

## **President's Report to Senate November 2020**

As we head towards the end of November and approach the end of another, albeit very unusual semester, our students are heading towards preparation for term assignments and virtual exams. Sincerest appreciation and kudos to all of our faculty and staff who continue to work so hard to provide the best possible opportunity for our students to be successful. With the second wave of COVID-19 continuing to ramp up, we nonetheless remain committed to improving our modalities of course delivery as we progress into the winter term and look forward to a return to increasing face-to-face activities as soon as possible. With the recent announcement of substantial progress on COVID-19 vaccines, a light is beginning to shine at the end of the tunnel with respect to the prospects for a full return to campus during 2021. While I have heard many good things from students about the virtual learning experience that is being provided, I also hear feedback that indicates that we must continue to work to optimize the experience for all. Our academic leadership from Provost Berger, through our Deans, the Center for Academic Excellence and our information technology department are all continuing their efforts to provide the tools and resources needed for our faculty to continue to enhance the learning experience through these new modalities.

### **Celebrating Laurentian @ Sixty**

On March 28th of this year, Laurentian University quietly observed its 60th anniversary. It was eleven days after the declaration of the COVID-19 state of emergency in Ontario, and just over two weeks after the state of emergency was declared on our campus. It did not seem appropriate to celebrate an anniversary, even one so remarkable, in light of the pandemic the world was only just beginning to experience. Months later, however, we revisited this decision and decided that the Laurentian community deserves to celebrate and be proud of its 60 years of accomplishments.

Without a dedicated budget, Laurentian is working to creatively address the celebration of the 60th in a way that amplifies the excellence of our University, while respecting the challenges that our community is currently facing. Our ideas for marking the 60th include the release of a 60th Communications and Marketing toolkit that provides our community with the signature block, PowerPoint slide decks, logos, news release, and key messages on our anniversary. We will further engage in outreach to the media to showcase Laurentian's history and current research, including a media tour/briefing/roundtable discussions, a guided campus tour of historical landmarks, and a flagship opinion editorial in English and in French. Advancement and Affaires Francophones have two e-magazines in the works, including one that celebrates Francophone alumni according to each decade. Laurentian is also planning a high-profile marquee kick-off event with notable alumni across the decades of Laurentian's history to be led and moderated by our Chancellor and noted journalist Steve Paikin. We are excited by these ideas and we think they will help us maximize good news stories about Laurentian's impact in our community.

## **Enrolment Update**

Preliminary numbers on Laurentian's official November 1st enrolments are becoming available. Official numbers will be filed with the province by December 1st. This preliminary November 1st "snapshot" shows enrolment numbers continuing to trend positive, with 7112 FTEs and 9252 total headcount. This represents a 4% (+266 FTE, +393 headcount) increase over the same date last year. Based on historical trends we expect the final numbers to be a bit lower, but still approximately 250 FTE above our budget plan numbers. As I mentioned last month, this increase is entirely due to growth in enrollments in online programs and courses. This continues to be positive news.

Overall, the trends remain the same as in my September update, with a small decrease in new undergraduate and graduate international, and increases in domestic, with the exception of returning domestic graduate, which is down from last year. The increase in enrolments in our francophone programs have also held up since September. This highlights that despite the serious impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Laurentian's operations, students continue to express confidence in Laurentian for their education.

## **Provincial Budget Highlights**

On November 5th, the Province of Ontario announced its fall 2020 budget. As expected there was relatively little for the postsecondary sector and universities. The two most significant announcements was a return of OSAP funding to levels very similar to those prior to the last changes made by the previous Liberal Government and an extension on the freeze on domestic tuition for at least the 2020-2021. This extension of the tuition freeze, although not completely unexpected, will add another pressure to Laurentian's financial situation, requiring additional efficiencies and adjustment in our tuition revenue projections for next year, as well as needing to plan for the potential of further extensions in the freeze beyond next year.

Additionally, the province announced almost \$60M in funding in support of the development of micro-credentials, an effort to be led through eCampus Ontario. The programs, as envisioned by MCU, will be employer-driven, skills focused and responsive to local industry needs. The programming will be OSAP eligible. There is seen to be particular opportunities for so called "rural" universities. Guidelines for the eligible delivery of micro-credentials will be announced in the coming weeks, including the development of a virtual passport to track student progress and requirements for partnership between public institutions and business/private institutions.

This continuing interest by the government highlights the importance of continuing education and the opportunities therein for Laurentian.

## **National Survey of Student Engagement.**

Every three years, first year and fourth year students are asked to participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Conducted in between February and May 2020, the survey results are in the process of being released. As NSSE represents a deeper objective dive into student

attitudes and perceptions, the results are much more reliable than the more subjective and superficial Maclean's rankings. Laurentian's results are compared with the average of the Ontario system as well as with a selection of Canadian "peer" institutions.

A strong effort was made this year to encourage participation by Laurentian students. It should be noted that a large majority of Laurentian responses were received by the beginning of March, minimizing the impact of the pandemic on our results. A slide deck providing some highlights to Laurentian's results is appended to this report and will be spoken to in oral remarks. Overall, the survey highlights the need for Laurentian to continue to focus strongly in growing the academic experience and supporting students along their journey.

## **Academic Renewal**

In last month's report to Senate, I issued a call for academic renewal to enable us to align our programming with our ambitions and our resources. The urgency of academic renewal is heightened by the impacts of the pandemic on top of our pre-existing resource challenges and is guided by the vision for the future of this university as a leading comprehensive research engaged university for the north that is creative, innovative and highly successful in achieving our mandate. It also builds on other motions and activities initiated during the fall and is guided by the goal of providing the best possible education for our students. The response to this call to action has been passionate and engaged and I believe that we are already making progress in engaging in conversations that will break down barriers and enable the art of the possible.

In the first instance, it has been reported to me that we are on track to immediately reduce the number of course offerings for winter term, with a commitment to work towards a 15% reduction in the number of course offerings for fall, while continuing our focus on building innovative and creative offerings that are academically strong, attractive to our students, and improve student outcomes.

In a second, ACAPLAN is progressing on its work to draft a protocol that it will bring to Senate to outline the steps to be undertaken for the suspension of academic programs. They are also beginning to bring follow up recommendations, following consultations with the concerned units, with respect to the 17 academic programs for which admissions had been suspended this summer. As an example, with the completion of the IQAP review process for Archeology, ACAPLAN is bringing forward recommendations to end the specialization in Archeology amongst other recommendations to maintain an interdisciplinary major. The Provost has been in contact with all the affected units, and their responses are being considered by ACAPLAN, with further recommendations forthcoming. This Archaeology example shows how an actionable path forward can be supported for programs.

Third, at its meeting of November 13th, ACAPLAN began its consideration of the motion approved by Senate in October to undertake a review of the academic administrative structure of the University.

I also know that faculties, units and programs have accelerated conversations around the future of our programs. I look forward to working with everyone as we continue and accelerate the conversation to renew our programs to align their appeal, performance and outcomes with the needs and desires of our students and our communities.

### **Transparency in Organizational Structure, Efficiency and Effectiveness**

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed Laurentian University under additional stress requiring a full examination of the organization. During times of organizational stress, evolution is often required to emerge healthier and more vibrant. I want to assure the Laurentian community that efforts are being undertaken across the organization to meet our challenges and to function as efficiently and effectively as possible. During this time, it is equally important to understand and appreciate the roles of individuals and groups within the organization as this work is done.

Through a motion approved at Senate last month, ACAPLAN is embarking on a review of the academic administrative structures of the University within its purview. As rightly pointed out during the last Senate, the governance and organizational structure of the University is complex, with much of the organizational structure under the purview of the Board of Governors.

It is also crucial in a bicameral system that there be transparency across the boundaries of governance, so as to work together towards addressing issues and solving problems.

Over the past several years, there has been an ongoing effort on the part of the leadership to optimize the organization and efficiency of the administration of the University. This has already led to considerable change, and over this time, significant reductions in managers and staff, as well as senior leaders. Further, there is more work to be done to ensure that all employees of the University are optimally positioned to contribute to our success - and to feel supported and appreciated in doing so.

In an effort to increase transparency and the effectiveness of the work still to be done and to build broader appreciation of the work achieved to date, I am committed to creating an advisory committee on the organizational structure of the University. This committee will be co-chaired by the Provost and Vice-President, Administration and will include representatives from the university's major stakeholders, its students, faculty and staff.

The mandate of this committee will be to consider the efficiencies that have been achieved and the restructuring that has occurred over several years and to offer advice on plans for further efficiencies and restructuring to be achieved as we collectively work towards building an efficient and successful university in which all members of the community and their work are valued and appreciated. Through the work of this committee, in bringing forward advice and in bringing back understanding, it will help to bring us together as a university community that is dedicated and committed to our purpose of "*offering an outstanding university experience in English and French with a comprehensive approach to Indigenous education*" (#Imagine 2023) in a manner that is both academically and financially sustainable.

## Monthly Kudos

- Laurentian University is proud to announce the creation of the Desiderata Entrance Bursary, thanks to a donation by Catherine Gravely. The bursary, worth a total of \$120,000, will be granted annually to three Laurentian students who have spent time in society care as youths in Ontario. This is a first in the province, and builds on [the university's announcement last year of waiving tuition for Ontario students who spent time in care.](#)
- Dr. Jennifer Johnson, Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies: Book Launch of *Maternal Geographies: Mothering In and Out of Place*, Edited by Jennifer L. Johnson (Thorneloe at Laurentian University) and Krista Johnston (Mount Allison University) at the International Association of Research on Mothering, Chicago October 4th, 2020 See <https://demeterpress.org/books/maternal-geographies-mothering-in-and-out-of-place/>.
- Dr. Jennifer Johnson, Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies: Publication of "Speaking Freely and Freedom of Speech: Feminists Navigating the "New" Right" edited by Rachel Alpha Johnston Hurst (St. Francis Xavier University) and Jennifer L. Johnson (Thorneloe at Laurentian University), a special section of *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture, and Social Justice* Vol. 41 Issue 1, 2020. See <https://journals.msvu.ca/index.php/atlantis/index>.
- Dr. Patrick Cavalier (History). Spoke at a conference centered around Religions in Times of Conflict put on by *La Sapienza* in Italy. His talk was entitled "The Symbolic Universe of Political Religion in Fascist Italy: The Case of Mussolini *Illustrato*". The paper and accompanying multimedia presentation examines the cult of personality and the sacralization of politics in Fascist Italy in the light of archival documents housed at the Italian Central State Archive (Rome), as well as propaganda photographs, iconographic images and film held at the LUCE Institute (Rome), which have only recently been declassified by Italian authorities.
- Maghan Ward (MSc Biology) is the first Canadian to receive the prestigious George Toland Award for Ecological Research on North American Herpetofauna for her work on the role of newly constructed ponds on the survival of salamander larvae.
- During the pandemic, all graduating students were able to complete their clinical placements by tele-practice through the university speech and language pathology clinic, thanks to the work of Roxanne Bélanger, Katherine Weiman (clinic coordinator), multiple

community partnerships and contracts, and clinical speech and language pathologists.

- The *Mining Mental Health Study* (2014-2019) was a large-scale investigation on the wellbeing of mining workers in Ontario. It was the first study of its kind and drew international attention for its unique methodology and key findings. Using several clinical measures of mental health and drawing from a large sample of workers (N=2,223), the research highlighted a very successful partnership between Vale, Laurentian University and the United Steelworkers. These same partners will now re-engage in a 2-year study (\$145,500) that seeks to apply the findings of this groundbreaking research. The goal of this project is to assist occupational health professionals to identify those workers in greatest need for assistance during their workplace absence and match these workers with the most impactful interventions to improve their health and the likelihood of a successful return to work. The study will be led by Dr. Michel Larivière, C.Psych (Laurentian) with co-investigators Dr. Zsuzsanna Kerekes (Laurentian), Dr. Céline Larivière (Laurentian), and Dr. Martin Lavalère (UQAC).
- Led by co-presidents, Sara Gauthier and Carlo Circelli, the School of Kinesiology and Health Sciences Student Association (KHSSA) has launched their “Student Kinnect” mentorship program, a program intended to connect first-year students with an upper-year mentor in their program. Mentors offer guidance with career endeavours and overall support to meet the challenges of life during and after university. The KHSSA also recently organized a very successful clothing drive to gather warm clothing for the less fortunate in our community. On November 7-8th, the KHSSA charity team collected 30 bags of winter apparel to donate to the Sudbury Women’s Centre and the Cedar Outreach Centre. Well done on these impressive initiatives.
- Dr. Bettina Brockerhoff-Macdonald, Director, Faculty Engagement was recently appointed to the Stewardship committee of OUCEL, the Ontario Universities’ Council on e-Learning, which is a working group that provides leadership regarding e-learning. Representatives on OUCEL are committed to e-learning that enhances student learning and engagement. OUCEL further encourages a scholarly approach towards e-learning in relation to teaching, research, and service – core values of Ontario Universities. Dr. Brockerhoff-Macdonald was also appointed to the Greater Sudbury Public Library Board in late October by the Council of the City of Greater Sudbury, in support of her research interest in how reading supports resilience.
- Dr. Stefan Siemann, professor in the Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry, was awarded \$200,000 from Canada Foundation for Innovation Exceptional Opportunities

Fund, for equipment that will enable him to advance his COVID-19 research.

- Gisele Roberts, Manager of Innovation and Commercialization and partners with **Innovation for a Greater Sudbury** have launched lunchtime seminars featuring, “NextGen Innovators”. The seminars organized in partnership with Cambrian College, Collège Boréal, Regional Business Centre, NORCAT and OCE, will feature several Laurentian University students including Cameron Perdue who will speak on November 30. All are invited to attend and can register at: [igs2020.eventbrite.com](https://igs2020.eventbrite.com).
- Laurentian University’s Gillian Schultze, Director of Strategic Research Initiatives, and Science North have partnered again to launch a second “**Let’s Talk COVID-19**”series. Laurentian researchers will join Science North Blue Coats to answer questions from the general public regarding COVID-19 and the work they are doing to support the pandemic. Topics include:
  - The interplay of flu season and COVID-19 (Nov. 18<sup>th</sup> 9AM); L’angoisse de se retrouver ensemble (Nov. 25<sup>th</sup> 1PM); The anxiety of coming back together (Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9AM) Is the COVID-19 vaccine our way out of the pandemic? (Dec 9<sup>th</sup> 9AM); Le vaccin contre la COVID-19 est-il un moyen d’arrêter la pandémie? (Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> 1PM); COVID-19 Infodemic - Misinformation in a global pandemic era (Jan. 13 9AM). The discussions will be streamed live at: [facebook.com/laurentian](https://facebook.com/laurentian) or [facebook.com/sciencenorth](https://facebook.com/sciencenorth)
- Jason-Scott Benoit, Shaun Malley, Kristy Rousseau, Michelle Brunette, Ashley Thomson and Josée Gervais and many others across departments at Laurentian teamed up to tell the story of students who have experienced society care and the launch of the new Desiderata Entrance Bursary. Their efforts lead to national news stories in the [Toronto Star](#), [the Sudbury Star](#), [Global News](#), and on CTV’s Your Morning. We also applaud and appreciate the participation of student Shianne Van Duzen, a fourth-year student at Laurentian University in Sudbury, and alumna Jane Kovarikova, who shared their experiences with journalists. Collectively, the efforts of these members of our community show what is possible when we collaborate to amplify our University’s stories.
- Amélie Hien, full professor and chair of the Departement of French Studies in the Faculty of Arts, was named one of the 25 stars of the North (“25 étoiles du Nord”) to recognize her passion for the promotion of the French language and Franco-Ontarian heritage.