

President's Report to Senate December 2020

As the fall academic term and the year 2020 draws to a close I wish to recognize everyone at Laurentian that has contributed to the successful navigation of this most challenging of years. Everyone at Laurentian should be very rightly proud of what you and the University has achieved under the most trying of circumstances. I do encourage everyone, students, faculty and staff to take time over the year-end break to relax, unwind, decompress and recharge. Reflect on your achievements and the opportunities ahead in the New Year. Spend time with family and friends within your bubble (a new concept for 2020!) and safely enjoy your passions, be they outdoors or indoors. I personally hope to enjoy the local ski trails over the break and to switch my virtual experience from *Zoom* to *Facetime* and *Houseparty* as we enjoy time with my extended and broadly dispersed family.

Laurentian's Challenges and Academic Renewal

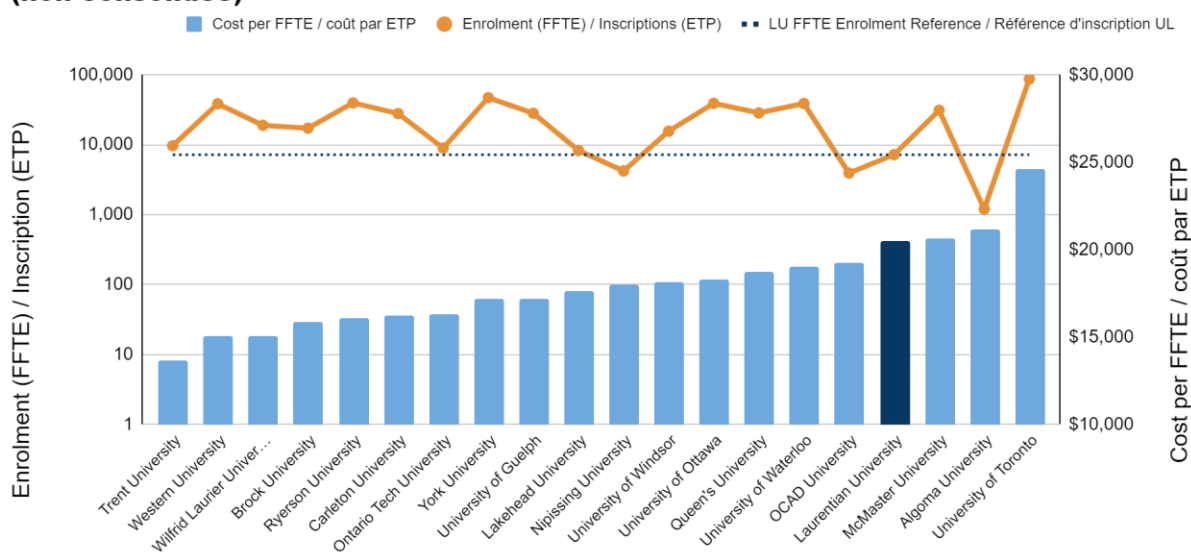
I have heard the sentiment expressed in my conversations around the university that our sustainability challenges have been long standing, and are in part self inflicted, and yet we always seem to muddle through for another year and that the challenges we are facing now are no different. I understand the sentiment expressed and have seen that through the normal times of the past several years, Laurentian has indeed struggled through. Even in normal times this raises concerns that we should be satisfied to muddle through, rather than build towards and grow our success. However, in a pandemic that is pushing us closer to the precipice than ever before, to ignore the challenges we face is to invite disaster.

Pre COVID-19 Laurentian faced an annual structural deficit, which means a deficit that is based on our current cost and revenue structure of over \$7M with costs expected to continue to rise year over year in an environment where tuition has been rolled back and frozen going forward. Now, COVID-19 has added another \$5M to our cost revenue gap for 2019-2020 and is projected to add an additional \$7+M in 2020-2021 to a total operating deficit that stands at almost \$20M at the end of fiscal 2019-2020. This is a result of increased costs to address health and safety in a pandemic environment and decreased ancillary revenues from sources such as residences and food services. All this at an institution with negative reserves - which means there are no banked funds available to cover deficits - and approaching its ceiling on borrowing.

Two significant parts of our overall challenge are as follows. First, Laurentian, through past strategic decisions around attracting students, is locked into amongst the lowest domestic tuition rates in the province. Compared to the provincial average tuition, this translates to forgoing \$2M in tuition revenue per year. The impacts of this have been compounded by a 10% tuition cut and now two years of frozen tuition. In 2020-21, this amounted to a \$7 million decline in revenues.

Second, Laurentian has amongst the highest education costs per student in the province (based on 2018-2019) data.

2018-19 COFO Benchmarking (Non-Consolidated) / Analyse comparative (non-consolidée)



The following table provides breakdown of the cost per student, by functional area, as per Council of Ontario Finance Officers reporting:

2018-19	Laurentian		All Ontario Universities			Small Universities		
(as per COU)	Cost/Student							
	\$	%	\$/Student	%	Diff	\$/Student	%	Diff
Academic	12,342	60.1%	10,234	55.5%	4.69%	8,198	49.4%	10.73%
Academic Support	1,626	7.9%	1,233	6.8%	1.09%	1,377	8.3%	-0.38%
Library	657	3.2%	752	3.9%	0.67%	567	3.4%	-0.22%
Student Services	2,245	10.9%	2,541	13.1%	2.12%	2,189	13.2%	-2.25%
Central Computing & Commun.	612	3.0%	628	3.7%	0.68%	805	4.8%	-1.87%
Administration & General	814	4.0%	1,244	5.8%	1.85%	1,206	7.3%	-3.31%
Physical Plant	1,794	8.7%	1,546	8.6%	0.09%	1,668	10.1%	-1.31%
External Relations	433	2.1%	449	2.7%	0.55%	582	3.5%	-1.40%
Total Cost/Student	20,520	100%	18,627	100%	0	16,592	100%	0

Our costs per student are essentially the same as McMaster University, the most research intensive University in Ontario (\$440K/FTE, Laurentian \$110K/FTE - 2019 data). Further McMasters figures include its Medical School (NOSM is counted outside of Laurentian in the same calculation). Indeed Laurentian's costs per student are generally in the same cluster as the big 6 Ontario Universities (Western being an outlier). For reference, the sum of difference per student compared to the Ontario average equates to \$13M and \$27M compared to the Small Universities Average.

Now the additional costs of providing bilingual programming do need to be considered, for which Laurentian receives special grants to support. However our cost per student is still somewhat higher than that of the University of Ottawa including the medical school and with \$240K of research funding per FTE (Laurentian +\$220).

Further, when the costs are broken down by area of activity, Laurentian spends more per student on Academics and Academic Support (Including research) than the system and less on everything else other than physical plant.

Over the past 15 years Laurentian has become a comprehensive research engaged university, with the additional academic costs of supporting research, scholarship and associated creative activity, while maintaining academic practices of a small undergraduate primarily liberal arts university. Thus Laurentian has evolved the teaching component of its workload to reflect the workload of comprehensive universities (12-15 credit standard, with a range from 6-24 credits) compared to primarily undergraduate universities (e.g. Acadia, St Marys @ 30 credits, Mount Alison @ 24-30 credits + mandatory undergraduate research supervision). At the same time Laurentian has maintained a student to full time faculty ratio of 19:1, more aligned with small undergraduate universities such as Trent (18:1) and Mount Allison (16:1), than comprehensive, research intensive universities such as Carleton (28:1), York (27:1) and Guelph (35:1). The costs associated with maintaining this student to faculty ratio has put tremendous pressure on Laurentian's budget and its future financial stability.

Together, this data highlights the importance of academic renewal to the future of Laurentian as a comprehensive research engaged university. To be sustainable and successful as we grow scholarship at current workloads, we must find ways to offer attractive, compelling programming in a way that also increases our student to faculty ratio and brings our cost per student to a sustainable level. Importantly, our current cost structure will not lessen efforts throughout the university, administrative as well as academic, to be as efficient and sector leading as possible.

I believe that the conversations that have been initiated in October with respect to streamlining our offerings and reducing duplication while improving outcomes and student experience - the results of which will begin to be seen in winter term- are a good start. Further, the work of ACAPLAN in looking to create efficiencies in the academic administrative structure and developing guidelines for the suspension of admissions to underperforming programs, as well as the Provost/VP Administration-led advisory committee on the review of the overall organizational structure of

Laurentian, will also make important contributions to meeting our current challenges and building towards a successful future.

However, I believe that the most important component of change Laurentian needs to ensure our future success will be achieved through a comprehensive bottom-up collegial review of all our academic offerings with the goal of increasing the attractiveness of our programs to students as we bring our cost structure into line at least with the average of the Ontario system. A lot of important work has already been done, and I applaud our collegium for its efforts as we continue to work. Together, all of these important changes will ensure a bright future for everyone at Laurentian, including students faculty and staff.

In a recent conversation with senior leaders at Laurentian, the passion, dedication and resilience of the Laurentian community was emphasized. It was highlighted that *“Laurentian gets things done even when facing difficulties.”*

They highlighted that our University has great academic strengths on which to build across all of our faculties. Further, our online presence has been a leader in Ontario. Our campus is also located in a beautiful setting that few in Canada can compete with. Our graduates have great outcomes, which must be further fostered. We are comprehensive and have become research intensive - from which there should be no going back. We serve and engage our community of Northern Ontario, and attract students from around the world. Our Alumni are proudly supportive and engaged. We are proudly bilingual and multicultural and highlight the best of what Canada has to offer.

At the same time, we are not without weaknesses and opportunities to improve. Not only are our operating costs per student high, but many of our buildings are in need of critical maintenance, our IT infrastructure is in need of increased investment, and many of our processes lag best practice around performance management, shared accountability, goal setting and recognition. Our cost structure is rigid, with less flexibility than many of our competitors. We lack strong continuing education and micro credentialing offerings that in many institutions support core academic programming. We have a federated structure that is costly and inefficient. We struggle to attract enough students to deliver many programs, and struggle to function as a truly bilingual university. Linguistically and culturally, the University is distinct from the Greater Sudbury Community and trails the system in addressing issues of racism, equity, diversity and inclusion. The absence of cash reserves limits our ability to invest and respond to challenges such as COVID-19 and the provincial tuition cut/freeze.

As a forward thinking, optimistic institution, tremendous opportunities for the future are seen for Laurentian. The digital transformation emerging from the pandemic offers the ability to expand our reach and broaden our catchment of students. We have learned much through the transition to remote learning and we must take advantage of what we have learned as we return to the new normal. We have some unique strengths on which to build and grow, with respect to the North, reconciliation, and sectors of the economy and our society in which we are leaders in supporting. There is an important opportunity to break down silos and build interdisciplinarity and collaboration. We must take the opportunity to build broader awareness of the University, and

the advantages of our location. As we come out of the pandemic, growing international, both in attracting students and in growing partnerships is seen as a major opportunity. There are particular opportunities seen in professional programs and continuing education. A new budget model will empower faculties and units, incentivize innovation and reward creativity. We do have the luxury of space, and thus the ability to creatively welcome more activity to campus, particularly as the implementation of new technologies reduces footprints. There is also the ability to build new partnerships internally and externally with stakeholders.

We face many threats as an institution that can impede or prevent our success. Our cost structure is unsustainable and must change. We must work collegially as a community to overcome resistance to change. We cannot afford to rely on the past or hold things sacred that limit our conversations. Externally, physical borders to postsecondary education are breaking down as technology improves, with competition in the marketplace providing options to students as never before. The postsecondary system in Ontario is also evolving, with the lines between colleges and universities continuing to blur. Further, pandemic related financial challenges across the system is increasing the aggressiveness of universities and competition for students. Limitations on governments as a result of the pandemic are expected to limit government investments in universities. Similarly, government policies on tuition may be expected to continue to restrict revenue growth opportunities.

The Senior Leadership group also provided guidance on some of the things Laurentian needs to consider in building on strengths and opportunities, overcoming weaknesses, and alleviating threats. A number of action items were highlighted in the conversation. As a collegium, Laurentian needs to build an umbrella of programming based on domains, interdisciplinarity and experiential community engagement. To enable this umbrella we must fundamentally reconsider our current faculty/unit/program structures and degrees in favour of thematic groupings and degrees and must be creative on how we integrate humanist and technical skill development to produce well rounded graduates. In doing so, we must move rapidly towards a student faculty ratio that reflects our status as a research engaged institution and a cost structure that is at least sector average. We must increase our focus on Truth and Reconciliation and inclusion, to realize our leadership and enable the full potential of our community. We must prioritize investments in new technologies and pedagogical methods over physical infrastructure and classical teaching modalities. As an academy, we must focus on student demand and student interests, and treat our students as valued clients whose business we must earn and with whom we enter into a contract of trust and expectation. We must build professional education, microcredential and continuing education to support the core academic mandate of the University. We must determine what we can be as a bilingual institution and be honest how we present ourselves. We must implement a budget model that incentives innovation and creativity, brings our expenses into line with revenues, and builds accountability into the provision of shared services and central supports. We must engage externally and be relevant to our community in building the economy of Northern Ontario and our society.

At least as important are ideas expressed around what we as an institution must stop doing. We must stop closing our minds to change based on historical practice and the myths of our past. We cannot continue to support structures, programs, courses and activities that rely on historical laurels

that drain resources from in demand activities. We must stop having courses with almost identical outcomes offered in different Faculties/programs. We must stop treating wishes like commitments and supporting activities and initiatives in the absence of documented and verifiable business cases. We must stop pretending to be all things to all people and focus on promises that we can deliver on.

I offer this conversation summary as a starting point for the broader collegial discussion that we are embarking on to transform the face of the university. As a biologist, evolutionary theory teaches that the constant slow evolution of life is disrupted by cataclysmic events. I believe that the resilience, commitment and dedication of this community will fully measure up to the challenges that we face and that Laurentian is primed for another 60 years of success as an outstanding academic institution serving Northern Ontario, Canada and the World.

Special Advisor, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Interim Associate Vice-President, Academic and Indigenous Programs

Over the past year, I have made a number of [statements](#) regarding the critical importance of eliminating racism and discrimination in the Laurentian community, particularly in its systemic forms and towards Black, Indigenous and Peoples of Colour (BIPOC). While we have been working hard to address these very real issues that exist on our campus, through Tri-Agency grant funding dedicated to advancing equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in research, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Amélie Hien as Special Advisor to Provost Berger and Vice-President Academic on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion for a five month period starting in January. This role will have three primary areas of responsibility:

1. Work with the Provost and Vice-President Academic to support the Ad Hoc Senate Committee on Racism and Discrimination on policies that impact EDI and suggest new approaches to advance continuous improvement.
2. Support the Vice-President Research to revise and implement the Canada Research Chairs program and EDI Action Plan including:
 - a. Review of policies pertaining to recruitment, hiring, and retention, for Canada Research Chairs in particular and searchers in general.
 - b. Provide guidance on the development of training programs and new approaches for researchers to advance their understanding of EDI and incorporation of EDI principles in their research programs.
3. Liaise with members of the Laurentian University President Advisory Group on a Safe Place to Work and Learn / Outcome 23 Advisory Group, tasked with implementing outcome 23 of the Laurentian University Strategic Plan which states, “we will ensure that appropriate resources are in place to promote and foster inclusion, acceptance, and respect for the diversity that exists within our campus community”.

Originally from Burkina Faso, Dr. Amélie Hien is currently a Full Professor and Chair of the Département d'études françaises. She brings a wealth of experience from her career and has

focused primarily on questions of accessibility, quality of french language health services for francophone minorities in Northeastern Ontario and the experience of immigrant and equity-seeking groups in health care. Dr. Hien is a current member of the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Racism and Discrimination and chair of its policy sub-group. I applaud Drs Berger and Hien for their leadership.

In addition, as you will likely have heard, interim Associate Vice-President Academic and Indigenous Programs, Shelly Moore-Frappier, was elected Gimaa of her home Nation, Temagami First Nation. As was announced by the Provost last week, I am pleased to welcome Jiidamoonhkwe, Susan Manitowabi, to the role of interim Associate Vice-President Academic and Indigenous Programs. An Anishinaabe-kwe from Whitefish River First Nation, Professor Manitowabi is founding Director of the School of Indigenous Relations and has been a key contributor to many of Laurentian University's milestones in Indigenous education and truth and reconciliation.

Special Advisor, Indigenous Language Preservation and Research

In the same vein, Laurentian is committed to being a leader in Truth and Reconciliation and we have been and seek to continue to be a leader in the education of Indigenous students and in bringing Indigenous culture and ways of knowing to the University. We have heard through many avenues that the loss of Indigenous positions at LU is concerning and threatens our leadership in the sector. Further, in responding to the call for Truth and Reconciliation, it is crucial that Universities work in partnership with Indigenous communities in the co-creation of programming and activities.

Language is key to identity and culture and is a top priority for Indigenous nations. Laurentians engagement and background with Indigenous communities and work to date in building our academic programs, provides the basis for growing our supportive leadership in this area.

Therefore, after much conversation, Laurentian is launching an effort to develop a plan and obtain support to host a Center for Indigenous Languages and Research in partnership with the leadership of Indigenous communities.

I will be seeking a Special Advisor to the President to lead this effort on behalf of the University. Collegial engagement within the academy and leadership from Indigenous community partners will be key to the success of this effort.

Given our current financial situation, the key to being able to launch this initiative at this time has been securing dedicated external funding to support the Special Advisor and their work. Further, a key part of the mandate of the Special Advisor will be to lead the generation of the external funding that will be needed to create the centre and build its activities and complement.

As a University, we cannot become stagnant and we must build towards the future even in these challenging times. The key in our current situation is to find creative and innovative ways to

support the development of initiatives in a manner that is self-funded at start-up and self-sustainable over time.

Farewell to the Dean of Science, Engineering and Architecture

Dr. Osman Abou-Rabia will be leaving his role as Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Architecture as of December 31, 2020 and retiring after six and one half years. Osman managed the Faculty through a number of major changes including the integration of the School of Architecture and the transition to two named schools in honour of major donors. Osman also took on an interim role as Executive Director of the Goodman School of Mines while a recruitment process was conducted for that role. He is one of the most experienced university administrators at Laurentian and has been essential in supporting new academic leaders throughout his mandate. Defined not only by his tremendous work ethic, Osman's positive energy and joie de vivre will be greatly missed. I invite you to join me in wishing him all the best in this well deserved retirement.

Update on the Federation Conversations

An engaged conversation with our federated partners on the future of the federation is continuing with a focus on academic collaboration, engagement and future financial sustainability. Discussions have focused on creating more efficiencies and the sharing of our strengths. Each institution is also committed to reducing course offerings by 15% in solidarity to the Faculty of Arts' mission to reduce the number of very low enrollment courses.

I look forward to the evolution of these conversations and achieving the efficiencies needed on which to build our future.

Kudos

- Since the pandemic, the Consortium national de formation en santé – Volet Université Laurentienne (CNFS-UL) has been inspired by its imposed limits and obstacles. With the support of a group of dedicated student ambassadors and her team, Michelle Thibeault, project lead at CNFS-UL developed and implemented two new initiatives. The first was to distribute 25 French activity kits (handouts and material) called "Explorons les programmes en santé" to French high schools across Northern Ontario. These kits were developed for high school students in order to allow them to discover Laurentian's CNFS academic programs while making important links to their curriculum. A virtual kit was also created for those learning from home. The second initiative is a podcast "La santé, en français SVP" which offers monthly episodes that explore various themes pertaining to the health of francophone populations by capturing the experiences of health professionals and researchers.
- Kudos to Professor Suzanne Lamothe who was mentioned on Umentioned Laurentian for very engaging course delivery. Within one day the post had 300 likes and over 30 students

and alumni shared their stories about how Professor Lamothe was one of their favorites. Suzanne is an asset to the Biology department with her incredible engagement and student-first approach to learning.

- Kudos to Troy Boyer and Melissa Keeping who have been instrumental in supporting international students with immigration questions. The need for one-on-one immigration advising has increased quite a bit during the pandemic and both have met this challenge head-on. We are extremely fortunate to have them as part of the Laurentian Team.
- Dean's Speaker Series: In November, we had the privilege of welcoming Mike Di Brina, Managing Partner at DiBrina Group, and Member of the Dean's Faculty of Management Advisory Council, who shared his experience with our business students. Topics such as skills and competencies required to be successful were raised during the discussion under the leadership of Zeeva Millman. Mike also talked about his lessons learned in life and in business.
- A new partnership has been signed for five years with NEOMA Business School (Reims, Rouen and Paris, France) recently. The general purpose of this Agreement is to establish specific educational relations and cooperation between the participating institutions in order to promote academic linkages and to enrich the understanding of different cultures. The institutions share the common mission to provide international education of the highest quality and are committed to continuous improvement. This agreement of cooperation will allow both Institutions to exchange two business students per year, facilitate exchange of professors, and eventually establish research cooperation. NEOMA Business School is part of the Conférence des Grandes Ecoles (France), and is AACSB, AMBA, and EQUIS accredited.
- A new association has been created recently: the MBA student association (MBASA). The purposes of this association are: (a) to provide social, networking and career-building activities. (b) to provide a link through which the students may speak to the Administration or Staff of the School. (c) to provide the opportunity for members to acquire leadership skills. (d) to promote positive relationships and communication between Laurentian University and the surrounding community. (e) to promote positive inter-school and intra-school relations.
- The 1st MBASA Executive Team members are: Tianqi Yu, Cameron Perdue, Liyu Hui, Bailey Isenor, Fan Zhang, Adam Pinard. and Yasmine Abou-Rabia.
- Congratulation on many new publications from the Faculty of Management:
 - **Abukari, K.** & Otchere, I. (2020). Dominance of Hybrid Contratum Strategies over Momentum and Contrarian Strategies: Half a Century of Evidence. *Financial Markets and Portfolio Management*, ABDC rank: B; Acceptance Rate: 12%.
 - Razmak, J., Al-Janabi, S. Kharbat, F.K., & **Bélanger, C.H.** (2021). Lean Database: An Interdisciplinary Perspective Combining Lean Thinking and Technology. *The*

International Arab Journal of Information Technology, vol. 18 (1), pp. TBA. In press

- **Eshghi, K.**, and Ray, S. (2020). Conflict and Performance in Channels: A Meta-analysis, the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, forthcoming. (A* on ABDC list, and listed on Financial Times top 50 journals list)
- **Zephir, L.** co-authored the first "Epidemiological Study of the Population's Knowledge, Attitude and Perception of Covid-19" in Haiti, on behalf of the Centres GHESKIO, spearhead by a Professor at the Cornell University Medical School.
- Razmak, J., **Bélanger, C.H.**, El Refae, G.A., & Farhan, W. (2021). Electronic Medical Records: Taking Young Generations of Patients and Physicians through Innovative Technology and Change Management. *International Journal of Electronic Healthcare*. In press.
- **Havlovic, S.** "Transnational Representation by European Works Councils in the Passenger Airline Industry". *The Journal of Air Transport Studies*. (acceptance rate of 30%) Volume 11, Issue 1, 2020.
- Liu, Jialin, **Luckny Zéphyr**, and C. Lindsay Anderson. "Optimal Operation of Microgrids with Load-Differentiated Demand Response and Renewable Resources." *Journal of Energy Engineering* 146.4 (2020): 04020027. https://ascelibrary.org/jleed9/ey_editors_choice_collection
- Bandanaranaike, S., **Orozco Quijano, E.P.**, Navarrete Baez F, "A COVID-19 work-integrated learning strategy for entrepreneurial mindset reflections; Case Study in Mexico, International Journal of Work Integrated Learning, Volume 21, Issue 5, special edition ISSN 2538-1032 https://www.ijwil.org/files/IJWIL_21_4_467_489.pdf
- Congratulations to our colleague Jean-Charles Cachon whose article 'Building Business Cred in the Hood: Traditional Teachings and Legitimacy Management in Indigenous Communities' has been selected as an Outstanding Paper in the 2020 Emerald Literati Awards. The editorial team said that it is one of the most exceptional pieces of work they saw throughout 2019.
- Dean Michel Delorme has been elected Member of the Board of the Business Schools Association of Canada/Association des écoles de gestion du Canada for a term of two years. The mission of BSAC/AEGC is to promote quality in management education and the professional development of business school administrators through various types of events, research and information services, and representation.
- Professor Jorge Virchez presented in an International Multi-stakeholder Governance conference to Overcome The Challenges of Covid-19. <https://sciencepolicy.ca/posts/multi-stakeholder-governance-to-overcome-the-challenges-of-covid-19/>.

- The *Foire des destinations postsecondaires* is an annual event that aims to promote high school graduation and facilitate student transitions. In this spirit, Ontario's twelve (12) French-language school boards and some thirty (30) French-language universities, colleges, communities and ministry institutions worked together to offer the province's 12,400 Grade 11 and 12 students a showcase of all the opportunities available to them.

Although the compilation of participation data is only preliminary, we can already report that the Laurentian virtual kiosk has received 1,080 visits from students and class groups from all twelve francophone school boards in the province, and that the 105 workshops offered by our institution from November 23 to 27 reached more than 3,000 students.

Congratulations to the professors and students who ensured the exceptional representation of their Francophone and bilingual programs. Bravo to the teams of the Office of Francophone Affairs and Liaison, who coordinated Laurentian's participation in this Fair. Thank you to the teams from Student Transitions and Engagement, the *Consortium national de formation en santé - volet Laurentienne (CNFS)*, and the Digital Strategies Department who helped make the project a success.