

Report of the President & Vice-Chancellor to Senate

September 16, 2025

Dear Senate colleagues,

It is with joy and a great sense of optimism that I welcome you to another academic session at Laurentian. Like me, I am certain that you are all looking forward to seeing the campus abuzz with students once again, and it has been great seeing many of you around campus at the Welcome Back Breakfast and other such events. Faculty and staff have been hard at work to prepare campus for students' arrival, and there are many activities coming up throughout the month of September.

As a result of the tireless efforts of many of you, our incoming domestic undergraduate cohort for 2025 is one of the largest Laurentian has seen in several years. While the official count (as reported to the Ministry) does not take place until the beginning of November, we expect to see a double-digit increase in our new domestic students this year, which is a welcome sign as our international student cohort is greatly reduced due to policy changes imposed by the federal government. Notably, our cohort of Francophone students has also significantly increased, now reaching the highest levels we have ever seen in our history at Laurentian.

This is an important reminder for us of all that we have achieved in the recent years, and of all that we have to look forward to in the years ahead. Whether they are First Nation, Métis or Inuit, Anglophone, Francophone or bilingual, whether they are coming to us locally, from Ontario or beyond, students are choosing Laurentian. We should be proud of that, and we must all continue to work hard and work together to ensure that this trend continues.

January 27 Working Group recommendations

Over the summer, I received the recommendations of the working group that was struck following the security incident that took place on campus January 27, 2025. The recommendations aim to enhance safety protocols, communication, and emergency management, and include:

- Improved communication protocols, including less reliance on email in an emergency situation and more reliance on the SecurLU-UL app;

- Enhanced communication infrastructure and technology, including the implementation of new technologies to reach the University community during a crisis;
- Strengthened security measures across campus spaces, including a safety audit to ensure that renovations and new construction on campus align with recognized best practices with respect to safety;
- Enhanced training for students, staff, and faculty, including regular table-top exercises and mandatory training for certain populations on campus;
- Improved communication with partners, both on-campus and off-campus, such as the daycares, former federated colleges, and Ministry stakeholders; and to
- Update the Emergency Management and Response Plan.

I want to thank the working group for its efforts. I have accepted their recommendations and we will begin looking at implementation in the coming months.

I want to encourage everyone to download the SecurLU-UL app, which is available on the App Store and the Google Play Store. This remains - and will increasingly become - a critical asset in the University's incident response framework. Please turn on notifications to ensure that you receive any messages from the University during a crisis. The app also includes valuable information that you may find helpful even outside of a crisis situation.

eCampus Ontario Board

Over the summer, I was pleased to be appointed to the Board of Directors of eCampus Ontario, a not-for-profit centre of excellence and global leader in the evolution of teaching and learning through technology. I will be tasked with chairing the University sector of the Board, which includes leaders appointed to the position by post-secondary institutions that belong to eCampus.

eCampus Ontario is dedicated to the development of resources and the promotion of best practices for online teaching and learning, including the use of technology to increase access to post-secondary education. Given Laurentian's northern location and its significant proportion of online learners, this new role with eCampus aligns closely with our strategic priorities as an institution and places Laurentian as a leader in this space in Ontario.

Continuation of the Varsity brand review

As you know, our current strategic plan includes a commitment to "undertake a process that engages both the campus and broader communities to re-imagine Laurentian's Voyageurs varsity brand to be more reflective of Northern values and the University's bilingual and tricultural mandate."

The first phase of the project was completed last year and included broad engagement with both the University community and the local community. The next phase, which will be completed this year, involves exploring a brand identity that best reflects our values and mandate while enhancing our student and varsity athlete experience.

As part of this second phase, the broader University community is invited to submit suggestions on varsity team name, visual representation, mascot, cheer, and other experiential components that they feel capture the

essence and spirit of who we are as a University community. These ideas can include best practices experienced elsewhere or brand new ideas you wish us to explore. Ideas will be collected until September 21.

As we celebrate our 65th anniversary this year, it is a fitting time for us to reflect on our history and also reimagine our future. This project is part of that reflection, and we look forward to hearing the community's suggestions. Submissions will be reviewed and evaluated, and recommendations will be made to the University's leadership for consideration and further development.

Recruitment events

The Ontario Universities' Fair (OUF) will be taking place on September 27 and 28 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre in Toronto. This is a hallmark recruitment event each year, as students from around the province flock to a single location where they can learn about many different universities at once. Laurentian is always well represented at the event, and this year will be no exception.

Similarly, mark your calendars for October 25, which will be the day of Laurentian's Open House. We always encourage staff and faculty to participate in any way they can. More information will come in the coming weeks. I'd also like to thank the many faculty, staff, and students who will join us to showcase Laurentian University.

Launch of the Centre d'apprentissage des langues

On September 19, we will launch the new space for the Centre d'apprentissage des langues/Language Learning Centre. The Centre connects a diverse community of learners with French and English, promoting their acquisition and improvement within the University's bilingual and tricultural learning community. In so doing, the Centre offers innovative and high-quality language training.

The launch event will take place from 10:30 am-12:00 pm in the Alphonse Raymond atrium.

50th anniversary celebration of the Franco-Ontarian flag

September 25 is the 50th anniversary celebration of the Franco-Ontarian flag, and a number of events are planned on campus. The day will begin with a flag-raising ceremony in Founders' Square, which will include a sacred fire and a number of speeches. Several dignitaries are expected to attend the event. In the afternoon, the AEF will be hosting a free concert and barbecue.

This is an important annual event related to Laurentian's bilingual and tri-cultural mandate, especially when we consider the critical historical role that members of the Laurentian community played in the creation and raising of the Franco-Ontario flag. I encourage you all to attend and celebrate the flag with us.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

September 30 is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a day which honours the victims and survivors of residential schools. Public commemoration of the tragic and painful history and ongoing impacts of residential

schools is a vital component of the reconciliation process. I encourage you to participate in the day's events by wearing your orange shirts and taking part in the various activities taking place on campus.

Announcements

I want to welcome Professor Ernst Gerhardt to his role as Speaker of Senate, a seasoned veteran of the governance world at Laurentian, including as Deputy Speaker last year. I look forward to working with Ernst throughout the year.

Over the summer, Dr. Serge Demers announced his intention to step down from his role as University Registrar and Associate Vice-President, Student Enrolment Services, including his responsibilities as Secretary of Senate, effective January 2026. Serge will remain at Laurentian in his other capacities, including as a faculty member. I want to thank Serge for his many years of dedicated service to Laurentian in a variety of roles, and I wish him the best in the remainder of his journey with us. The Provost will be launching the search for a new University Registrar shortly.

Sincerely,

Lynn Wells
President & Vice-Chancellor