

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

I would like to begin my report by acknowledging the passing of Ms. Tina Sartoretto, member of Laurentian University's Board of Governors since 2015, Board representative to the Laurentian Senate and Chair of the Joint Board/Senate Committee on Bilingualism. Tina was a passionate alumna who embodied the values and principles of Laurentian University as an institution dedicated to the North, proudly bilingual and multicultural. She was an active participant at Senate and always spoke with a passion and caring that reflected her pride in what Laurentian has become and what it had yet to achieve. We have lost a true champion for the University and I extend our sincerest condolences to her loved ones and all who have been touched by her presence.

In the interim, until the Board elects a new permanent representative to Senate, this role will be filled by Board member Mr. Brian Montgomery, who long-serving members of Senate will remember as having served in this role before Ms. Sartoretto.

### **A Strong Start to the Academic Year**

These are exceptional times, and Laurentian continues to be an exceptional place. With the fall academic term now successfully well underway, it is important to recognize and acknowledge the herculean efforts that have been made by everyone in the Laurentian community to provide the best possible learning experience for our students. While we each work and make our contributions to Laurentian within individual spaces, it is crucial to recognize the importance of the work of those around us to the ongoing success of the University. Faculty have done an outstanding job of adapting their course materials to our new learning modalities, and the broader academic leadership, Deans, Chairs, Directors and Academic AVPs have worked tirelessly to enable this success. I also am pleased to recognize the collaborative spirit and proactive flexibility with which the Laurentian University Faculty Association has worked with the administration and its members to meet our current academic challenges. In that spirit, I truly look forward to an engaged forward-looking discussion today on the delivery of our curriculum for the Winter term.

Additionally, the University's academic success depends on many many people, exceptional people that must also be recognized and appreciated for the tireless and sometimes thankless work that they do. Our teams in the Laurentian Hub, Liaison, Registrar, Student Services, Student Life, Bookstore, Communications and Marketing, and Residence Life are at the front line of attracting and supporting students, to help them choose Laurentian and have a seamless experience. Our health and wellness support team provides support to our students through these challenging times. Our Information Technology team ensures that the increased demand for technology and connectivity is met. Our facilities, security and operations people, including the print hub, who have worked so hard to make our campus safely navigable. Our finance and administrative support team, who have ensured that our people and bills are paid and that we operate as efficiently as possible. Our Advancement and Alumni relations team, who have maintained and grown our relationships with the broader community through these trying times. Staff in Office of Research Services, front line research staff and partners, who have contributed so much to support the resumption of research on campus. Equally, I must recognize the Laurentian University Staff Union, and its collaborative approach in working with the University in the best interests of its

members and the University. Lastly, I would be remiss as well if not to include our external partners, providing food service, enhanced cleaning and other supports without which the university could not function.

It is truly important for everyone at Laurentian to recognize the importance of all these individuals for the ongoing success of the University, and to truly appreciate the efforts that each group has made during these challenging times. During times of adversity, there can be a tendency to point fingers and identify challenges in others. I believe that Laurentian's resilience and long-term success hinges on the acknowledgement that every single individual that is a part of our community and is committed in their own way to our students and the success of this University. The only way we can achieve our ambitions and overcome our challenges is by working together across our University and our community.

As I presented orally at the September Senate, our first day of class numbers have modestly exceeded expectations, and I know everyone is working hard on student retention and engagement as we progress towards finalizing our fall numbers in early November. With almost 7,000 FTE and 9,000 total students as of the first day of class, we have experienced a 5% increase in headcount over fall 2019. This increase results entirely from growth in registration in online programs, with registrations in face-to-face (now mainly remote) programs, modestly trailing last year. There was significant growth in student interest in our Francophone programs, with a 7% increase in FTE, or almost 90 additional students. For international students, retention of students year over year has increased, as we continue to recover from the significant loss of students from Saudi Arabia, while new undergraduate enrollments have declined by only 3%.

Lastly, Laurentian continues to grow student interest in graduate programming, with enrollments increased by 13% for fall 2020. Graduate students now comprise almost 12% of all enrolments at Laurentian.

While there is nervousness over enrollment attrition, particularly with respect to international students, I have been truly impressed by the work that everyone across the University is doing to ensure that our students have a strong experience at Laurentian and are able to successfully complete their programs.

Notwithstanding, this positive news on enrollments, Laurentian continues to experience increased costs and substantial loss in ancillary revenues from residences, food services etc. due to COVID-19. Losses for this year are current at \$5M and are likely to increase further. This also comes on top of the \$5M loss experienced at the end of fiscal 2019/2020.

### **Headwinds and a Fork in the Road - a Pressing Call to Action**

Over the past decade, Laurentian has experienced, and responded strongly to, a seemingly endless and ongoing series of challenges. Indeed just since 2018, over the past few years, Laurentian has been engaged in an ongoing process to identify and execute on initiatives to drive cost savings and new revenues in response to these challenges. Over time, despite our pride in the institution and strong strategic ambitions as expressed in Laurentian's [Strategic](#), [Academic](#) and [Research](#) plans,

these challenges have impacted morale and eroded confidence. More dangerously, they have also led to a degree of apathy towards our current ongoing challenges of overcoming the recent provincial 10% tuition reduction and ongoing freeze and COVID-19. Resignation that we have survived many challenges in the past - there is always a crisis of some kind - and complacency that we always seem to muddle through, dramatically increases our risks as an institution. We cannot and must not allow ourselves to be worn down or jaundiced by the challenges we have overcome in the past so as to be unable to respond to and overcome our current challenges - which due to the ongoing uncertainty of the pandemic in and of itself presents an overarching challenge to the University.

Over the past decade, Laurentian has followed a chosen path towards comprehensiveness, research and scholarly activity, while retaining a historical commitment to culture and the student experience through small class sizes and personal attention. In essence, continuing to provide the personalized undergraduate experience under a broader umbrella of research engagement and graduate programs. While Laurentian has been decidedly successful in increasing scholarship and the comprehensiveness of our offerings, as is pointedly evidenced by Laurentian's Maclean's 2021 student satisfaction results (19th of 19) and our current financial sustainability challenges, we still have considerable work to do to achieve our overall goals.

Indeed, I submit to the community that Laurentian has reached a fork in the road and we must urgently undertake action that will secure our future along a collegially chosen path. This goes well beyond debate over the temporary suspension of admission to low enrollment programs, but demands a fundamental examination of self and of the institution we wish to be going forward. That our challenges have been heightened and our timelines contracted due to COVID-19 is far from fair - but I truly believe in the strength, commitment and capacity of our faculty and community to succeed!

This is not to ignore our successes. Our students have the highest post-graduation employment rate in the province and amongst the highest starting salaries. We are an accessible university that proudly welcomes amongst the highest percentage of first generation learners in the province. We are proudly bilingual and multicultural, committed to truth and reconciliation, equity and diversity and to ending systemic discrimination. We have also become the 8th most research intensive university in Ontario and amongst the top 30 nationally. At 12%, our graduate student population is approaching the 15% threshold considered representative of a strongly comprehensive university. We proudly serve the north, with a focus on sectors that are directly relevant to the northern economy and northern communities.

I believe the academic choices we face today are collegial choices, and must be made in the best interests of our students and community, present and future, and must be focused on a sustainable vision for the University.

On the one hand, there is the opportunity for a continued journey along the path of comprehensiveness and scholarly engagement. To succeed on this path, we must fundamentally reflect on, revise and renew our academic vision. We must focus, streamline and invest in our programming to increase its attractiveness to students, enhance their engagement and elevate their

success. Our programming must also be nimble and meet increasing demands for interdisciplinarity. We must be efficient and effective in our delivery of pedagogy and be proactive in the adoption of teaching modalities of comprehensive universities. We must continue to take a balanced approach to teaching and scholarship, continue to invest in teaching, research and scholarly pursuits, and the human and physical infrastructure enablers of that success. We must also continue to grow our reach in attracting students from across Ontario, Canada and the globe, who choose Laurentian based on the comprehensiveness and overall quality of our offerings.

On the other hand, we can return to our roots as a small undergraduate focused university. To focus on the personal undergraduate experience we must grow our commitment to teaching and reduce our participation in and support of scholarship. Here we must also fundamentally reflect on, revise and renew our academic vision. Our programming must also be nimble and focused on supporting student needs and preparing students for careers or the next step in their academic lives. We must focus locally and regionally, align our programs even more closely with the needs of our community and local students. We must reduce our investment in costly research infrastructure and scholarly supports to provide the resources needed for success as a small institution focused on the undergraduate experience. We must align our collegium and student body to enable sustainable success.

I bring a call to you today for academic renewal that is in two parts. First, that this Senate and its constituent bodies engage in deep reflective conversation on the future vision for the university - to determine the choice of path for our future and our sustained success. Our new academic plan - approved just a few months ago by this very body - sets out these very academic ambitions for the University. This Senate and its constituent bodies must now develop and follow key principles in executing comprehensive and timely strategic curriculum reform.

However, more immediately, over the next three months, we must significantly streamline and focus our offerings for the fall of 2021. We must work collegially and collaboratively, faculty, Chairs and Directors with support by their Deans and Provost and VP Academic to act quickly in streamlining our course offerings for next year. We must take advantage of opportunities to reduce duplication, increase interdisciplinary listings and interfaculty and interprogram collaboration, cycle courses and streamline core and elective offerings to maximize the educational experience of our students and the effectiveness and efficiency of our program delivery. We must find a way to reduce our total course offerings by 10-15%, without impacting on the quality or breadth of our students' education. These steps are a requirement to address our structural budgetary issues and a prerequisite for the investments that we need to make going forward.

In doing this work, our overriding expectation needs to be a focus on our students, maintaining the quality of their education, and supporting their success. Our students have given us the tremendous privilege and responsibility of providing them with an education of their choosing. We must do everything within our ability to meet their expectations in a pedagogically innovative and financially sustainable manner.

## Government Advocacy Update

Individually and through the Council of Ontario Universities, Laurentian has been aggressively engaged with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and the Provincial Government with respect to the needs of the sector and the specific challenges that Laurentian faces. It remains clear at this time that universities remain a low priority for a government that is dealing with the continuing health and economic challenges of COVID-19. There is a strong sentiment that robust domestic enrollment across the sector in the fall means that universities are fine and not in need of assistance. Indeed, the government is presently most concerned with providing assistance to students and families rather than institutions. Our work continues.

On the federal side, Laurentian has been a strong proponent of the work being done by Universities Canada with respect to international students. Thus, we were very pleased to learn last week that the federal government is relaxing the travel restrictions for international students. With strong protocols in place at Laurentian for self-isolation of arriving students, we are hoping that many international students that are presently outside of Canada will soon be able to return to campus.

## Maclean's

The Maclean's Universities Rankings continue to provide a challenge for Laurentian University through its methodology and ranking. For 2021, we continue to rank 12th overall in our category. Of the 13 indicators that comprise the ranking, we improved by two places for Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grants (to 13th) and declined one position (to 11th) in Student to Full-time Faculty Ratio (to 11th). Overall, our ranking is weighed down by the highly weighted Reputational Survey and Student Satisfaction components of the rankings, which were performed this year concurrent with the onset of COVID-19. With our continuing strong ranking in research (1st) and awards (5th) we continue to be a poor overall match for the criteria of our category.

Improving Indicators	Unchanged Indicators	Declining Indicators
SS&H Grants (15th to 13th)	Student Awards (10th) Awards per Full-time Faculty (5th) Total Research Dollars (1st) Scholarships and Bursaries (10th) Library Expenses (14th) Student Satisfaction (19th) Medical/Science Grants (9th) Operating Budget (5th) Library Acquisitions (7th) Student Services (10th) Reputational Survey (15th)	Student to Full-time Faculty Ratio (10th to 11th)

## Update on Conversation with Laurentian's Federated Partner Universities

Conversation with our federated partners on updating and renewing the Federation have been formally launched. There has been agreement to focus the conversation first on the academic partnership model that will best suit us going forward, before turning our attention to consideration of finance and governance of the Federation. In this conversation, Laurentian is guided by the principles that any changes to the federation model must enhance learning and the student experience as well as increase the efficiency and sustainability of the federation.

### Monthly Kudos

- Great work to the Indigenous Student Affairs (ISA) team in the organization of important sharing and learning opportunities for the community on Orange Shirt Day. I would also like to recognize both the ISA team and the Communications team who for the first time collaborated to publish a fully-written news release in Anishinaabemowin.
- Dr. Linda Ambrose had a successful virtual launch of her most recent book “After the Revival” on September 30th.
- Dr. Joey-Lynn Wabie received a grant worth \$38,000 from the Canadian Heritage Commemorating the History and Legacy of Residential Schools component of the Celebration and Commemoration Program. The purpose of the *Tabik-gìzis Kinamegewin* (Moon Teachings) project is to bring forward and honour the Truth stories that many Indigenous peoples have experienced and survived through residential schools. This proposed project will share these experiences of resilience through videos that can be used to educate the current and future generations via social media and online platforms.
- Kristy Rousseau, Director of Development, was the opening speaker for the Canadian Council for the Advancement of Education (CCAEE) 2020 #Development Summit. She provided the virtual audience with an incredible discussion on Shifting Strategies: Fundraising in a time of Constant Change.
- Dr. Rueben Roth's Chapter “Labor Education Programs: Radical Beginnings, McCarthyist Backlash, and the Rise of Neoliberal Education” was recently published in the *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education*.
- The Science Communication program led by Dr. Chantal Barriault has been awarded the NSERC Science Communication Skills Training Pilot Grant. Of the twenty applications selected of over one hundred applications, this award demonstrates that Laurentian University delivers a world-leading graduate program in science communication.
- University of Sudbury has revived its Engaged Learning program, enabling students to get involved in helping the disadvantaged in our community. So far, students have worked

with homeless and disabled people, all while following physical distancing and other health regulations.

- A special thank you to Facility Services consisting of the grounds, carpenters, locksmith, shipping/receiving, mechanical and electrical teams as well as our partners from GDI that have the campus looking top notch both inside and out, the floors sparkling, and ready to respond to the evolving circumstances of the pandemic. Did you know that all of the plexiglass barriers that have been installed across campus were created and built by our very own carpentry shop? Well done.
- Another special acknowledgement of the Ambassadors of the Parker Building in the month of September (Joscelyne Meilleur, Peter Hellstrom, Mike Clark , Anelka Tuttle, and Bryan Carruthers) who were tasked with supporting students using the study spaces, ensuring they were comfortable and providing assistance as to what services were open and where they were located.
- Dr. Louis Phillippe Rochon was invited to be keynote speaker at the International Seminar on Economic Theory and Policy in Mexico 2020.
- Thank you to Lucie Gélinas and the Counselling team for successfully improving and adapting our range of mental health support services communications for the Counselling website.
- Kudos to the research centres and schools/departments that pivoted to host virtual seminar series providing opportunities for students to enhance science communication skills while engaging with virtual audiences across the world. A few notable examples include:
  - SNO Lab Summer Student Talk Symposium
  - Biology Seminar Series
  - CROSH COVID Conversations
  - Research Innovation in Sudbury Seminar Series
  - Science Communication Research Symposium
- Dr. Melchior Mbonimpa, University of Sudbury, has published a book on themes of inequality, traditions, friendship, access to education and immigration.
- Thank you to Todd Gagnon in the Career and Employment Centre for leading the coordination of the work study program and overseeing the filling of 90+ student positions for Fall 2020.
- Dr. Jacqueline Litzgus and Dr. Albrecht Schulte-Hostedde were mentioned in [Canadian Geographic](#) and the Thinking Extinction conference held at Laurentian in 2013, organized with the leadership of Dr. Brett Buchanan, was highlighted.
- FedNor has approved a funding application from the McEwen School of Architecture (MSoA) for an intern to work on WoodLab. This is an emerging research institute with a

mandate to develop applied wood research. The institute will explore research collaborations with the forest products industry, government agencies and university forestry departments to develop a new wood research facility based at the MSoA. The institute will serve as a Northern Ontario research hub within an international network of wood research centres that advance the use of wood in furniture and architectural applications. The FedNor Youth Internship program will assist in our objective to develop this new research centre and foster important partnerships that will ensure its success.

- Dr. Aaron Langille, a master lecturer in the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science at Laurentian University, has been named one of Ontario's most outstanding university teachers by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA). He is receiving a 2019-2020 OCUFA Teaching Award for his outstanding contributions to improving the quality of higher education at Ontario's universities.
- As you may have seen in recent media announcements, the Faculty of Education's École des sciences de l'éducation has received grant funding in support of its new program options, the 3-year Hybride (consécutif, BEd after degree) program and the 5-year Concomitant program (BA & BEd). The initial intake for the concomitant offering has exceeded projections, welcoming 21 students to its inaugural cohort this fall. This promising new offer increases pathways for Francophone students in both Arts and Education.
- Well done to the Teaching and Innovation team that has been hard at work on a number of initiatives:
  - Sarah Bouchard, Boriana Panayotova and Kelly Brennan worked on 25 online courses, which included 6 new online courses.
  - Since early June, Kelly Brennan, Paisley Worthington, Sarah Bouchard, Boriana Panayotova and Michelle Laurence have given 17 workshops, met with 12 departments, and conducted 105 one-on-one appointments with individual faculty members.
  - The Laurentian Online team has successfully rolled out 161 online course offerings for the 2020-2021 Fall and Fall/Winter semesters. This represents an increase in the number of course offerings of just over 15% from 2018F/FW and an increase of 6.5% from 2019F/FW. This dynamic team is composed of Vicky Brown, Monique Brouse, Mariette Bradley, Joanne Senchuk, Linda Fiorino-Piette, Christina Sckopke, Renée Roth, Emily Davis and Marc Rousselle.
- Laurentian University researchers, and collaborators, were awarded research grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council illustrating the diversity of scholarship making an impact:
  - Dr. Izabel Amaral, An Ecology of Wood Cultures in Canada (2003–2020): comparing constructive cultures through awarded architectural designs
  - Steven Beites, Architecture, Neuroscience and Technology: An Investigation into the Experiential Dimensions of the Built Environment

- Dr. Laura Hall, Clayworks and Creation&#39;ing: Addressing and Ending Violence through Land and Arts-Based Learning for Indigenous Women and 2SLGBTQIA Communities
  - Dr. Kamran Eshghi, The Potential Impact of Adoption of Cryptocurrencies by Firms: hype or a wise investment?
  - Dr. Luis Radford, The Ethics of Mathematics Teaching-and-Learning: A Vygotskian Approach
  - Dr. Isabelle Côté, Women's Safety-Related Empowerment in the Context of Domestic Violence : A Study of Shelter Practices
  - Dr. Lynne Gouliquer, Stigmatised Identity: Giving voice to easterly Canadian Métis
  - Dr. David Leadbeater, Amalgamation, Community Decline, and the Future of Northern Resource-Dependent Communities
  - Dr. Na Xiao, The Influence of Evaluation Mode on Construal Level in Product Evaluation and Choice: A Goal-activation Perspective
  - Dr. Lorrilee McGregor, Indigenous Research Sovereignty and Governance: Anishinaabek Perspectives on Indigenous Knowledge, Cultural Expressions, and Intellectual Property
- Dr. Andrew McDonald, Harquail School of Earth Sciences, was awarded the Hawley Medal with student Elliot Wehrle, in recognition of their co-authored paper, which was selected as the best to be published in The Canadian Mineralogist throughout 2019.
  - Drs. Rosanna Langer, and Moira Ferguson were recognized with the 2020 International Award for Excellence for The Interdisciplinary Social Sciences Journal Collection for their paper on Stigma, Discrimination, Resilience, and Support in Members of a Mental Health Consumer Peer Support Organization.
  - Kudos to the student team under the direction of Malek Abou-Rabia, 2nd year business student and Vice-President Education, SGA and in partnership with Cameron Perdue, Masters Student and owner of Incaptur for the ongoing development of a platform that will feature virtual information about significant artwork around campus. This initiative has come out of the Strategic Plan Objective Outcome #4: "To be a hub for arts and culture."