

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO SENATE OCTOBER 2021**

The Laurentian community continues to go through a difficult period as we progress through the CCAA process. Yet despite the uncertainty surrounding Laurentian's current situation, with the return to campus there is a noticeable spirit of renewal and optimism. The return of our community to our beautiful campus has allowed us to come together in a spirit of grit and determination, moving forward to ensure that Laurentian continues to be an important part of Ontario's post-secondary system and a critical institution supporting Northern Ontario.

I am thankful to our students, faculty, employees, and all our community partners who care about the University's success. I thank everyone for their patience, their passion, and their deep attachment to "our" University.

It is also important during these challenging times to care for ourselves and for others, being generous with our time and energy, but also to share concerns, big ideas, practical solutions, and work together to ensure the brightest possible future for our University and the Laurentian Community. This Senate in particular has a vital role to play in setting the course for Laurentian and I look forward to working with you collegially to achieve the academically strong future that this university and community truly deserves.

*Miigwech-Thank You-Merci* to everyone contributing to building the foundations for a brighter future for Laurentian.

### **COVID-19 Vaccination Update**

At the time of the writing of this report, our vaccination rates of students, faculty and staff on campus have reached 97%. The [Vaccination Policy and associated Program](#) are in place to comply with provincial legislation and the recommendations for public health. I wish to thank everyone in the community for your proactive compliance and for your patience as we work to do everything possible to keep the campus open for our students.

To bolster our efforts in compliance with the regulations set forth by Public Health, as of October 18th, there are Safety Ambassadors on campus. The role of the Safety Ambassadors is to educate our community members about our [Mask Guidelines](#), validating [Vaccine Passports](#) where required by the Provincial Government, and to answer any questions our community may have about these necessary compliance measures. The Safety Ambassadors will be circulating throughout campus and will be identifiable by distinctive vests.

As public health measures will be certain to continue to evolve, we will continue to regularly update the community. The latest information is also posted to <https://laurentian.ca/COVID-19>.

### **Operational & Governance Review**

In a process overseen by the Chief Redevelopment Officer, and in keeping with the University's commitment to its labour partners, the University has engaged [Nous Group](#) to conduct a fulsome governance and operational review of the University and make recommendations for improving

the operational structure and function of the University, as well as governance at the Board and Senate. These recommendations may be expected to identify changes and investments that the University needs to make to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of both governance and operations.

As part of this review, Nous will engage with senators, which may be through a special senate meeting or in some other forum proposed by Nous. There will also be a process wherein faculty, staff, students and stakeholders will be able to provide their thoughts and perspectives with respect to the review. It will also include the Board of Governors. Nous Group began their preparatory work on October 12th. I ask everyone to take the opportunity to contribute your thoughts and ideas to the review.

The review is expected to take approximately two months, with recommendations to follow. Completing the Governance and Operations review as well as the ongoing Real Estate review are important steps in the CCAA process.

### **Recruitment and Admissions**

The admissions cycle for Fall 2022-23 is now open through OUAC. The domestic and international liaison groups are actively engaging with students, in a remote fashion for the moment, and presenting Laurentian's programs and services. The Ontario University Fair (OUF) was held remotely this year, at its normal timeslot. Laurentian participated with a good turnout at our virtual booth. I encourage all senators and faculty members to engage and participate in recruitment events. A virtual Open House will be held on October 23rd, showcasing all that Laurentian has to offer.

Our students are our future and it is incumbent upon the entire community to look beyond the immediate challenges of the University to provide students with a strong vision for their future at Laurentian.

### **Application for Federal Funding for to Support High-Quality Post-Secondary Minority-Language Education**

On October 14th, Laurentian University submitted a proposal to the Federal government to invest in the development of Laurentian's French language programs as part of the recently announced \$121.3 M in funding to support official-language minority education and second official language instruction. Laurentian's application consists of 6 components that will support the development of French undergraduate, graduate programming and microcredentials, both through face-to-face and online instruction.

In addition, Laurentian is a partner in a proposal for a Consortium universitaire pour l'enseignement et l'apprentissage en ligne en français led by the University of Ottawa.

The continuing development of Laurentian's French-language programs is essential to achieving our mandate to the francophone community and to our future as a bilingual, tricultural university. We look forward to federal support of our proposal and are also in conversation with the province with respect to matching provincial funding.

## **2022 Maclean's University Rankings and the Opportunity for Laurentian**

Earlier this month, Maclean's Magazine published its annual rankings of Canadian universities. Laurentian's overall ranking declined compared to last year from 12th to 15th out of 19 institutions, remaining unchanged or declined in most of the 13 indicators used for the university's rankings.

Many will see the decline in ranking as a reflection of the University's current journey through CCAA. However, it is very important for the community to understand that overall low ranking in Laurentian's Maclean's rankings over the past few years -- as well as a significant part of the decline for this year, are a reflection of Laurentian's ingrained and longstanding historic challenges -- as we have discussed in this very senate in each of the past two years since I have taken on my role.

Thus, all but two of the data sets that drive the rankings are derived from data that are "*slipped*" by at least one year (i.e. 2020 or before). The student satisfaction survey is current and was launched on February 25th, 2021, immediately following Laurentian's CCAA filing, though we are uncertain of exactly when in the fall/winter of 20/21 the reputational survey was conducted.

Indeed, the current restructuring of the University, when successfully completed, will offer both an opportunity and a springboard for Laurentian to rise in rankings such as Maclean's. The goal of the restructuring is for Laurentian to emerge as a nimble, financially sustainable institution with the ability to make the investments needed to improve most areas, from the academic quality of our programs, to student services, to academic and administrative process. In restructuring, Laurentian is focusing on its core as an academically strong primarily undergraduate university, delivering high quality programs across the faculties of Arts, Management, Health and Education, and Science Engineering and Architecture.

We offer a bilingual and tricultural experience that is "*sans pareil*" in Canada. We are focused on serving the needs of students from Northeastern Ontario and beyond. Working together, I truly believe that we will have the tools and resources necessary to build national recognition for what we have to offer -- recognition that will see Laurentian rise in rankings such as Maclean's in the years to come.

### **Working to Promote Student Success and Satisfaction**

Despite Laurentian's strong performance with respect to post graduate employment for graduates, as reflected in the Maclean's rankings, student satisfaction and experience is one of the areas that the university has experienced historical challenges and must address. One of the areas in which we expect the Nous-led operational review will consider is in the area of student support and the operational structures that support the student experience and student success. We encourage the Laurentian community, including students and student groups to engage in this process, so that the recommendations that will be brought forward and implemented will be best positioned to meet student needs.

For the short term, the Student Success Working Group is relaunching its collaborative initiatives to develop practices that will align student services, centralize training and internal processes through the development of a comprehensive Student Service Knowledge Base powered by Confluence. This interdepartmental working group is being led by the Provost and Vice-President, Academic and being championed by Connor Koch, Mary Laur and Melissa Ouimette.

The goal is to empower cross-departmental information sharing for staff and faculty and to provide responsive services and support for students by accessing quick and accurate information at [my.Laurentian.ca](https://my.Laurentian.ca) Staff and faculty will also have access to Customer Service

Excellence and More Feet on the Ground training modules to better support the entire Laurentian community and help each other towards *mino bimaadiziwin*.

I do want to recognize the efforts of everyone in the Laurentian community who are committed to student success. We strive to create the best experience for students, but we have more work to do to ensure that we're supporting students in their studies, their aspirations, and their career goals.

I also recognize that our commitment to students goes beyond what is measured by Maclean's rankings and for us, success is about supporting students in their own paths and own versions of success.

To that effect, we advance women's leadership opportunities through our support of the student-led Laurentian University Women in Sport programming. We also celebrate a diverse student population through cultural events, International Education Week, and programming through the Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre (ISLC). We embrace being a place of growth, with 52% of students who are the first in their family to attend post-secondary, many of them from Indigenous and Francophone communities. Student Associations, the AEF, SGA, and GSA, continue to support students in meaningful ways to enhance the Laurentian student experience.

We have our work cut out for us. We are all committed to student success and to continue to further develop student-centered practices and support services that contribute to the educational and career goals of Laurentian University students.

This is a time of transformation and determination: we are all working to make Laurentian strong, sustainable, and driven to help students succeed for the future.

## **Events**

The *Foire provinciale virtuelle des destinations postsecondaires*, which will take place October 19-21, is an annual event that aims to promote high school graduation and ease the transition of students to their next destination.

It is within this framework that the twelve (12) French-language school boards of Ontario and some thirty (30) French-speaking university, college, community and ministerial institutions have come together to offer potentially 12,400 students in 11th and 12th grade a showcase of all the possibilities available to them. Regarding Laurentian programming, there will be about twenty (20) French-speaking presentations that will be offered each day by our teachers, technicians and students.

The Office of Francophone Affairs, accompanied by the Liaison team, coordinates Laurentian's participation in this Fair. In addition, the contribution of the Consortium national de formation en santé - Laurentienne component (CNFS), the University Success Office, the Office of Education and Native Programs as well as the Marketing Office will make this project a success.

## **Reminder**

Lastly, a reminder that our website dedicated to the CCAA proceedings can be accessed at: [www.laurentianu.info](http://www.laurentianu.info) and that the same for the Monitor can be accessed at: [www.ey.com/ca/Laurentian](http://www.ey.com/ca/Laurentian))

## Kudos

- Chi miigwech to all who gathered in recognition of the children of residential schools on the first ever National Day of Truth and Reconciliation (September 30). Maamwii-Together-Ensemble, we will build stronger communities that will confront the legacies of our story and foster stronger ties of reconciliation among each other. Volunteers and members of the Laurentian community made this day possible. They include: Elder Lorney Bob, John Condo, Susan Manitowabi, Mary Laur, Kevin Fitzmaurice, Isabelle Bourgeault-Tassé, Natalie Lacasse, Amy Commanda, Émilie Bourgeault-Tassé, Paskwamoostosis Lightning, Carole Perreault, Cynthia Belfitt, Paul Roberts, Steve Potvin, Marc Pharand, Roxane Marois, Vanessa Despatie, Nur Hassan, Jean-Paul Rains, Marie-Lynne Michaud, Lynn Laird, and many others, including members of the Student General Association (SGA), the Association des étudiant.e.s francophones (AEF), and the Graduate Student Association (GSA). A very warm chi miigwech also to Dr. Anas Karzai who joined activities with two of his classes, providing his students with an opportunity to engage in truth and reconciliation.
- Kudos to Dr Elizabeth Turner from the Harquail School of Earth Sciences for her article, *Possible poriferan body fossils in early Neoproterozoic microbial reefs*, that was published in **Nature** earlier this summer. Click [here](#) for the open access link.
- Kudos to Dr John Gunn and the team from the Vale Living with Lakes Centre, Dr Nadia Mykytczuk and the team from the Goodman School of Mines, and student leaders for their leadership to open the **United Nations Restoration Trail; Sentier de la restauration des Nations Unies; Maamweziying biinhchigeing mikan** on campus and to celebrate the community's legacy on environmental remediation with events on October 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>.