

Interim President and Vice-Chancellor's Report to BOG

January 2026

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

Boozhoo, Aanii, Bonjour, Hello,

Welcome back! I hope the holiday break provided at least some opportunity to rest and reconnect before we begin what is already shaping up to be a busy winter semester.

This report highlights our enrolment trends, financial status, advocacy efforts at Queen's Park, upcoming Forum, and recent achievements shaping Algoma University's strategic direction.

2026 Winter Semester Enrolment

Winter 2026 enrolment is progressing more slowly than anticipated, largely due to outstanding Fall 2025 tuition fees among current students. As of December 15, 2025, enrolment sits at 2,332 across our three campuses, including 88 newly admitted students. We expect this number to rise through mid-January, and I will provide updated figures in my February report.

Budget 2025-26 Forecast to Year End

At the November 4, 2025 Finance Committee and the December 1, 2025 Board Meeting, our Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Richard Peters, shared an update on Algoma University's current financial results and expected April 30 year-end position.

We are currently projecting a \$6.7M operating deficit, compared to the May 2025 budget of a \$1M surplus, which is a negative change of \$7.7M. The projected \$6.7M operating deficit is in line with the budget information that was shared during the September 2025 Forum, which projected a net deficit of \$5.5M to \$7.0M. This is mainly due to revenues coming in about \$2.5M lower than planned, and expenses tracking about \$5.2M higher than budgeted.

To help reduce this in-year deficit, the University is exploring approximately \$3.5M in expense reductions this year. Examples include further reduction of non-essential travel, further decreases in outside consultants, and reclaiming unspent amounts throughout other budget lines. If these savings are achieved, the projected year-end operating deficit for 2025/26 would drop to approximately \$3.2M.

Algoma Steel Statement of Support

Algoma University stands in solidarity with Algoma Steel, its employees and their families following the difficult announcement of layoffs. We know this decision will have a deep impact

on many households across Sault Ste. Marie, and on a company that has long been central to the economic and social fabric of our community. We believe deeply in the resilience of Sault Ste. Marie, and we are committed to doing our part to help ensure that resilience endures, even in the face of difficult changes.

1,000 layoff notices is not just a number; these are individuals, friends, family members, and alumni who have contributed to the strength of our community and whose well-being matters deeply to all of us at Algoma University. Moments like this call for institutions across the community to step up, coordinate and support one another.

We will continue to work closely with Algoma Steel and the Canadian Skills Training and Employment Coalition (CSTEC) to ensure affected workers have access to meaningful pathways during this transition. That includes exploring a range of undergraduate and graduate programs, retraining opportunities, advising support, and other resources that can help affected employees and their families navigate their next steps.

Sherri Smith, Sault College's Interim President, and I, also sent out a letter of support to key media contacts, community members, union leaders, Algoma Steel leadership, and politicians at all levels. The letter reaffirmed our commitment to supporting laid-off workers, and expressed our readiness to align our efforts and resources to help the affected employees. We have received verbal acknowledgement from Minister Nolan Quinn and Minister Mélanie Joly, who say they will be contacting us.

Queen's Park Advocacy

In November 2025, Algoma University joined the Council of Ontario Universities' advocacy day at Queen's Park, alongside colleagues from across the province, to highlight the value of Ontario's life sciences research. The event brought together nearly 130 attendees, including more than 30 government officials, and sparked productive conversations about research, talent, and future opportunities.

COU also released *Fueling Ontario's Future: Advancing the Life Sciences Ecosystem*, which included a feature on Algoma University's research and its role in driving innovation, job creation, and investment in the life sciences sector.

We continue to engage with government partners, advocating for the University's role in strengthening Canada's research and talent pipeline, and in particular for an increase in funds through several possible means.

January 2026 Forum

We are preparing for our hybrid Forum on January 14, 2026, which will provide staff and faculty with a clear overview of the latest developments across the post-secondary sector. The Senior

Executive team will share updates on workforce restructuring, the budget and budget process for 2026-2027, Winter 2026 enrolment figures, the progress of the Makwa Waakaa'igan construction project, and the new intranet for Algoma University employees.

The Forum will be held in person at the Sault Ste. Marie campus, with employees in Brampton and Timmins able to join virtually via Zoom. I encourage all members to participate in this session. As always, the Forum will include time for questions and discussion, and I look forward to hearing your perspectives.

Makwa Waakaa'igan Construction Update

Construction of Makwa Waakaa'igan is progressing well, with steel framing now underway. The project remains on schedule and within budget. Maple Reinders, the general contractor, continues to track toward a substantial completion date of January 4, 2027.

Construction is proceeding under existing permits issued by the City of Sault Ste. Marie; however, in order to obtain the final building permit, approval of the Archaeological Assessment Report by the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism is required. The Archaeological Assessment consultant has submitted all the required documentation, and the University is currently awaiting final sign off from the Ministry.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

The EDI Office, together with academic departments, Student Services, Support Services, Library Services, Physical Plant, and Administration, has worked collaboratively to develop tailored EDI roadmaps that reflect immediate realities while opening pathways toward a shared future. Guided by the Special Mission and a braided framework, these action plans are part of an evolving journey to embed decolonization, equity, and inclusion into the University's core functions, ensuring this work is a fundamental component of Algoma U's everyday operations.

This transformative work extends beyond policy compliance, driving our ongoing commitment to EDI through education, research, relationship-building, reflection, systemic change, and adaptation. We demonstrate this commitment through intentional curriculum design, programming, research, and inclusive spaces that celebrate our growing culturally diverse community. Through these collective efforts, EDI becomes both an institutional priority and a lived practice that shapes our university culture.

ISTEAM Land Camp

Algoma University's Anishinaabe Initiatives Division (AID), in partnership with Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig (SKG), the Algoma District School Board (ADSB), the Shingwauk Anishinaabe Students' Association (SASA), and ACTUA, proudly hosted the third annual ISTEAM Land Camp, Waawaaskonwe Niigaan ("There is a Light Ahead"), in November 2025.

Held on the SKG site, the four-day camp brought together Indigenous youth aged 12–18 for an immersive learning experience that integrated Indigenous knowledge systems with science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM). Participants engaged in land-based activities, creative workshops, and technology-focused learning designed to foster curiosity, leadership, and cultural pride.

A highlight of the weekend was a keynote presentation by Ted Nolan, former NHL coach and recent recipient of the Order of Sport, who shared an inspiring message about perseverance, identity, and the power of community.

Recent University Achievements

American Indian Culture and Research Journal (AICRJ): Dr. Paulette Steeves (Cree-Métis), Professor of Geography, Geology, and Land Stewardship at Algoma University and Tier II Canada Research Chair in Indigenous History, Healing and Reconciliation, served as the invited Special Edition Editor for the December 2025 issue of the American Indian Culture and Research Journal (AICRJ).

The special edition, titled “Pyroepistemology: Reclaiming Knowledge, Histories, Lands, Relations,” features Dr. Steeves as the author of the issue’s introduction. Her piece frames the collection with a powerful exploration of how Indigenous fire knowledge, land stewardship practices, and interconnected histories can reshape contemporary understandings of science, culture, and memory.

COP30 Engagement: Algoma University’s Faculty of Cross-Cultural Studies (FCCS) continues to play a pivotal role in strengthening global partnerships and advancing international dialogue on climate justice, biodiversity, and territorial governance. Dr. Sheila Gruner worked alongside Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities and organizations over the past several months to develop an International Inter-ethnic Environmental Alliance. This effort resulted in the *Joint Declaration of the Interethnic International Alliance for Life, Biodiversity, and Environmental Governance*, signed by over 40 organizations and launched at COP30 in Belém, Brazil.

Developed through a series of international and regional gatherings during 2025, the declaration calls for the protection of ancestral territories, the recognition of ancestral knowledge systems, and the meaningful participation of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples in environmental governance. At COP30, Dr. Gruner co-moderated the international launch of the declaration and was joined at the summit by partner organizations from Robinson Huron Waawindamaagewin (RHW), Jamaica, Colombia, Ecuador, and Brazil.

Cricket Fundraiser for Grace Court Seniors Home: Algoma University students from the Faculty of Business and Economics raised \$4000 to support upgrades at Grace Court, a seniors’ residence in Brampton. The funds were generated through *Pitching for Hope*, a student-organized cricket fundraiser that drew strong community participation.

Organized by students in the Managing Small Business Enterprises course, the fundraiser aimed to help Grace Court address urgent infrastructure needs and begin building an endowment fund to support the organization's long-term sustainability. The fund will support priority safety improvements, updated alarm systems, repairs and replacement of aging air conditioning units, new accessible furniture, upgrades to essential medical equipment, and refreshed common areas designed to foster social connection and recreational programming for residents. Led by Professor Shahrukh Khan, students developed, marketed, and delivered the event from concept to execution, demonstrating leadership, entrepreneurial thinking, and a strong sense of social responsibility.

All the best for 2026! Chi-Miigwech, merci, and thank you for all you do for Algoma University.