

President's Report to Senate September 2020

Welcome Back and Looking Forward

As we begin a new academic year, on the 60th anniversary of Laurentian's creation, optimism and enthusiasm abound. Indeed, as of this writing over 1500 students have participated in orientation events for fall 2020! While this is certainly a year like no other before, and the summer has been most unusual and challenging, I still feel the optimism around me for our students, staff and faculty and for the institution. All of you have worked hard to prepare for the fall term, and I believe that we are well positioned to provide our students with the best possible education over the coming year.

The uncertainty and impacts of living through a pandemic have certainly increased the magnitude and the immediacy of the challenges facing Laurentian. However, pre-COVID-19, Laurentian had already embarked on a path towards growing our reputation and impact and overcoming our academic and financial challenges and I believe that the Laurentian community continues to be resolute in working towards those goals. I look to this Senate for its continuing leadership in charting a strong academic course for the future of Laurentian. There is much work to do and timelines have been compressed, but I am fully confident that the commitment and dedication within this body and across the University, will set Laurentian firmly on the path to success for its next 60 years.

As COVID-19 case numbers have declined and the province has eased restrictions, we have over the summer moved into Phase II of our Return to Campus plan. Research facilities have now almost fully reopened; we have welcomed approximately 500 students in residence and the campus is becoming reanimated. Listening to students and their desire to be on and study on campus, we have reconfigured study spaces, are providing for curbside pick up of library materials, have reconfigured food services, and remodeled classrooms to enhance our capacity for remote course delivery. As we continue through the fall, as COVID-19 numbers continue to hold steady and/or decrease we will continue our stepwise reopening of campus. Indeed, I look forward to being able to participate in a future Senate meeting from its normal location, and as we become able to engage in hybrid activities that include a component of socially distanced face-to-face activity. While 10-15% campus occupancy compared to pre-COVID-19 days may seem sparse, achieving this safely and securely is a crucial step towards achieving our new normal. Your patience and understanding is also appreciated with respect to observing the measures that have been put in place to ensure everyone's safety.

At the same time, Laurentian is well prepared for a second wave of COVID-19, should it arrive. We have developed protocols for isolation, testing and responding to any increase in COVID-19 numbers in the province and for any return of COVID-19 to campus. While the arrival of the first case of COVID-19 on campus in March precipitated immediate shutdown of University facilities, six months later, measures and protocols that have been developed and put in place will ensure the rapid containment and management of any return of COVID-19 to campus. While our objective is to continue to build on our Return to Campus plan, our first concern remains for the safety and security of our community - students, faculty and staff - and thus we will not hesitate to take

whatever steps needed to keep our community safe as we provide the best possible ongoing learning experience for our students.

Athletics, competitive and recreational, are an important component of the university experience, which also has been dramatically impacted by the pandemic. While varsity athletic competition remains suspended until the new year, we have initiated return to train protocols for student athletes and will be looking in the coming weeks to begin to relaunch our recreational activities.

These are challenging times throughout society as the quest for social justice continues around the world. Universities have a particular responsibility to provide safe spaces where big societal debates can be fully explored and meaningful change can emerge. Laurentian is committed to providing our community with opportunities to speak up and speak out, embrace and prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion, laying the groundwork for an environment welcoming and supportive of all students, faculty and staff in fulfilling our tricultural mandate. As such, we supported #ScholarStrike on September 9th and 10th, two days of action to protest systemic violence against Black, Indigenous, and Communities of Colour at home and around the globe. We have also encouraged and supported the conversation and debate throughout the spring and summer.

At its meeting of June 23rd, 2020, Senate declared that systemic racism and discrimination exists at Laurentian University. An adhoc committee to investigate the state of systemic racism and discrimination has been created, with the mandate to bring forward an action plan to eliminate racism and discrimination within the academy on campus, particularly in its systemic and structural forms.

This committee has been populated and held its first meeting on September 8th. The committee took stock of its mandate and outlined a work plan. As per its terms of reference, allowing the addition of members as needed to the committee, the committee voted to add Provost Berger to the committee and requested that she serve as co-chair. The committee also identified the need to further expand its membership to include individuals relevant to the full scope of its mandate, including individuals that are not from equity-seeking groups. The committee has committed to biweekly meetings over the coming year.

Financial Update

These continue to be extremely challenging times financially for businesses and universities around the country. At Laurentian, the impacts of COVID-19 have exacerbated our pre-existing financial challenges. While so much work has already been done, with approximately \$30M in cost efficiencies and new revenues being achieved since 2018, we have faced new and accelerated risks since March 2020. Over \$8.5 M in savings have been achieved between March and June, through implementing measures such as a hiring freeze, reduction in part-time and contract employment, significant non-salary budget reductions, and significant salary reductions and unpaid furlough days for the Executive Team, including myself, all Senior Leadership, including the Deans and our LUAPS/non-union staff. I particularly wish to thank our LUAPS staff for their leadership during these challenging times. However, the risks to the University continue. In

addition to the hopefully mostly temporary challenges due COVID-19, with \$5-20M of potential risk for 2020/2021 (as of June 2020), Laurentian must continue to solve an ongoing structural deficit of almost \$7M, which has arisen mainly due to the 10% reduction in domestic tuition rates and loss of unachieved graduate spaces in SMA3.

At its meeting of June 18th, the Laurentian Board approved a preliminary 2020/21 budget with a \$7.4M shortfall that remains to be dealt with during the fiscal year. The preliminary budget projected this to be achieved through \$4.4M in academic savings, \$1.8M in additional non-academic savings and \$1.2M in SMA3 government advocacy. A final budget will be brought to the Board this Fall, with the expectation of a balanced projection.

In the interim, Laurentian has achieved approximately \$500K from government advocacy related to the finalization of SMA3 and corridor flexibility, and \$1.5 million in non-academic savings as a result of the early negotiation of the Laurentian University Staff Union (LUSU) Collective Agreement. Although the Collective Agreement was not due to expire until June 30, 2021, we held collaborative discussions with LUSU to find ways to address the combined 2019-20 and 2020-21 projected deficits. In addition, we worked collaboratively to implement a retirement incentive, redeployments and job transfers resulting in 14 position redundancies. On behalf of the entire University, I want to personally thank LUSU and every LUSU member for being collaborative partners and demonstrating leadership in coming together to develop solutions and provide flexibility in the future to ensure that we will grow stronger together.

Progress to our final budget has been closely monitored by Laurentian's Board of Governors through two additional special meetings during the summer. Most recently, on August 24th, the Board Finance Committee received draft financial statements for 2019/20. A high level update to the preliminary budget was also provided to the Finance Committee and the full Board on August 28th. Laurentian's draft financial statements showed an operating deficit of \$5.4 M (\$5.1M due to COVID-19), pushing Laurentian's accumulated operating deficit to \$19.886 M. This exceeds the 2019 Board mandated maximum allowable cumulative operating deficit of \$15M and is a particular concern given the absence of cash reserves at Laurentian.

As of the August 28th update, with then existing enrollment data, the overall estimated additional risk due to COVID-19 has narrowed to \$5-11 M, comprised of an ancillary revenue risk of \$5M and tuition risk of \$0-6M, this in addition to the \$7.4 M shortfall in the June preliminary budget. Work is ongoing to achieve the additional academic, non-academic savings projected and government advocacy in support of the additional costs and lost revenues of COVID-19 is ongoing.

It should be noted that the province has stated explicitly that it will not provide any support for pre-existing problems in the postsecondary sector, and the University must address its structural deficit due to the tuition revenue decline. A key component of reaching our goal is to continue working together with all staff, faculty and our labour partners. All members of the Laurentian community must come together | *ensemble* | *maamwi* if we are to remain sustainable.

Preliminary Registration Update

As indicated in the financial update, Laurentian's enrollment risk has declined over the summer. I wish to acknowledge and thank everyone at the University, faculty and staff who have been engaged throughout the summer and particularly in the past three weeks in converting applicants. I expect that the fruits of their efforts will be reflected in our first day of class numbers that I expect to be able to provide a verbal update on at Senate.

SMA3

Recently the Ministry and Laurentian University signed the SMA3 Agreement. A final copy will be posted on the University's website as soon as it is received from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry announced recently their decision to delay the activation of the "at risk" performance-based grant funding for two years (2020-21 and 2021-22), decoupling the funding, but keeping all other aspects of the SMA3 model. The redistribution of Core Operating Grant to Performance Grant will proceed as planned and the Corridor threshold of +/-3% will remain. Laurentian anticipates a reduction in its Core Operating Grant as a result of decreased enrolments where the university will be below the Corridor threshold. Unfortunately, the unachieved graduate spaces and related growth funding from SMA2, were not approved for carry forward into SMA3. The Ministry has also delayed the reporting of Faculty Workload and Compensation to Year 3. On an annual basis, the Performance Metrics will be shared with the Senate and Board following the Annual Evaluation process with MCU.

Suspension of Admission to Programs

Ensuring Laurentian's future is dependent on offering high quality academic programming that attracts the interests of students locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. It is equally important that our programming serve the needs of the North and our constituent communities, English, French and Indigenous. Achieving both goals means that we must offer a comprehensive suite of programs for which there is uptake in the community. This is particularly important for Laurentian as we pass through these challenging times. Academic programming must also be a living, breathing, constantly evolving part of the University. Developing, improving and adapting our program offerings is essential ongoing work of the Senate. Ultimately, this work will determine the future and even the survival of this University.

I encourage this work, respect this work, and look forward to the Senate's continuing leadership. At the same time, the situation of the University is such that we can not ignore program offerings that have demonstrated sustained low interest amongst our students. We are not serving our community or mandate if we are not producing sufficient numbers of graduates.

Thus in keeping with our Senate-approved process, on July 30th 2020, Interim Vice-President Academic and Provost Demers issued a memo to the Laurentian Senate subcommittee responsible for academic planning, announcing the suspension of admission for all new incoming students in Fall 2020, until further notice, to the following programs:

- Études de l'environnement/Environnement et développement durable - spécialisation (FR)
- Mathématiques - spécialisation, majeure et concentration (FR) (BA & BSc)
- Music (BA and BFA) – specialization
- Modern languages – major in Italian
- Théâtre – spécialisation (FR)
- Geography/Géographie – specialization et spécialisation (FR & EN)
- Archaeology – specialization, major and concentration (EN)
- BAA Ressources humaines (FR)
- BBA International Management (EN)
- BBA Entrepreneurship (EN)
- Baccalauréat en éducation physique et santé: Leadership: activités physiques de plein air (FR)
- Maîtrise en Kinésie humaine (FR)
- Anthropology – specialization, major and concentration (EN)

There is also an expectation that in the coming months, the English and the Études françaises departments will find a way to consolidate their program offerings.

We have worked closely with all affected students to ensure that they are well supported and provided with all available options. We further affirm our commitment to Laurentian's francophone community, for who the suspension of admissions struck a deeply personal chord. We maintain our commitment to provide vibrant, attractive academic programs to serve the needs and interests of our francophone community.

It is important to recognize the important work of ACAPLAN, not only with respect now to these programs that have been referred to it, but its ongoing work in enabling the long term success of all of Laurentian's academic programming.

With a new academic plan approved in the spring, ongoing conversations with our federated partners with respect to the delivery of programs, and the overall challenges faced by Laurentian, I look forward to the collegial leadership of our faculty and our Senate in building the strong academic future of the high quality, sustainable, in demand programming that all of our students deserve.

There is an important conversation ahead, essential to the survival of the University, and I look forward to the strong engaged collegial leadership that we have at this institution to guide us in growing our long term success.

Winter 2021 Course Delivery

With the fall semester now well underway, our attention now must turn to the winter term. In the Spring, Senate mandated that a decision on the methods of delivery of our winter programming would be taken by the October Senate meeting.

For the fall, 99% of our offerings are being delivered remotely, with faculty taking advantage of technology upgrades in some classrooms to enhance the remote learning experience. At the same time, many students have expressed a desire to be on campus and have the ability to interact with their peers and professors.

Thus as we plan for the modalities of course delivery for the winter, I would encourage senators and indeed all faculty, to consider the potential of hybrid learning modalities that combine in person and remote learning. Laurentian has already implemented some hybrid-enabled classrooms and has the ability to further increase the number as needs grow. I believe as a University dedicated to our students and the student experience, we must invest in the technology and infrastructure needed to support our faculty in the delivery of instruction in the ways most sought after by our students.

Ultimately, as we pass through this pandemic we must take all appropriate and safe steps in working towards the new normal as we work to meet the needs of our students. Our challenges are complex, and I truly appreciate the flexibility and engagement of all faculty so far in meeting the challenges of a remote learning environment. I also have confidence that Laurentian can and will show leadership in the return of course delivery towards the new normal.

Kudos

- Congratulations to all stakeholders for their exceptional dedication that has made the start of our 2020-2021 academic year possible.
- A special thank you to our Operational Resumption committee for guiding our return to campus and putting the safety of our community first. The work of many people and departments at Laurentian University has accounted for our success in getting the 2020-2021 academic year underway with the newly added steps and measures for COVID-19. I want to acknowledge the committee members for their efforts and dedication: Brad Parkes, Osman Abou-Rabia, Benjamin Demianiuk, Brent Roe, Cindy Cacciotti, Gail Cowper-Benoit, Ginette Gervais, H el ene Joly, Isabelle Bourgeault-Tass e, Joel Dickinson, Laura Geryk, Lisette Legault, Luc Roy, Lyne Rivet, Martin Laferri ere, Michel Delorme, Melanie Dionne, Mary Laur, Meredith Teller, Nicole St. Marseille, Peter Hellstrom, Shawn Frappier, Shelley Watson, Tammy Eger, Yves Pelletier, Gillian Schultze, Jean-Paul Rains, Lace Marie Brogden, Michel S e guin, Normand Lavall ee, C eline Larivi ere, Erik Labrosse, Justin Lemieux, Marie-Lynne Michaud, Patricia S e guin, Rachel Trudeau, and Shelly Moore-Frappier.
- A special thank you to Lyne Rivet (Manager of Health and Wellness Services) for her leadership during our return to campus planning and her effective service to serve our campus and students both as a nurse practitioner and as our health response clinical lead in our preparations for the COVID-19 pandemic. She has balanced both roles extremely well, led by example with professionalism and calm and worked tirelessly to ensure a seamless transition for her patients and her team to remote health & wellness services.
- A special thank you to the IT team and their leaders, specifically:

- The Information Systems team for the swift changes to Colleague to allow student registration and payments;
 - The Teaching & Learning and Service Desk team to design, order, install and test the 8 remote and hybrid classrooms;
 - The Web Team's commitment to modify as quickly as possible the information on the portals and website; and,
 - The rest of the IT team (operations, security, network) for keeping the University operating while the rest were busy applying the changes.
- Dr. Jennifer Walker has been selected to receive a Minister of Colleges and Universities' Award of Excellence. Dr. Jennifer Walker is a Haudenosaunee member of Six Nations of the Grand River and holds a Tier II Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Health at Laurentian University. In response to COVID-19, Dr. Walker and her team of graduate students pivoted their focus to respond to research questions from First Nations. Dr. Walker's recent collaborations have focused on addressing community health data priorities related to COVID-19. Notably, her research program at Laurentian University has produced COVID-19 epidemiological models to support the Chiefs of Ontario, the Ontario Regional Chiefs and other First Nations leadership to develop their pandemic planning and response. Congratulations on a well-deserved honour.
 - A special acknowledgement of our Recruitment and Liaison teams led by Justin Lemieux and managers Pieter Breijer, Benoît Clément and Jin Liang for their tireless efforts in recruiting students this year and for supporting other units.
 - A special acknowledgement of our Admissions Office who has been working hard to process a high volume of applications for all three 2020 intakes this year (2020W, 2020SP and 2020F). With a total of 17, 085 applications across these three 2020 intakes, the team made 12, 916 offers of admission and saw both an increase of 12% in offers for transfer students and an increase of approximately 55% in master level offerings for Fall 2020.
 - Kirsty Bourret from the School of Midwifery is the co-recipient (with research partner Cristina A. Mattison, PhD, McMaster University) of the 2020 International Policy Ideas Challenge award funded by Global Affairs Canada and the Social Sciences and Humanities research Council of Canada. This award is for a project that champions changes in power structures and social norms that address global gender inequality. Research title: *Grounding the Feminist International Assistance Policy in evidence to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights through partnership with women-led civil society organizations.*
 - Registrar and former interim Vice-President Academic and Provost, Serge Demers, has been appointed to the Ontario Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) Board of Directors for a two-year term.
 - Julie Ceming, Acting Manager, and the Transitions and Engagement team led a successful orientation with over 30+ student events and 20+ department-specific orientation. As part

of welcoming new students, Jason-Scott Benoit and Sarah Johnston led 31 Registration Clinics in English and French. 1,559 students have participated to date via Zoom.

- Céline É. Desaulniers, Mary Laur and Jason-Scott Benoit are leading a new Peer Support Council, in coordination with the Student Associations and student leaders. The Council aims to peer-led support through the Learning Commons in the Centre for Academic Excellence.
- Louise-Phillip Rochon (Dept of Economics) has been invited to speak at The Banff Forum which brings together Canadian leaders and leading thinkers from around the world to engage in conversation and debate on a range of current and critical themes. By promoting discourse, leadership development, and professional networking across regions and sectors, we are helping build a more united, innovative, and prosperous Canada for all those who live here. Each year the Banff Forum selects approximately 200 participants through a rigorous application process. Delegates are chosen based on their professional achievements and their engagement in business, social, environmental or political activities. Although they represent a broad spectrum of professional sectors, they share a common desire to change our country – and our world – for the better.
- Troy Boyer, a Regulated International Student Immigration Advisor in the International Student Services unit worked closely with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to facilitate the arrival of new international students, through individualized immigration and quarantine plans, and leading detailed international orientation events.
- Chi-miigwech to the Indigenous Student Affairs team (ISA) who focused on alleviating student concern from the onset of COVID-19. The team sent out daily messages of encouragement, created opportunities for community connections via drumming, craft sharing and messages from Elders. The team also worked directly with communities to gather information on student needs and ensured that even those students in the most remote regions were offered support.
- Kauppi, C. (Social work), Hankard, M. (Indigenous studies), FitzMaurice, K. (Indigenous Studies), Pallard, H. (Droit et Justice), Montgomery, P. (Nursing), Faries, E. (Indigenous Studies, retired) & Newhouse, D. (Chanie Wenjack School of Indigenous Studies, U of Trent) obtained a SSHRC Grant. “On the Move: A Mixed Methods Study of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Homelessness and Migration in Northeastern Ontario”. Funded by Making the Shift Youth Homelessness Social Innovation Lab, Networks of Centres of Excellence, York University, Toronto, Ontario. \$285,336.00 (Total Project Budget: \$585,336.00).
- Academic Advisors, Corie Flesch, Melanie Roque, Brigitte Desjardins, and Maryse Gareau, have helped transition new domestic and international students, setting record numbers of advising contacts by week in the final weeks of August, supporting an average of 330 student cases per week.

- Investigators: Drs. Lynne Gouliquer (Sociology), Daniel Côté (Indigenous Social Work) obtained a SSHRC Insight Grant “Stigmatised Identity: Giving voice to easterly Canadian Métis” along with collaborator Dr. Carmen Poulin (UNB).
- The Language Institute, led by Manager, Tammie McLoughin, successfully transitioned to remote delivery of all language partnership programs in China, including the XUST Summer Experience Program (61 students) and JXUST English Language Program (51 students).
- The Centre for Academic Excellence's Teaching and Innovation team has demonstrated exceptional leadership this summer, working collaboratively with faculty members to prepare for the upcoming academic year. During July and August alone, the team conducted 8 workshops and 5 department visits, for a total of 412 attendees. The team also met with over 200 faculty members via Zoom, e-mail, or phone.
- In collaboration with Instructional Technology, the Centre for Academic Excellence's Teaching and Innovation team created a new webpage. Our Teaching and Innovation team also co-wrote an open textbook, <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/luremote/>, which includes Laurentian specific tips and tricks. Such fantastic teamwork and support for teaching and learning at Laurentian.
- Professor Elizabeth C. Turner from the Harquail School of Earth Sciences has received the Howard Street Robinson Medal, presented by the Geological Association of Canada (GAC), which recognizes "a respected and well-spoken geoscientist who will further the scientific study of Precambrian geology." Turner receives this award for outstanding contributions to research on precambrian geology.