

President's Report to Senate January 2022

I would like to start my report by wishing everyone in the community, students, faculty and staff, the very best for 2022.

Laurentian's journey through restructuring continues, and the positive signs we've seen over the last few weeks give us confidence that better days are indeed ahead - and that our determination in getting this rebuild right will lead to a stronger, more resilient and financially sustainable university.

I know that the entire Laurentian community shares a common goal of ensuring that Laurentian emerges from CCAA as quickly as possible, so that it can continue to provide quality postsecondary education accessible to all in a vibrant, bilingual and tricultural environment.

Provincial Support for Laurentian as it Continues through Restructuring and Renewal of the Board of Governors

On December 16, 2021, the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) announced a package of support reflecting its commitment to the future of Laurentian University. Laurentian is very pleased with this demonstration of the Province's continued support and commitment to its long-term success. The university is grateful to the Province for its assistance and collaboration throughout this restructuring.

This investment by the Province provides renewed confidence in the future of the University. It should provide everyone, in particular students considering Laurentian University and their families, reassurance in choosing to attend this University that has been proudly serving the North for over 60 years.

While this was broadly reported before the holidays, I want to reiterate here that the financial terms of the support from the Province include:

- Up to \$35M to refinance the existing DIP (debtor-in-possession) financing made available within the CCAA proceeding. That is, to replace the existing \$35 million loan that Laurentian has with Firm Capital Corporation, with a new \$35 million loan from the Province.
- The province also expressed an intention to replace the DIP Facility with a long-term loan upon Laurentian's successful emergence from the CCAA proceeding following a Plan of Arrangement that has been accepted by creditors.

- In addition to refinancing the DIP loan, the Province will provide up to \$6M in COVID funding and will provide enrollment corridor and performance protection of up to a combined amount of \$22 million over 6 years. This will help to ensure that the effects of the changes made during the restructuring do not unduly impact Laurentian's operations, and provide the university with a period in which to stabilize all of its operations following emergence from the CCAA proceedings.

This support will help the university emerge from its restructuring as a stronger, financially viable and vibrant institution serving students, employers and communities in Northern Ontario. This announcement is great news for northern Ontario, our community and those who wish to study in a bilingual and tricultural environment. The province's support will help Laurentian pursue its mission of providing quality post-secondary education that is accessible to all.

Laurentian's ongoing restructuring includes changes that will continue to occur, some on an accelerated timeline.

We were pleased to announce on December 21, 2021, the names of five (5) members appointed to the Laurentian University Board of Governors by the Province of Ontario. These volunteer members are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council (LGIC) pursuant to the Laurentian Act and will serve for one year, in accordance with the terms of their appointment by the LGIC. These members are:

- Debbi Nicholson, President & CEO, Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce;
- Don Duval, CEO, NORCAT;
- Robert Brouillette, Owner/President, City Welding and a lawyer in the community;
- Gerard (Gerry) Bilodeau, President, GBMC Inc. a mining consultancy; and
- Jeff Bangs, Partner, Pathway Group, a government relations firm.

At the same time we want to express our thanks and appreciation to the 11 board members who recently stepped down from the board. Their dedication to the university, particularly through the past year during the restructuring process, has been unwavering.

In October, the University commenced a comprehensive operational and governance review conducted by an independent third party Nous Group through the court-appointed Monitor and Chief Redevelopment Officer, which included input from a significant number of stakeholders. We know that there will be a number of recommendations arising from those reports, and we look forward to engaging in discussions with Laurentian stakeholders on the recommendations we receive. The University is committed to continued renewal of the board, as well as reviewing all functions, practices, operations and roles and making changes as recommended, where appropriate.

COVID-19 Update

On January 3, 2022, the Government of Ontario released new [provincial regulations with respect to the pandemic](#) that detailed the [province's 21-day measures](#) which began on January 5, 2022.

Based on these new regulations, the Laurentian University team has determined the following will apply to campus until at least January 27, 2022:

- Dining on-campus will be limited to the Great Hall and will be open for take-out only
- Residences remain open and staffed to support students

- The Campus Recreation Center gym is closed
- All indoor training for varsity athletes is currently on hold
- Remote Work Guidelines for employees remain in place

Classes commenced January 17, 2022 as previously reported and most classes previously scheduled for on-campus delivery will be delivered remotely until at least February 4, 2022. Beginning the week of February 7th additional face-to-face instruction is expected to return to campus, with the intent to have all classes originally scheduled to be face-to-face in the Winter Term, resumed on-campus no later than February 28th. I expect there will be a few exceptions for a limited number of courses and students will be contacted directly by their instructor for those applicable courses.

We intend to share details on the programs/courses that will be returned to campus the week of February 7th, February 14th, and February 28th no later than January 24th. It remains our goal to provide a minimum of two weeks notice for return to on-campus delivery. Although the pandemic continues to evolve, the health and safety of our campus community remains a top priority, and we will continue to communicate updates in a timely fashion to provide a safe return to in-person learning that we know is so important to student life.

Although the University remains open to support students in residence and critical research activities that are not able to be completed off-site, most staff are working remotely until January 28th. During this time, most student services including the Hub, are currently being delivered remotely and for more information, students can contact the myLaurentian Hub via the following:

- Live Chat: [Chat Now](#)
- Email: hub@laurentian.ca
- Telephone: 705-673-6565 / 1-800-263-4188
- myLaurentian Student Portal: my.laurentian.ca

To support the gradual and staged return to face-to-face instruction on campus, staff supporting student services and teaching delivery will have a staged return to campus beginning the week of January 31st. More information on the return to campus schedule for student service delivery will also be shared by January 24th.

I would like to commend the Laurentian community for their commitment to vaccination against COVID-19. At the end of the Fall semester, over 99% of the employees and students attending campus were fully vaccinated against COVID-19. With 3rd dose/booster shots readily available, I strongly encourage all who are eligible to receive their booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to do so as we prepare for a return to campus for face-to-face learning. I recently received the booster myself and have been made aware that many of our local walk-in vaccination clinics are welcoming patients with very short wait times. Vaccination Clinics will also be held on campus at Health & Wellness Services in SSR G-23 every Wednesday from 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM by appointment. I recommend visiting your local Public Health agency to learn more about this and [other COVID-19 protocols](#).

Update on Applications to Laurentian and Recruitment Efforts

The Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC) deadline for direct-entry high school applicants was January 13th, 2022. While applicants can apply after this deadline, Laurentian typically receives the majority of high school applications (101s) by the OUAC deadline. When comparing the same date (January 10th) year over year, domestic 101 applications are currently -44% behind.

The decrease in applications is disappointing but not unexpected, given the academic restructuring that was undertaken last spring, which occurred after 101 applications had been received. We're also dealing with partial data so we're nowhere near the finish line. This is a marathon, not a sprint.

Laurentian expects to continue to receive more applications, right up to the deadline; however, the current trends have been consistently behind by more than 40% since late Fall. Regionally, the domestic 101 applications are showing the following gaps:

- Sudbury -33%
- GTA -36%
- North East -54%
- Central -57%

In the past two months, Liaison, Marketing and Digital Strategy have been having regular meetings with the Associate Vice-President, Student Success, Registrar and Secretary of Senate to ensure there is an understanding of the approaches to recruitment and retention by all.

Additionally, when looking at all domestic applications (all application types for all academic levels), English Language programs are slightly better trending at -42% when compared to French Language programs which are trending at -52% year over year. On a more positive note, our fully online degree programs overall are showing less of a year over year decrease at -1% when compared to our on campus degree programs at -44%.

International, Transfer/Mature and Graduate applicants do not have an OUAC deadline and the bulk of applications are received later in the cycle. Laurentian will be continuing to monitor the admission trends and provide updates as the cycle evolves.

Domestic Recruitment, International Recruitment and the Office of Admissions will be focusing their efforts to secure high conversion rates to confirmed offerees for 2022/2023. To start, two (2) Enrolment Clerk positions will be hired in the coming weeks to facilitate document follow-up, outreach, and front-line services, encouraging not only new offerees, but also new applicants to flow through the funnel to receive offers and participate in one of the many unique and recurring conversion activities. Admissions will be increasing their offering rate, and re-reviewing all applications to ensure the maximum number of offers are distributed to the eligible applicant pool on an ongoing basis. From here, the academic departments will focus on initiatives to promote the acceptance of offers. It should be noted that the only program to be considered 'limited enrolment' for undergraduate applicants will be for the English-language Nursing program. Therefore, offers will be able to be sent to qualified students early on.

On the Domestic side, from now to the end of February, we will begin the next phases of our ongoing Post-Sec 12 series, aimed at helping applicants through their journey. Both events - 'Parent Night' and 'You and Your Offer' focus on helping offer holders and their supporters see the specific reasons and advantages of Laurentian University.

International offer holders will be invited to monthly information sessions to work on accepting offers, preparing for study permit applications, and how to get into Canada.

In conjunction with the School of Natural Sciences, we will be offering a virtual Open House for all offer holders to the School's many programs. We then begin pushing on social media, email, and text as an ongoing conversion campaign.

The topics and messaging for each campaign is unique, not only the platform used to convey the message, but also the person's specific program(s) to which they hold an offer(s). We focus on the following in an ongoing fashion until, and even after, the deadlines have passed;

- Accepting your offer
- Deposit payment reminder for international offer holders
- Issue confirmation of payment to support study permit application
- Student-to-student email testimonials
- International student testimonial by Country (Major countries such as China, India, Iran, Bangladesh, African, etc)
- Welcome to Sudbury, Canada Marketing campaign for international offer holder
- Study Permit Info session to support international offer holders
- Graduate success stories
- Friendly nudges for campus tours
- Upcoming events and activities

Deans and School Directors, along with their respective program coordinators have already begun receiving bi-weekly updates to their offeree pool, including direct contact information for email and phone. Liaison continues to work with departments to craft messaging, and encourage outreach in any number of promotional ways, including program information, graduate success stories, upper year courses, career paths, professional school opportunities like medicine, and first year experiences. Additionally faculty and Liaison student ambassadors will be encouraged to focus their efforts on this group for a call campaign in February (Students) and March (Faculty).

For both 101 and 105 offer holders, activities will ramp up in March to ensure we showcase our exceptional first year experience, but also provide that direct 1:1 experience Laurentian University is known for in its applicant engagement. Coupled with this are our ongoing activities with other departments, which include;

- Alumni Ambassador Training Program
- Office of Graduate Studies Conversion
- The ongoing awareness campaigns from Marketing
- CNFS Ambassador Mentorship Program

It is important to remember that Domestic Recruitment, International Recruitment and Admissions continue to recruit and evaluate new applicants throughout the second semester. Phone, email, zoom and discovery-oriented presentations will continue for all those who are interested in pursuing their education with Laurentian University.

New Academic Partnerships

As of September 2022, Laurentian University in collaboration with Collège Boréal will offer a *baccalauréat en Administration des affaires (B.A.A.)* entirely from Collège Boréal's Toronto campus. This new course will allow students to obtain both technical and university training. This offering is also part of the long-term commitment to the excellence of the programming of the two institutions and the relevance of ensuring a quality French-speaking and bilingual workforce.

Francophone Advisory Committee

The Joint Bilingualism Committee, whose mandate is to promote bilingualism at Laurentian University, has approved a *Comité consultatif francophone* that will help develop policies and strategies relating to Francophone matters. Committee members will come from Laurentian University and community partners. The invitation to participate in this twelve (12) member committee will be issued soon.

CCAA Updates

Laurentian continues to proceed through the necessary steps of the CCAA restructuring in order to emerge as a restructured entity. This includes:

- the Monitor's review and determination of all claims filed against the University with input from the Laurentian team, and the determination of any disputed claims by the court-appointed Claims Officer or the Court
- considering and engaging with stakeholders on the recommendations arising from the operational and governance reviews undertaken by the Nous Group
- considering the recommendations in the real estate review and actioning any items
- finalizing the audited financial statements for the year ended April 30, 2021
- preparing and refreshing the financial forecast
- addressing the new relationship with NOSM in view of its independence as a standalone university, including its use of Laurentian-owned buildings in future and the financial terms that will apply
- engaging in negotiations with creditors around the terms of a Plan of Arrangement to be voted upon.

We are diligently working to advance each of these items. A motion will be brought before the CCAA Court on January 27, for an extension of the existing stay of proceedings (which currently expires on January 31) to May 31. Detailed materials in support of the requested stay extension will be served on all parties in the CCAA proceeding on January 20. They will also be filed with the Court and posted on the Monitor's website, and are publicly available for all to see.

The Monitor advises that the NOUS Reports on the operational and governance reviews are now complete, so I anticipate that further information relating to those reports will be available very shortly.

A reminder that our website dedicated to the CCAA proceedings can be accessed at: www.laurentianu.info and that the same for the Monitor can be accessed at: www.ey.com/ca/Laurentian.

Auditor General of Ontario Audit

The decision released January 12, 2022 by Chief Justice Morawetz of the Superior Court of Justice provided a clear answer to the issue that has been the subject of considerable disagreement between the Auditor General and the University. That legal issue, which the Auditor General requested the Court to rule on, relates to an audit subject's legal obligation to provide information to the Auditor General, and the Auditor General's legal right to access information from an audit subject. The Court confirmed that Laurentian is not required to provide, and she is not legally entitled to, information and documents that are subject to legal privilege.

The Auditor General has announced in the media that she intends to appeal this decision.

Apart from the narrow issue of information and documents subject to legal privilege, the University has cooperated with the Auditor General's inquiry in all other respects. Laurentian has authorized and encouraged all staff to participate in interviews with the Auditor General of Ontario, and has not filtered or impeded those discussions in any way. Laurentian personnel have provided documents directly to the Auditor General without any counsel reviewing them in advance, in the case of all documents that do not include legally privileged communications which the Court has determined the Auditor General is not entitled to receive. We have also granted her office direct access to our entire financial database, enrolment system, as well as a substantial volume of other non-privileged documentation covering many decades. We will continue to provide the Auditor General with any documentation and non-privileged information she needs, and is entitled to receive, in order to perform her audit.

Speaker's Warrants issued by the Legislature

In December, in connection with the document requests made by the Auditor General and her position on non-disclosure of those documents, warrants were issued by the Speaker of the legislature at the request of the Standing Committee to myself as President of the University and the then-Chair of the Board of Governors, Claude Lacroix. The Committee's stated intention in seeking these documents from Laurentian through a Warrant is to provide them to the Auditor General for her audit. The Court has recently declared that the Auditor General is not entitled to receive documents subject to privilege.

Much has happened since the Warrants were issued on December 9:

- the University has continued to collect and deliver all non-privileged information and documents requested by the Committee
- the Chief Justice of the Ontario Superior Court has issued a written decision confirming that the Auditor General is not entitled to compel or receive documents from Laurentian that are privileged
- Laurentian brought a motion within the CCAA proceeding asking for a "pause" (or a stay) on complying with the Warrants by the deadline of February 1 so that the Court can determine whether the Warrants are legal. That stay motion is being heard by Chief Justice Morawetz on Tuesday, January 18, and all parties will await the decision from the Court.

As the matter is currently before the Court and involves legal issues, I will not comment further except to say that the University will, of course, comply with any direction provided by the Court. These are complex issues that need to be resolved, and are not obstacles created by the University to frustrate the Auditor General, the Standing Committee or stakeholders. Our goal is to complete the CCAA restructuring and emerge on a financially-sustainable footing, having successfully addressed and corrected challenges that existed for many years.

Kudos

- During the month of December there were several students who were isolating in residence due to COVID-19 protocols. During this time staff in residence, and members of Laurentian's CARE team, provided exceptional support to the students. Meals and care packages were delivered to students in isolation and daily check-ins also occurred to

ensure each student had the care and support needed. Kudos to the following people from residents who were involved in supporting the students, Benjamin Demianiuk, Joseph McGibbon, Kayla Dibblee, Dave DeLoye, Kyle Ackerland, Armande Martin, and Bryce Allen.

- The core members of the CARE team include: Nicole St. Marseille, Shannon Goffin, Michelle Brunette, Mary Laur, Stephanie Harris, Joseph McGibbon, and Isabelle Chaussé. Through the holiday period, the CARE team coordinated student support and outreach with the help of Kayla Dibblee, Tom Fenske, Sylvie Chrétien-Makela, Leeanne Croteau, Melissa Ouimette, Troy Boyer, and the teams from Residence, LUSU, ISA and Security. The mission of the Laurentian Campus Assessment, Response, and Education (“CARE”) team is to “support a caring and safe place to learn and work, by identifying and communicating behavioural risks and threats, and providing coordinated early intervention for individual and campus wellness.”
- Kudos to Health and Safety including all the Safety Ambassadors and Health and Wellness Services for continuing to provide exceptional services to employees and students at Laurentian University as we navigate the on-going pandemic. The teams were instrumental in setting up the health and safety procedures for exams and were in regular communication with Public Health Sudbury and Districts throughout the month of December to ensure the Laurentian community had the most up to date information on COVID-19. Through their advocacy and leadership COVID-19 testing and vaccination clinics were available on campus (and continue to be available). Kudos to members of the teams including, Gail Cowper-Benoit, George Flagler, Lyne Rivet, Emily Carriere, Linda Tresidder, Sandra Frappier, Kaitlyn Lyrette, and Susan Finlay.
- Congratulations are in order for learners amongst Human Studies and Interdisciplinarity students. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual and hybrid modes of learning have not only increased in volume, but have also been enhanced. Students are now accustomed to learning both in and outside of the classroom, and this year’s cohort of PhD students in the Human Studies program recently shared that they attribute much of their ongoing academic success to the hybrid mode of learning made available to them. Congratulations to these students and all others at Laurentian who we are proud to call so resilient. Equal resiliency is shared by our dedicated faculty and staff.
- I would also like to highlight the efforts of the team at MIRARCO, a research arm of Laurentian University. Together and with shared expertise, they launched a new collaborative project with Peru on environmental remediation. Their research project aims to develop a restoration plan that will improve water quality throughout the Coralaque River basin in Peru, and help local communities affected by this problem. MIRARCO and Laurentian University recently sent a research team to Peru to initiate the first phase of the project. Congratulations!
- I would like to recognize the Office of Equity, Diversity, Human Rights and Inclusion at Laurentian for their collaboration with Collège Boréal and Cambrian College whose collaborative video raising awareness of Sexual Violence was made available to the public in the month of December. The video addresses the following key points: raising awareness, breaking the silence, giving hope, and promoting services.

- I would like to recognize the dedication of many involved with the delivery of our December exam session. First, our faculty members who were able to modify their exam delivery to be remote as new safety measures were put in place. Second, our staff who supported this transition. And of course, our students who once again were required to persevere and succeed regardless of the changes to the environment. We are proud of the strength, dedication and resilience of the entire Laurentian community. We know that in 2022, we will continue to find strength and a sense of community, both on and off campus.
- Dr. Sara Torres from Social Work was awarded a Connection grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for her project entitled "Knowledge Mobilization Focusing on Protective Factors for Children's Welfare: the case of Urban Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, and Immigrant and Refugee communities". With this grant, in 2022, Dr. Torres and her research team will organize a series of interactive educational and outreach activities, based on their previous research, seeking to raise awareness and to foster dialogue between and within communities, with health and social services providers, policy-makers, and culturally specific organizations, on how to serve and engage with families and children. They also aim to identify strategies that will prevent further over-representation of Urban Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, and immigrant and refugee populations in state care in Nova Scotia.
- "Over the dusty moon". A mechanical engineering capstone team from the School of Engineering & Computer Sciences has just been invited to compete at an international space robotics competition organized by the Colorado School of Mines and Lockheed Martin, with judges from NASA. The competition (called Over the Dusty Moon) involves developing a material transport system to efficiently move lunar regolith. The team has a very good concept and a very strong group of industry and faculty advisors: Dr Derek Gransden, Dr Markus Timusk and mechanical technologist Greg Lakenen.
- Forensic Science Student, Bella Croiser, hit the local news spotlight for playing a lead role in the Sudbury Youth Opioid Awareness Campaign. This is an educational outreach program aimed at high school students, being delivered under the umbrella of the Sudbury Rainbow Crime Stoppers initiative. The program will be promoted and executed across many secondary schools in the region. [Find out more by viewing the CTV Northern Ontario news clip from Jan 7th](#) which features Dr James Watterson, Director of Laurentian's School of Natural Sciences and Director of the Forensic Science Institute.