

Interim President and Vice-Chancellor's Report to the Board of Governors *September 2025*

Message from Interim President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Sheila Embleton

Boozhoo, Aanii, Bonjour, Hello,

As we begin this new academic year, I am filled with optimism for the months ahead and the opportunities they hold for our students, faculty, and staff. I am confident that together, despite multiple challenges ahead, we will continue to build on Algoma University's proud tradition of learning, growth, and transformation.

I began on July 1 as Interim President and Vice-Chancellor at this unique moment in Algoma University's evolution. A sincere thanks to everyone across our three campus communities for the warm welcome! While my time here so far has been both busy and energizing, it has also been inspiring to witness the dedication, creativity, and care throughout this institution.

It's a time of significant change, so also an opportunity for conversation, reflection, and community building. My role is to listen, learn, support, and guide — helping the University stabilize and thrive during this period of transition.

This is a moment to review what is working well and to identify areas where we can better align with the ever-shifting postsecondary education landscape. Over the coming months, my focus will be on helping the institution adapt to the realities of the new financial landscape while advancing academic innovation, championing collaboration and transparency, ensuring operations align with the University's vision and Special Mission, and maintaining open lines of communication with the Algoma University community.

Algoma University's purpose, values, commitments, and potential inspire all of us every day. Together we will honour the past, remain grounded in the present, and shape a future that reflects the aspirations of our university and the people it serves. I am delighted to walk alongside you in the year ahead and to support all that Algoma University is becoming.

Fall 2025 Enrolment Update

Updated: As of September 13, a total of 514 new students (392 domestic and 122 international) have enrolled at Algoma University across all three campuses for the Fall 2025 semester. At the same time, we have a total of 3,961 unique students registered—not including Professional and Continuing Education (PACE) students—against a projected 4,840, which represents approximately 82% of the target. Registration for Fall 2025 is now closed and we continue to identify and assist students with registration as we move toward Winter 2026.

Latest Immigration, Refugee & Citizenship Canada & Provincial Attestation Letter (PAL) Updates

The focus of our international enrolment discussions has needed to shift recently. For much of the past year, the key question was whether institutions had been allocated enough Provincial Attestation Letters (PALs) to meet their needs. Now, the more pressing issue is our ability to fully utilize the allocation we already have. This change reflects two intersecting challenges. First, the broader global environment for international education has undergone a dramatic shift. Federal policy changes, visa processing delays and approval rates have led to a decline in certainty for prospective students and have drastically impacted Canada's competitiveness. Other countries have acted swiftly to capture a larger market share. Within Ontario, competition has intensified from both public and private institutions, with many expanding their graduate-level offerings and recruitment capacity. We are not just aware of but, of course, actively addressing these challenges.

Second, institutional readiness plays a role. Earlier cost-containment decisions, prudent at the time, reduced our market visibility during a critical recruitment window. Additionally, our graduate program portfolio remains limited compared to the growing demand for applied, career-focused master's programs. This programmatic gap limits our ability to respond to shifting market preferences, even in cases where PALs are available.

While we continue to perform well relative to many peers on key conversion metrics, the current constraints on PAL utilization cannot be overcome solely through recruitment activity. We must rely on data-driven enrolment forecasting, grounded in actual conversion data rather than optimistic assumptions. This, along with targeted reinvestment in high-yield markets and the accelerated development of graduate-level programming, will ensure that we not only allocate PALs but also position ourselves to convert them into enrolled students, despite the significant headwinds in the external environment.

Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) — Fall 2025

Looking ahead, the Registrar's Office is preparing to pivot its SEM starting in Fall 2025. The new structure is designed to create more substantial alignment across portfolios, improve responsiveness to student needs, and ensure our enrolment strategies remain focused and effective.

The revised approach will include:

- Co-leadership by the University Registrar and the Executive Director, Student Services, alongside the Vice-President Academic and Research.
- A high-level steering committee of senior leaders tasked with setting overarching enrolment goals.
- Three sub-committees will be formed, each including subject matter experts and, importantly, voices that work directly with students. Their mandate will be to review data,

assess existing action items, and recommend new strategies to meet enrolment priorities.

The three sub-committees will focus on:

1. Enrolment Growth and Partnerships;
2. Equity, Access and Indigenous Engagement; and
3. Program Demand and Market Alignment.

This new model replaces the current 20-subcommittee structure, streamlining our approach while ensuring expertise and student perspectives remain central to decision-making. Ultimately, this change will position us to better respond to evolving enrolment trends and support student success more effectively.

Temporary Pause in First-Year Admissions for Low-Enrolment Programs

In May 2025, the Board of Governors approved a one-year time-limited pause on first-year admissions into five low-enrolment programs: Geography, History, Music, Sociology, and Visual Arts. The Board did not take these decisions lightly and emphasized our shared responsibility to ensure the long-term strength and financial sustainability of all our academic programs.

Together with the interim VPAR, Brett Goodwin, I have met with each of the affected departments. These discussions provided an opportunity to review the data, to hear directly from faculty about the strengths and uniqueness of their programs, as well as about their ideas for strengthening admission into the affected programs and making them financially sustainable. I am optimistic that the creativity, expertise, and commitment within these departments will generate actionable proposals that both protect academic excellence and position these programs for future success.

Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security (MCURES): Improving College and University Governance Structures

In the Spring 2025 Red Tape Reduction package, the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security (MCURES) committed to consulting with Ontario's publicly assisted colleges and universities to explore ways to improve institutional governance. This includes areas such as board size and composition, roles and responsibilities, skills and knowledge, government appointments, and financial management. The Ministry's goal is to enhance decision-making efficiency and accountability of college and university governance, drawing on best practices and input from the sector. I continue to work closely with the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) and other member universities on ensuring the soundness and effectiveness of university governance, as well as adherence to leading governance practices and fiduciary responsibilities.

Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security (MCURES): Funding Formula Review

In late July, MCURES commenced consultations on the long-anticipated Funding Formula Review. During a preliminary meeting with Executive Heads (University Presidents), the Ministry outlined the scope of this process and emphasized that the Funding Formula Review builds on ongoing work with the sector to achieve long-term financial sustainability. This work has already included additional "STEM" enrolment funding and increased per-student grants through the Postsecondary Education Sustainability Fund.

At a high level, the objectives of the Funding Formula Review are intended to:

- Serve the needs of all learners while aligning with labour market needs, particularly in light of projected demographic growth and consistently strong domestic demand.
- Support postsecondary and provincial financial sustainability in the context of increasing financial constraints due to federal changes to the International Student Program and frozen domestic tuition fees.
- Ensure responsiveness to the unique needs of different regions and learners, including Indigenous, northern and rural communities (a priority that is especially relevant to us).
- Incentivize continuous improvement in student, community and economic outcomes.
- Drive greater institutional efficiencies and accountability.
- Allocate funding in a fair, predictable and transparent manner. The Ministry aims to explore opportunities to simplify the funding model, including integrating specific special-purpose grants into the Strategic Mandate Agreement framework where appropriate.

I, along with other presidents, shared preliminary comments on these objectives and will have further opportunities to provide detailed feedback as the consultations continue. We will also work closely with the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) and the Ministry to ensure that Algoma's specific needs and priorities are taken into consideration, as the Funding Formula Review evolves.

People & Culture Updates

The renewal collective agreement between OSSTF District 35 and Algoma University has been ratified by both the membership and the University. This agreement is the result of productive and respectful negotiations, reflecting our shared commitment to strengthening the working relationship between the Union and the university, supporting the continued success of our institution and the people who make it such a special place. The new agreement is in effect, with further details being provided by the Union and the People and Culture team in the coming weeks.

Last month, Richard Peters joined Algoma University as our new Chief Financial Officer, based in Sault Ste. Marie. Richard is a Chartered Professional Accountant and a Chartered Business

Valuator. He holds both a Master's of Accounting and a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Waterloo. His career spans 15 years of senior leadership roles across the Ontario college system, most recently as *Vice President of Strategic Enrolment, Partnerships & Employment* at Sault College. He previously served as *Vice President, International*, at Sault College, *Vice President, Finance & Administration*, at Sault College, and *Vice President of Finance & International*, at Canadore College.

Makwa Waakaa'igan Construction Updates

Construction is currently underway on Makwa Waakaa'igan, a future Centre of Cultural Excellence that will serve as an international hub for cross-cultural learning, Indigenous-led research, and reconciliation work on the Sault Ste. Marie campus. The most recent project updates include:

- Demolition of the old building was completed in June 2025.
- Footings were completed on August 11, and foundation walls and backfilling began on August 22.
- Superstructure is expected to start in November 2025.
- Construction is expected to be completed by the beginning of December 2026; however, our focus has shifted from "construction completion" to the projected "move-in date", which is currently set for January 2027.
- Following the completion of construction, a fit-out period of a couple of months will be required to prepare the building for occupancy. This phase encompasses essential tasks, including air balancing, carpentry, furniture installation, and testing the alarm system.

Major Milestone for Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig (SKG)

Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig (SKG) has received a 10-year approval from the Indigenous Advanced Education Skills Council (IAESC). With this approval, SKG will be able to submit new program proposals directly to IAESC for stand-alone accreditation. This approval is a step towards the institution's full accreditation. SKG is right across the road from us in Sault Ste. Marie; we have agreements with SKG, and are in the process of renewing and updating our agreement, to reflect this new evolution. Congratulations to all involved, and we look forward to our future cooperation and synergies.

Office of Research and Innovation (ORI)

Throughout Summer 2025, the Office of Research and Innovation (ORI) observed a significant increase in external grant submissions. A record-setting 21 Notice of Intent (NOIs) were submitted to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Discovery grant program. Additionally, eight federal/provincial grant applications were submitted

with Algoma as the lead institution, and two applications with Algoma as a co-investigator. The summer has also brought positive funding outcomes, with one successful award and two grants with international organizations where Algoma is a collaborating institution. We intend to maintain this momentum into the fall with the rollout of a suite of grant writing workshops and resources designed to further strengthen our institution's funding competitiveness.

Fall Convocations

This Fall, I look forward to participating in Convocation ceremonies in both Timmins and Brampton. The Convocation ceremony in Timmins is on October 8, and will also give me an opportunity to engage with community members and university partners. Later in the month, I will also participate in the Brampton Convocations on October 21-22 to celebrate the accomplishments of our graduates.

September Forums

We recently hosted two internal Forums—on the Brampton campus on September 18, and on the Sault Ste. Marie campus on September 22. These rounds of Forums differed slightly from previous iterations as they combined both in-person and virtual elements. We welcomed both staff and faculty members from all three campuses—Brampton, Sault Ste. Marie and Timmins—rather than hosting separate Forums for each group. Along with senior executive members, I had engaging discussions with staff and faculty, and had an opportunity to discuss ongoing federal and institutional changes, among other pertinent subjects.

Recent University Achievements

[Hon. Nolan Quinn Campus Visit](#): In July, we welcomed the Honourable Nolan Quinn, Ontario's Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security, to our Sault Ste. Marie campus. The special visit, in honour of increased provincial funding for STEM seats in universities, featured guided tours of two of the University's cutting-edge research facilities. We also discussed Algoma's growing role in Ontario's post-secondary landscape, the University's commitment to environmental sustainability, and its expanding research footprint for both undergraduate and graduate students.

[32nd ACIS International Conference on Software Engineering, AI, Networking and Parallel/Distributed Computing \(SNPD 2025\)](#): During the summer period, the Faculty of Computer Science and Technology hosted the 32nd Association for Computer and Information Science (ACIS) International Conference on Software Engineering, Artificial Intelligence, Networking and Parallel/Distributed Computing (SNPD 2025) on the Brampton Campus. This three-day global conference convened international researchers, industry professionals, and students to share breakthroughs and foster collaborations in AI, networking, and software engineering. Organized by Algoma in partnership with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and ACIS, approximately 75 research papers authored by researchers from

China, the USA, Jordan, Tunisia, Japan, Oman, Bangladesh, and Canada were accepted and presented at the conference, including a paper submitted by an Algoma University researcher.

Human Library Event: Last month, the Arthur A. Wishart Library was transformed into a unique living library. In an atmosphere filled with courage, compassion, and hope, students, staff, faculty, Elders, and Residential School Survivors gathered for a profoundly emotional Human Library: Unjudge Someone. This inaugural event brought stories to life through raw and honest conversations. The Human Library is a global movement that aims to challenge stigma and foster understanding through open dialogue. At Algoma University, a place built on the former site of the Shingwauk Indian Residential School, the experience carried a weight and resonance that was uniquely powerful. The event was singled out for prominence in Academica's Daily Top 10 Newsletter.

NSERC Discovery Grants: Algoma University is celebrating a major research milestone, with three faculty members awarded prestigious Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Discovery Grants, totalling \$541,000 over the next five years. Dr. Ping Luo is developing artificial intelligence (AI) tools to detect cancer earlier and more accurately, Dr. Syed Muhammad Danish is designing smarter, greener infrastructure for electric vehicles and renewable energy systems, and Tier II Canada Research Chair Dr. Isabel Molina is investigating how plants naturally produce protective compounds, with the potential to transform sustainable farming and biotechnology.

Royal Society of Canada: As of September 1, 2025, Algoma University has been accepted as an Institutional Member of the Royal Society of Canada. This is another significant milestone in the recognition of our impact on the Canadian research and knowledge creation landscape.

Chi-Miigwech, merci, and thank you for all you do for Algoma University.