

## **President's report to Senate**

*January 21, 2025*

Dear Senate colleagues,

I am pleased to welcome you to a new calendar year! I trust you all had a pleasant and restful holiday break, and I am looking forward to everything we will accomplish together in the Winter term. While my December report provided a retrospective on 2024, I would like to take this opportunity to look forward to 2025.

### **Budget**

An early priority will be the construction of the budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year. As we discussed at our Community Update meeting on December 9, these are challenging times for Ontario's postsecondary sector, as a confluence of factors resulting from policy-making decisions coincide to adversely affect the bottom lines of colleges and universities. Within this difficult environment, Laurentian finds itself in a relatively positive position, one that results largely from the restructuring decisions that were already made in recent years.

The budget process will play out in the coming months, with the focus being on reinvesting responsibly in areas of priority for the future. We are in a good position today, but we must continue to be conscientious and strategic in our decisions to ensure that this situation endures. The policy context for the post-secondary environment is unlikely to improve in the near future. As a result, we must maintain financial flexibility to compensate for unexpected headwinds while rebuilding our reserves.

### **Exiting CCAA**

In 2025, Laurentian will also formally exit the CCAA process by completing the Plan of Arrangement. To do so, the University has until the end of November to complete the sale of real estate assets to Infrastructure Ontario. These will be leased back for our use where appropriate. The funds from these sales will be used to fund the distribution pool for the repayment of the University's creditors.

This is a complex process that involves a number of stakeholders, and several steps will have to take place before we are in a position to make any public announcements. However, the process is well underway and the University is confident that the sales can be completed before the November deadline. We will provide additional updates as we are able.

## **Strategic Plan implementation**

Finally, a continuing priority will be the implementation of the University's Strategic Plan, including the approval and implementation of the Academic and Strategic Research Plans. One strategic initiative on which I would like to focus today, however, is the articulation of Laurentian's identity as a bilingual and tricultural institution. The identity plays out in a number of different ways, including the programs and academic activities we offer in French, the services provided for Francophone students, our support for Indigenous programs and services, and our hosting of special events such as the National Building Reconciliation Forum.

Of course, this bilingual and tricultural identity is not a new idea. To the contrary, it is one that many of us already take for granted and that is reflective of our local context. However, the Strategic Plan asks us to consider what it means – for us, for our students, and for our activities – to be bilingual and tricultural, and to articulate this publicly.

## **EAF project**

On November 4, Laurentian announced the launch of a project under the Ministry of Colleges and Universities' Efficiency and Accountability Fund (EAF). The purpose of the project, which has been supported by Deloitte, is to expand our planning and continue in our goal of building a stronger, more resilient university, and to help guide reinvestment in areas of institutional priority. Laurentian's participation in the Fund was mandated by the Ministry, as it was for approximately 20 other post-secondary institutions selected by the provincial government.

Under the Ministry's timelines, Deloitte must submit a draft report by the end of January. This report must include a list of recommendations for raising new revenue and reinvesting in current activities, as well as financial modeling for these recommendations. The draft report will then be refined by the end of March, at which time a final report must be submitted.

The draft document will come to Senate in February for discussion.

## **Congratulations**

### *SPAD consulting trip*

Students in the Sports Administration program capped off their academic journey by completing an international consulting project for Adidas, the renowned sports apparel company. This capstone experience is part of the program's commitment to preparing graduates for global success by providing hands-on work-integrated learning experiences and fostering industry connections.

### *Architecture Partnership*

Graduate students in the McEwen School of Architecture have been working on an innovative project in collaboration with Independent Living Sudbury Manitoulin (ILSM). Under the guidance of Professor Dr. Thomas Strickland, the students are designing a fully accessible residential building based on the specific needs of the residents of ILSM while applying the seven principles of universal design.

## **Responsible Use of AI**

The Ad Hoc Senate Committee on Generative AI invites all faculty and staff to a Generative AI webinar presented by Dr. Erin Aspenlieder, Associate Vice-Provost, Academic Quality and Teaching Innovation at Sheridan College via Zoom titled 'Responsible Use of Generative AI in the University Environment'. The session will take place on January 27 from 1230-200.

This presentation examines how generative AI is being used across higher education, drawing from direct experience guiding AI implementation at McMaster University. The session explores current applications in teaching, research, and administrative operations, while addressing key ethical considerations and risks. The presentation covers both the capabilities and limitations of AI tools in the university setting, along with strategies for responsible adoption.

I want to thank the Committee for their work in planning this event and encourage all those who are able to attend this timely event.

## **Reconnecting with alumni, donors, and friends of Laurentian**

In order to further the University's strategic objectives, I have continued to meet with alumni, donors, and friends of Laurentian to share updates on our activities and recent news. Since my last meeting, these have included the following:

- Paul Genest, Senior Vice-President of Power Corporation of Canada. Power Corporation has roots in Sudbury and its current Deputy Chairman is André Desmarais, after whose family the Laurentian library is named.
- J. Paul Rollinson, President of Kinross Gold. Kinross is one of the top mining companies in Canada and Mr. Rollinson is a Laurentian graduate. Kinross is also the title sponsor of Laurentian's Annual Goodman Gold Challenge.
- I attended the annual induction ceremony of the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame, where I met with a number of senior executives in the mining sector. Of this year's four inductees into the Hall of Fame, three have a connection to Sudbury.

## **Updates from the Vice-President, Research**

As we embark on a new year, I wish all faculty, staff, and students success in your research and scholarship endeavours in 2025. Research plays a vital role in developing talent, advancing knowledge, and addressing some of the most pressing challenges facing society. Sudbury and Laurentian University have led the way before with environmental restoration of land and water (Sudbury Protocol) and our faculty, staff, students, industry, government, community, and Indigenous partners are well-positioned to be leaders again addressing climate change, and climate adaptation through environmental solutions, while also developing innovated methods to mine and recover critical minerals needed for the global energy transition. We also have leaders among us who are at the forefront of addressing social well-being, mental health and addictions, and housing challenges through their scholarship. Laurentian also has a unique opportunity to partner with Indigenous communities to advance research by, for and with Indigenous communities as a steward of documents from the Robinson Huron Treaty settlement.

Early this year we will complete the Strategic Research Plan setting out a vision and path for the next five years. Knowledge creation and discovery and innovation will be needed, led by faculty, staff, and students from the Library and across every Faculty. Laurentian has a proud history of research and scholarship that has made a difference locally, nationally, and internationally, and I look forward to continuing to celebrate your research excellence in the year ahead.

### **Research Week Updates**

A reminder for Senators that Research Week activities will take place between February 24-28, 2025. Faculty, staff and students will have opportunities to participate in a number of events including research insight talks, poster presentation sessions, the graduate student symposium, 3MT, GradFlix, and the Voyageurs Innovation Challenge, to name a few.

Graduate students are invited to contact [graduatestudies@laurentian.ca](mailto:graduatestudies@laurentian.ca) for more information on how to participate in the Graduate Student Research Symposium taking place February 26 and 27, and 3MT and GradFlix taking place on February 27.

Faculty, students, postdoctoral fellows, and research staff are invited to submit an expression of interest to display a poster during Research Week by completing the following form: [Link to Google Form](#). The deadline for expressions of interest is January 27th at 4:30 PM.

Calls are still open for faculty, staff, and students interested in displaying a research poster or competition in the Voyageurs Innovation Challenge. Teams of faculty and students interested in participating in the Voyageurs Innovation Challenge must submit a completed application by filling out the Google Form ([link](#)) no later than **February 7, 2025**.

Laurentian University will also partner with Science North for a special screening of *Planting Hope*, in the evening of February 25 at Dynamic Earth. Mark your calendars, as more information will follow soon along with the full schedule of Research Week events.

### **Internal Research Funding Opportunities**

The *New Research Initiative Fund* supports research exploring social sciences and humanities questions or areas by providing seed funding in preparation for the upscaling of a project and a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant submission. The objective of the *Knowledge Mobilization Activities and Initiatives Fund* is to increase the reach and impact of social sciences and humanities research conducted at Laurentian University. Awards are valued at up to \$7,000, with applications due by January 30, 2025, at 4:30 pm. More information on how to apply can be found at <https://laurentian.ca/research>.