Interim President and Vice-Chancellor's Report to the Board

June 2026

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

Boozhoo, Aanii, Bonjour, Hello,

I am pleased to share my June report, which provides an overview of recent developments, key priorities, and activities across the University.

On April 27, Algoma University's Board of Governors approved the institution's 2026–27 Operating Budget, setting a course toward financial sustainability and long-term stability. The budget projects total operating revenues of approximately $75.4 million and total operating expenditures of nearly $91.9 million, resulting in a projected structural deficit of $14 million, in addition to $2.45 million for non-recurring (i.e. one-time) restructuring costs, that total to a $16.45 million operating deficit. It's important to highlight that the operating budget does not include any new borrowing.

This deficit is primarily driven by an anticipated steep decline in enrolment, with the University's student population projected to decrease to approximately 3,292 full-time equivalent (FTE) students in 2026-27. As a result, tuition revenue is expected to decline by more than 50 per cent.

This budget is about facing reality as it is, not as we might wish it to be. We are operating in a challenging environment shaped by significant federal policy changes and intensified competition for students across Ontario, Canada, and the international post-secondary sector. These factors are not unique to Algoma University, but they are having a real impact on our institution and others across Canada.

Framed by a commitment to disciplined, responsible action, we will work to reduce the deficit through a combination of cost savings and targeted revenue-generation initiatives. The University has already taken substantial steps to reduce costs, including lowering non-salary operating expenses by $23 million (36 per cent) compared to 2025–26, helping bring the projected structural deficit to $14 million. Further actions will be required throughout the upcoming fiscal year to ensure the budget is implemented effectively and financial targets are achieved, beginning with two Voluntary Employee Incentive Programs as well as Administrative and Staff layoffs.

At the same time, we are focused on responsible, realistic enrolment growth across all three campuses by expanding in-demand, market-ready programs, such as a new Master's in

Artificial Intelligence, and pursuing opportunities aligned with government priorities, particularly in STEM fields, to strengthen domestic funding and support long-term sustainability.

I would also like to highlight that the Board approved a five per cent international tuition increase effective Fall 2026 for all undergraduate programs and most Master's programs, as well as annual international tuition increases for select Master's programs beginning January 2027.

Four-year Music Honours program

Algoma U is pleased to announce the launch of its new, four-year Bachelor of Arts in Music Honours program, beginning in Fall 2026. This milestone marks a significant step forward for music education in Northern Ontario. Expanding on the existing three-year degree, the new program reflects the University's commitment to innovative, accessible, career-oriented arts education, while broadening student opportunities and improving pathways to graduate studies.

As one of only two universities in Northern Ontario to offer a four-year honours music degree, we are helping to reshape how high-quality music education is delivered across the region. This program reflects the University's commitment to making responsible decisions that ensure long-term sustainability while taking all possible actions to grow the student population.

Current students in the three-year Bachelor of Arts in Music program will be provided with a clear pathway into the fourth year, while new prospective students will be enrolled directly into the four-year honours degree. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the development of this new academic program.

New 16-month Master of Computer Science

Algoma University's Faculty of Computer Science and Technology (FCST) is launching a new 16-month Master of Computer Science (MCS), designed to meet the speed, complexity, and demands of today's global technology sector.

Offered in Sault Ste. Marie and Brampton, and launching in January 2027, the course-based MCS program delivers an accelerated, industry-aligned experience with a specialization in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Designed for graduates in computer science, information technology, and related fields, the program equips students with the technical and analytical skills needed to succeed in some of the fastest-growing areas of the digital economy.

As an important addition to the University's growing suite of graduate programming, the new MCS specialization is designed to align with labour market demand while supporting Algoma University's long-term sustainability and responsible student population growth. Thank you to everyone who played a role in launching this exciting new academic program.

Spring Convocations

With Spring 2026 Convocation ceremonies fast approaching, I am pleased to share that preparations are well underway to celebrate this important milestone for our graduating students. This year, we look forward to welcoming graduates, families, faculty, staff, and community members to two ceremonies in Sault Ste. Marie on Saturday, June 13, 2026, which will be held at a new venue, the Sault Community Theatre Centre. We will also host two ceremonies in Brampton on Wednesday, June 17, at Universal Eventspace.

Convocation remains one of the most meaningful milestones in the life of our University, providing an opportunity to celebrate the achievements, perseverance, and success of our graduates. I am also pleased to share that we will confer two Honorary Doctorates this year, one on each campus, recognizing individuals whose distinguished contributions have made a lasting impact on their professions, communities, and society more broadly. A full announcement detailing their extraordinary achievements will be made shortly.

Recent University Achievements

Groundbreaking Study in Leading Scientific Journal: With global progress on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals stalling at just 17 per cent, new research from Algoma University emphasizes the urgent need for collaborative approaches that elevate Indigenous knowledge systems that have long been overlooked.

Published in the influential American Chemical Society journal *Sustainable Chemistry & Engineering*, the peer-reviewed article "Braiding Knowledge Systems: Integrating Indigenous Wisdom and Sustainable Research for a Regenerative Future" centres on practical, relatable ways of thinking: planning for the next seven generations, and moving from isolated approaches toward collaborative, place-based models that centre Indigenous knowledge.

Key principles highlighted in the research include planning for future generations, treating the land as a relative rather than a resource, and ensuring that research contributes positively to the environments and communities they engage with.

The study emerged from a collaborative workshop in Baawaating (Algoma District), where knowledge holders, researchers, and community leaders came together, including members from Ketegaunseebee (Garden River First Nation) and Batchewana First Nation. The collaborative work also reflects the ongoing efforts of Bimosen Anishinaabe Miikana, an Algoma University collective focused on advancing decolonization and strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities.

Co-authored by faculty, researchers, and community partners from across the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River system and Turtle Island, the article demonstrates how Indigenous-led,

place-based collaboration can inform global conversations in sustainability science. Full author affiliations are outlined below.

Congratulations to all the co-authors and authors for this groundbreaking research:

- Elizabeth Edgar-Webkamigad: Founder~Lead NaanookshkaaNs Do Kinoomaagewin Hummingbird Teaching and Consulting; Anishinaabe Studies, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Algoma University
- Dr. Jody-Lynn Rebek: Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business and Economics, Algoma University
- Dr. Audrey Moores: Centre in Green Chemistry and Catalysis, Department of Chemistry, McGill University
- Dr. Michael R. Twiss: Department of Biology, Cameron Faculty of Science, Algoma University
- Dr. Pedro Madeira Antunes: Department of Biology, Cameron Faculty of Science, Algoma University
- Dr. Isabelle Aubin: Great Lakes Forestry Centre, Canadian Forest Service, Natural Resources Canada
- Dr. Isabel Molina: Department of Biology, Cameron Faculty of Science, Algoma University
- Jordan M. Barone: Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business and Economics, Algoma University
- Aaron Jones: Lands and Resources Department, Ketegaunseebee (Garden River First Nation)

BFA Thesis Exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Algoma: Three emerging artists from Algoma University turned personal and socially relevant experiences into public-facing work back in April, as part of their Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) Thesis Exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Algoma. Presented over the course of the month, the exhibitions featured work by fourth-year students Zach Carr, D'Lyla Maureen, and Ariana Petainen, each offering a distinct artistic approach and perspective.

Spanning themes of memory, identity, healing, and lived experience, the exhibitions invited the public into conversations that are often private, overlooked, or unresolved, demonstrating the critical role of art in making sense of complex human experiences.

More than a final project, the BFA Thesis Exhibitions are a cornerstone of Algoma University's experiential learning approach. Students present professional-level work in a public setting, gaining hands-on experience in exhibition development while building meaningful connections with local audiences, organizations, and cultural spaces.

Mitacs GRA Awards: Algoma University students are contributing to one of Canada's most important research areas, quantum technologies, earning national recognition through prestigious Mitacs awards that support both advanced research and industry-driven innovation.

Two Faculty of Computer Science and Technology (FCST) students, Muhammad Minhajuddin and Vidhi, have been awarded the highly competitive Mitacs Globalink Research Award (GRA). Their research, titled 'A Comparative Analysis and Integration Framework for Quantum Key Distribution Protocols in Next-Generation Networks,' is a critical component of next-generation secure communication systems as quantum technologies continue to reshape how data is protected.

This summer, both students will conduct advanced research at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland under the supervision of Dr. Ajmery Sultana, Algoma University Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Science and Mathematics, and Dr. S.M. Riazul Islam, Associate Professor, Department of Computer Science, University of Aberdeen. Each student will receive $6,000 in funding to support international travel and research-related expenses.

In addition, two Algoma University student interns, Bruna Jacinto Grassi and Tarandeep Singh, have been awarded the Mitacs Business Strategy Internship (BSI) for their research project 'Enhancing Educational Business Intelligence with Predictive Analytics and LLM Driven Insights'.

This project aims to enhance the data analytics capabilities of an educational software company by upgrading its existing Business Intelligence (BI) system. A more powerful and proactive analytics product helps schools make faster, data-driven decisions, strengthening the company's competitive edge in the educational technology market. Each student will receive $15,000 to support applied research that bridges academic expertise with real-world business challenges, while collaborating directly with industry partner Plurilogic Inc.

Graduate Research on Canada's wildfires and tree regrowth: As wildfires continue to intensify across Canada each summer, Master of Biology student Roxane Bergeron is studying how soil ecosystems and climate change influence the ability of trees to regrow after wildfire events, a key factor in determining how forests recover after disturbance.

Her research explores whether soil organisms act as barriers or supports for tree species shifting northward due to warming temperatures, with important implications for post-fire regeneration and long-term forest resilience. With fire seasons becoming longer, more frequent, and more severe, this study is addressing a critical and immediate challenge affecting communities, ecosystems, and economies across the country.

Her findings suggest that while many tree species can adapt to new soil conditions, some, including sugar maple, may face challenges in fire-disturbed boreal environments. The research highlights the role of specialized soil fungi and underscores the complexity of post-fire recovery.

Between April 12–15 2026, Bergeron presented her research at the Global Soil Biodiversity Conference in Victoria, British Columbia, where scientists from more than 50 countries gathered to discuss ecosystem health and climate response.

AU & Sault College Business Case Competition: On April 10, 2026, Algoma University and Sault College launched a new joint business case competition designed to enhance experiential learning, strengthen collaboration, and create clear academic pathways for students. Known as AUSCx, the full-day competition challenged students to apply their knowledge to community-based business scenarios in a fast-paced, collaborative environment, culminating in formal presentations and final pitches to a panel of local judges.

The competition centred on real-world business scenarios drawn from the local community, requiring students to develop practical, actionable solutions. One challenge focused on advising a Sault Ste. Marie-based company about its growth strategy as it looks to expand into Southern Ontario, including market positioning and scalability considerations. A second scenario tasked students with shaping a marketing and brand strategy for a local business with diverse operations, requiring teams to navigate brand cohesion, audience targeting, and long-term positioning across multiple lines of business.

The partnership highlights the growing alignment between Algoma University and Sault College, with a focus on enabling seamless transitions for students pursuing further education. As a result, five Sault College students who participated in the competition plan to continue their studies at Algoma University this fall through the 2+2 program.

The inaugural event featured five teams from Algoma University and four from Sault College, with Algoma U teams earning the top three placements. Congratulations to all participants and winning teams. Thank you to everyone who helped organize the inaugural event and participated in judging the teams.

Psychology student earns the Undergraduate Research Award: Congratulations to undergraduate Psychology student Navdeep (Nav) Kaur on earning the Undergraduate Research Award for her research, "The Impact of Mindfulness and Social Media Detox on Stress and Well-being in Undergraduate Students," exploring how digital habits and mindfulness practices shape student mental health.

Recognizing the rise in student mental health challenges linked to social media, Nav designed a research project exploring an alternative to full digital detox, specifically, replacing habitual scrolling with a mindfulness-based stress reduction program. She conducted a four-week study among 60 Algoma University undergraduate students, under the supervision of Assistant Professor of Psychology, Dr. Karolina Bearss, dividing students into two groups, including a Detox Only control group, who cut their social media use by 50 per cent, and a Detox and Mindfulness experimental group, who also cut their use by 50 per cent while adding 15 minutes of daily mindfulness.

Building on the momentum of the Undergraduate Research Award win, Nav's research was accepted for a poster presentation at the national level, where she presented at the Interdisciplinary Conference in Psychology (ICP 2026) at the University of Ottawa May 7 and 8.

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