

Interim President and Vice-Chancellor's Report to BOG

February 2026

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

Boozhoo, Aanii, Bonjour, Hello,

As the academic year progresses, the pace across Algoma U has been strong and steady. The first few weeks of 2026 have already been filled with activity, from academic milestones and planning work to community events and campus-based initiatives. Across our tri-campus community, teams have been deeply engaged in advancing priorities that support our students, strengthen our academic mission, and reflect the unique role our University plays in the communities we serve. This report provides an overview of key developments and activities since my last update to the Board.

In a welcome piece of academic recognition, the University of Winnipeg in Manitoba recently cited Algoma University as an “inspiration” behind the launch of their new Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Language Immersion in Anishinaabemowin, currently before their Senate.

This acknowledgement speaks to the broader ripple effect of doing this work with care and purpose, to our leadership role in this area, and to Algoma University’s ongoing response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action in education.

I was also delighted to see the *Globe and Mail*’s recent [Makwa Waakaa’igan](#) article that highlights Indigenous, Survivor-led storytelling and the meaningful ways history can be honoured through care, connection and community. This work, evidenced in spaces like Makwa Waakaa’igan, helps shape a more inclusive future grounded in respect and relationship. We welcome this national exposure of the transformative Centre of Cultural Excellence, which will serve as a hub for cross-cultural learning and further advance Algoma University’s Special Mission.

2026 Winter Semester Enrolment

Since my report in January, overall enrolment for the 26W term has increased. Prior to the winter break, enrolment stood at 2,332 students across our three campuses, including 88 newly admitted students. Now that the semester has started and the registration no-change date has passed, total enrolment has grown to 3,424 students, including 220 newly admitted students, as of January 19, 2026. This represents a healthier enrolment position than we were seeing prior to the holiday break and a stronger January intake than originally anticipated.

While this enrolment growth is a positive outcome for the University, financial pressures persist due to ongoing challenges with tuition fee collection, including delayed or missed payments by a portion of students. To help address this, the Student Accounts team has introduced a one-time

26W payment plan on a trial basis. This plan allows students to pay their winter term fees in four equal installments of 25 per cent.

2026-27 Budget Process

The 2026-27 budget process commenced on January 16 with the release of the budget guidelines and timeline, followed by the distribution of the 2026-27 intake and enrolment plan to budget holders on January 19. The Finance department is also hosting budget holder workshops in the first half of February to support this process, ahead of senior executive review of the budget in March.

We aim to have the 2026-27 budget reviewed and approved by the Board of Governors on April 27, 2026. Based on high-level budget assumptions, the institution is realigning operating costs to reflect anticipated slower revenue growth and is minimizing discretionary capital spending, while continuing to prioritize its Special Mission, and the delivery of a high-quality student experience across Algoma University.

20th Annual Gathering at the Rapids Pow Wow

Led by Algoma University's Makwa Waakaa'igan, the Anishinaabe Initiatives Division, and the Shingwauk Anishinaabe Students' Association, we are proud to host the landmark 20th Annual Gathering at the Rapids Pow Wow: A Celebration of Lifelong Learning, on Saturday, February 14 and Sunday, February 15, 2026, at the GFL Memorial Gardens in Sault Ste. Marie. This milestone event marks two decades of celebrating Anishinaabe culture, education, and community, and is expected to draw an unprecedented number of participants and visitors.

The 20th Annual Gathering at the Rapids Pow Wow traces its origins back to 2005, when it began as a student-led initiative through a partnership between Algoma University's Anishinaabe Initiatives department and the Shingwauk Anishinaabe Students' Association. From its inception, the Pow Wow was envisioned as a celebration of Anishinaabe culture, bringing together community members in a spirit of unity and cultural pride.

Over time, the Pow Wow evolved to include a broader mission - to showcase Algoma University as a welcoming academic environment for prospective Indigenous students and to promote employment opportunities at the university for Indigenous community members. As interest and attendance grew, competition dancing and drumming categories were introduced, offering substantial prize money and drawing skilled performers from across the region.

2026 Queen Elizabeth Scholars Program

The Queen Elizabeth Scholars (QES) program provides Algoma University undergraduate students with a fully funded international experiential learning opportunity, reinforcing our commitment to cross-cultural learning, global engagement, and community-based education.

Through QES, selected students will complete three-month international internships with community partners abroad, working on projects focused on resilience, sustainability, and cross-cultural education. These placements offer students meaningful, hands-on experience while deepening their intercultural competencies and global awareness. Participating students also earn the Global Leadership Certificate, and join a national network of QES scholars and alumni across Canada.

2026 QES Scholars have many exciting options to intern abroad this spring and summer, including:

- Exploring Costa Rica's cloud forests with the Monteverde Institute, contributing to environmental research, conservation, and sustainable community projects.
- Working in the beach town of Da Nang, Vietnam, supporting social inclusion, environmental initiatives, and community empowerment with the Centre for Research and Community Inclusive Support.
- Working on programs that foster socio-economic inclusion with the Azrou Centre for Community Development in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco.
- Experiencing the shores of Lake Atitlan in Guatemala working on permaculture, food sovereignty, and Indigenous-led community initiatives with Instituto Mesoamericano de Permacultura.

Algoma U Intranet & App

Following the internal Forum back in January, I am pleased to announce that the Algoma U Intranet for staff and faculty has officially launched.

The new platform brings all work resources and applications for faculty and staff into one streamlined hub. The homepage includes direct links to Gmail, ADP, Greenshield, and Smartsheet, along with a dedicated bulletin board for the latest press releases, memos, and announcements, as well as a new Community Calendar featuring university-wide events.

Additionally, departments including People and Culture, Finance and Planning, Innovation and Technology, and Marketing and Communications, have their own "Space" that provides quick access to tools, services, and support. The new intranet offers a centralized, secure, and more convenient way to reach all tools in one place.

The Algoma U Mobile App, an on-the-go companion to the intranet, will be available for download soon, allowing employees to access the same tools and updates anywhere, anytime, using their Algoma U login. A homepage for students is also currently under development and will be launched once ready.

Recent University Achievements

Super Smash Bros. Ultimate Esports Tournament: Algoma University's Department of Applied Business Studies and Executive Education (ABSEE) recently hosted its second Super Smash Bros. Ultimate Esports Tournament, underscoring the growing interest in esports and the University's commitment to preparing students for emerging, in-demand industries. Organized by students in the Introduction to Esports course, the tournament brought together competitors and spectators from across academic programs. As part of their experiential coursework, students managed the full scope of event planning, including registration, promotion, and live match operations, gaining practical skills that are directly transferable to careers in esports and digital media.

2026 Hunger Freeze: The Algoma University Hunger Freeze Food Drive returns on February 21 at the Canadian Bushplane Heritage Centre, as part of the 2026 Bon Soo Winter Carnival. The annual initiative supports local food pantries, including the Algoma University Students' Union (AUSU) Food Pantry. The goal for this year is to fundraise \$5,000 or equivalent canned food items. As fundraising milestones are reached, participants will take the plunge, helping to raise awareness about food insecurity while reinforcing the University's commitment to a caring and inclusive community and inspiring meaningful community action.

USports Academic All-Canadians: Algoma University is proud to recognize the outstanding achievements of its 2024-25 USports Academic All-Canadians, a distinction awarded to varsity student-athletes across the country who have maintained exceptional academic performance while competing at the highest levels of their university sport. More than 35 Thunderbird student-athletes earned this distinct honour, marking another strong showing for the University.

Visual Arts Program Project: Algoma University's Visual Arts program has once again partnered with the Sault Area Hospital (SAH) to bring artwork into the Algoma District Cancer Program (ADCP), supporting patient wellbeing by fostering a more calming, welcoming care environment.

The 2025 project was guided by current research into the types of artwork and environments that best support patients in cancer care settings. Studies show that thoughtfully integrated hospital art collections can positively influence patient health outcomes, helping to reduce stress, promote calm, and provide a distraction that may ease pain.

The curated collection includes a variety of styles and media, guided by a commitment to inclusive and representative care spaces, ensuring Indigenous artwork is prominently represented. By the end of the term, over 50 artworks were installed throughout waiting areas, hallways, and clinical spaces.

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