning of the transformation process. The second topic is the rapidly changing situation around international student visas. The regular Board meeting is then on the

morning of Friday February 16. The first topic on that agenda is a presentation by Dr. Shirley Cheechoo of the Weengushk Film Institute, which has a relationship with Laurentian. The Institutional Neutrality policy, passed by the Board in December, continues to receive favourable comment from other universities, and also from the National Post, in the one newspaper article I have seen on this topic: [Laurentian University's commendable defence of educational neutrality | National Post](#).

## **2024 Fall Enrolment**

In addition to the [news shared](#) with the University community last month, which was highlighted by an increase of +5.9% in the number of applications from Ontario High School students, the fall 2024 enrolment trends continue to provide optimism. Since the previous update, we have received even more signs that an increasing number of applicants are interested in Laurentian.

As of January 29, 2024:

- Ontario-based high school applications for undergraduate programs
  - up 7% (+218 applications) - seeing a slight increase in on-campus and larger increase in online degree programs
- Other Domestic applications for undergraduate programs (transfer, non-direct)
  - is up 28% (+195 applications)
- Domestic applications for teacher education
  - down 17% (-19 applications)
- Domestic applications for graduate programs
  - up 30% (+90 applications)
- International applications for undergraduate programs
  - up +72% (+1,157 applications)
- International applications for graduate programs
  - up +88% (+918 applications)

We are encouraged by the growth in nearly all aspects of the University, the increase in the number of first choice applications, and will continue all efforts to foster interest in Laurentian.

## **International Students**

With respect to future enrolment of international students, we are interested to see how the Province will allocate the now-limited spaces for international students. Until those details become clear, we are not able to estimate the impact on Laurentian. We look forward to working with both the federal and provincial governments as these policies unfold. Laurentian sees a greater percentage of its international student population at the graduate level, which is not directly affected by these changes, although the confusion globally about whether student visas to Canada are being granted or not is reportedly already damaging these numbers across the Ontario system. As of last year, Laurentian reached the provincial average of 17% of the overall student population coming in as international students.

## **Update on senior administrative searches**

The search for the next Provost is ongoing. The search for a new Associate University Secretary will be restarting shortly. The new University Librarian will be the subject of today's closed session. Provost Brouwer is chairing the search for a new Dean of Management and a new Dean of Education & Health, both of which are still recruiting candidates. Provost Brouwer is also chairing a search for an Associate VP Students, which will support goals in both the transformation plan and the strategic plan around improvements for student services. VP Lafontaine is continuing to search for a new AVP - Financial Services in a very difficult market.

## **Budget Process**

We had a budget planning forum yesterday (February 12), with presentations of 5-year financial projections, budget requests from academic and central budgets, and the consolidated budget requests. The next steps are to work to refine those budgets, track down details, make decisions, etc. before it goes to the Finance & Property Committee of the Board on April 15, with a view to full Board approval on April 26.

## **Funding News**

There is still no provincial announcement about grants or fees for 2024-2025, or any other recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Panel, which reported last fall. We received notice from the Ministry that our underspent amounts under the 2022-23 [Facilities Renewal Program](#) will be available for us to use over the 2024-2025, 2025-2026, and 2026-2027 fiscal years (on top of those years' normal allocations). We also recently received positive news from the province about special funding for Indigenous initiatives. The Indigenous Education Branch has given us \$2 million over 3 years (2023-2026) to support various initiatives that support Indigenous students, such as counselling and support services and cultural events. This now secures the funds for three years rather than the previous annual renewals.

## **Events**

Since 1992, members of the Laurentian community have been participating in a **Model Parliament** event held in Canada's Parliament in Ottawa. This year marks just the fifth time the event has been organized by Laurentian alumni, and the first student/alumni hybrid event. On January 27th, a group of more than one hundred students, alumni, and donors continued the tradition by debating their bills in the Senate Chamber in Ottawa, followed by an evening banquet, and an alumni organizer breakfast the following morning.

The Critical Minerals Edition of the **Goodman Gold Challenge**, a realistic mining investment case competition, ran from January 31st to February 2nd, here at Laurentian, and included a UK team for the first time ever. Teams of university undergraduate students acted as finance firms in this unique annual competition. The event was organized by the Goodman School of Mines. Congratulations to the Goodman organizing team who made this unique event possible once again.

February is Black History Month and there have been many events both on campus and in the community. There was a Gala on February 3rd at the Steelworkers Hall, where LUACSA (Laurentian University African Caribbean Students Association) and Laurentian were well represented. Black Entrepreneur Day was held on February 7th, Friday at the Cinema will be hosted on February 23rd, and finally a cultural showcase will take place on February 29th.

The Indigenous Student Affairs team has organized multiple events to highlight Red Dress Awareness Day, beginning tomorrow, February 14th, with events also on the 15th and 16th. Among the guest speakers during the week will be Vanessa Brousseau, Angela Sterritt, and Dr. Shirley Cheechoo. All are encouraged to learn more at the Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre.

## **Congratulations**

The **Laurentian Voyageurs Women's Curling team** recently accomplished something for only the third time in Laurentian's history as they became Ontario University Athletics (OUA) Champions. The

team of curlers and their coaches will now compete in Fredericton at the USPORTS national championships in March.

On January 15, **Gabrielle Pellerin** (she/her/elle) began her role as Legal Counsel in the Office of the General Counsel at Laurentian University. Gabrielle is Haudenosaunee Mohawk of Kahnawá:ke and is fluently bilingual in French and English. She is familiar with Laurentian, having obtained her Honours BA here with a Specialization in Indigenous Studies.

Congratulations to **Dr. Sara Z. MacDonald** (School of Liberal Arts, History and Vice-Dean of Arts) who recently won a prestigious book award from the Ontario Historical Society, for her book *University Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in Canada*. Founded in 1888, the Ontario Historical Society is a non-profit corporation and registered charity dedicated to the preservation and celebration of Ontario's history for people of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

Congratulations also to **Senator Dan Scott**, who was recognized by the Ontario Council of University Libraries as one of the recipients of their Outstanding Contribution Award.

The "Bell Let's Talk" **Mental Health Day** was recognized on campus on January 24th, with multiple guest speakers including James Jefferson, Ted Nolan, and Viviane Forest. Congratulations to the organizers of this very successful event!

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