

# President's Report to the Board of Governors

February 6, 2026

shaping the

**EVOLUTION**

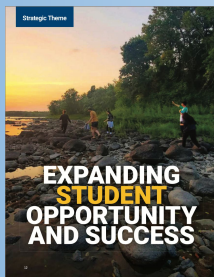


**Lakehead**  
UNIVERSITY

## Preamble

On September 25th 2025, we officially launched Lakehead University's new five-year strategic plan, *Shaping the EvoLUtion*, which sets a bold vision for our future. This plan reflects Lakehead's unique and essential role in Canada's post-secondary landscape, serving northwestern and central Ontario — regions defined by progress, curiosity, and resilience. It positions Lakehead as a place where learning and research break down barriers, drive innovation, and create local solutions with global impact.

*Shaping the EvoLUtion* was informed by input from more than 1,200 voices — students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners — and it clearly outlines what we aim to achieve by 2030, why it matters, and how we will get there. Grounded in our values of integrity, community, belonging, curiosity, and reconciliation, the plan is built around **five interrelated themes**:



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

In addition to the strategic plan, the Board of Governors has assigned me five goals to guide my work as President over the coming years:

- 1. Transformative Student Experience** – Ensuring that every student’s journey at Lakehead is engaging, meaningful, and successful.
- 2. People & Culture (Employee Engagement & Leadership Capacity)** – Strengthening a culture where faculty and staff feel valued, supported, and empowered to lead.
- 3. Financial Sustainability** – Managing our resources responsibly and investing strategically to secure Lakehead’s long-term stability.
- 4. Digitalization and Infrastructure** – Enhancing our technology, digital systems, and campus infrastructure to support teaching, research, and operations.
- 5. Leadership & Governance (Alignment & Oversight)** – Ensuring that our strategic priorities, accountability, and oversight are clear, effective, and aligned across the University.

These goals, alongside Shaping the EvoLUtion, set the course for Lakehead’s next chapter — one defined by growth, transformation, and meaningful impact. They will guide how we strengthen community partnerships, drive economic vitality, and elevate our academic and research excellence. Sixty years ago, Lakehead was built by the community, for the community. Today, we are ready to write our boldest chapter yet, reimagining and redefining our role in shaping society through exceptional teaching, groundbreaking research, and meaningful service.

Reports to the Board of Governors will aim to correlate the University’s events, accomplishments, and activities to the five themes of Shaping the EvoLUtion and my goals, illustrating how the work of our faculty, staff, and students advances the strategic plan and drives Lakehead University’s ongoing evolution.

Dr. Gillian Siddall  
President & Vice-Chancellor



## Lakehead University's Economic Impact (2024/25)

Lakehead University continues to be a major driver of economic activity across Ontario and, in particular, the regions it serves. In 2024/25, the University contributed **\$4.73 billion annually to Ontario's GDP**, reflecting its substantial influence on both regional and local economies.

This contribution includes:

- **\$2.69 billion** annually to the economy of Northwestern Ontario
- **\$2.15 billion** annually to the economy of the City of Thunder Bay
- **\$355 million** annually to the economy of the City of Orillia

The University's economic impact extends beyond direct spending, encompassing employment, research initiatives, student expenditures, and community partnerships that stimulate business activity and innovation. Lakehead's presence strengthens local industries, supports workforce development, and fosters entrepreneurship, demonstrating the University's vital role in driving sustainable growth and prosperity in the regions it serves.

By contributing significantly to both regional and provincial economies, Lakehead University exemplifies the *Sustainable Economic and Community Development* theme of *Shaping the EvoLUtion*, reinforcing its commitment to building vibrant, resilient communities while creating opportunities for students, staff, and residents alike.

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### Alignment with the Strategic Plan



*Lakehead's economic contributions directly support the Sustainable Economic and Community Development theme of Shaping the EvoLUtion, demonstrating how the University drives regional growth, fosters innovation, and strengthens communities.*

### Alignment with the President's Goals

- **Transformative Student Experience:** Student engagement drives economic and learning impact.
- **People & Culture:** Supports employment, workforce development, and leadership capacity.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Highlights Lakehead's value as a regional economic driver.
- **Digitalization and Infrastructure:** Enabled by research, operations, and campus resources.
- **Leadership & Governance:** Reinforces regional partnerships and strategic alignment.

## Lakehead University Recognized as One of Canada's Top Undergraduate Research Universities: December 4th, 2025

Lakehead University has been ranked the **#2 undergraduate research university in Canada** and 35th overall among all Canadian research-intensive universities, according to the 2025 Top 50 Research Universities list released by Research Infosource Inc. This recognition highlights the University's growing national reputation for research excellence and its commitment to advancing discovery that matters.

Total research income continues to grow year-over-year, increasing **4.1% to \$28 million** from 2023 to 2024. Lakehead again holds the top spot among Canada's undergraduate universities for not-for-profit research income, attracting **\$7.2 million** in funding. The University's researchers are actively engaged in cross-sector collaborations, including partnerships with Indigenous communities, social service organizations, hospitals, and other post-secondary institutions, driving tangible societal impact. Lakehead is also leading in international Artificial Intelligence (AI) research publications, demonstrating interdisciplinary innovation in areas such as health, environmental science, mining, and natural resources management.

Looking ahead, the launch of the **Barrie STEM Hub in fall 2026** will expand opportunities for students to engage in hands-on, high-tech research, preparing them with the skills needed for future-focused careers.

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### Alignment with the Strategic Plan



This ongoing research excellence aligns with the *Advancing Societal Impact* theme of *Shaping the EvoLUtion*, demonstrating how Lakehead University connects knowledge to community, fosters innovation, and contributes to regional and national social and economic development.

### President's Goal Alignment

Supports **Transformative Student Experience** by providing students with high-impact research opportunities and preparing them for innovative, career-ready pathways.

## Holiday Employee Receptions: Thunder Bay and Orillia: December 18 & 19, 2025

Lakehead Thunder Bay's annual Holiday Reception was held on December 19 at the Outpost on the Thunder Bay campus, bringing colleagues together to celebrate the close of the term. While the President was unable to attend in person, President Siddall sang a song via livestream, joining the celebration in a memorable and lighthearted way. The President extends her sincere thanks to the Social Committee for organizing such an enjoyable event and to the Outpost team for the excellent food and warm hospitality.

On December 18, Lakehead Orillia staff gathered for their annual holiday celebration, marked by laughter, connection, and a strong sense of community. With more than 60 colleagues in attendance, the event featured games, a memorable gift exchange, and a festive meal shared together. In the spirit of the season, staff and faculty also generously donated food items for the campus food pantry.



Social Committee Members: In front: Jeff Alexander  
Back (L to R): Garth Galvin, Gillian Lavoie, Samson Busch, Jessica Richardson, Sadie Stout, Kimberly Zuback, Patrick Larin, Tiia Einola, Amanda Stefanile, Stan Nemec  
Missing: Cynthia Hodgson



Members of the Orillia campus community.



President Siddall joined the celebration with a wonderful live streamed musical performance!

*The Holiday Receptions advanced the **People & Culture** theme of Shaping the EvoLUtion by bringing colleagues together in celebration, fostering connection, and reinforcing a shared sense of belonging across the University, directly supporting the President's goal of strengthening employee engagement and leadership capacity.*



## Speaker: Bomgiizhik (Isaac Murdoch): January 9th, 2026

Bomgiizhik (Isaac Murdoch) of Serpent River First Nation, located between Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury, Ontario, joined the University community as a featured speaker. He is a father of four and currently resides at Nimkii Aazhibikoong, an Anishinaabe language and culture camp located in the forest approximately two-and-a-half hours from Sudbury. Through his storytelling, Bomgiizhik shared Indigenous history, as well as insights into Anishinaabe language, culture, and connection to the land. His presentation offered students, faculty, and staff a meaningful opportunity to engage with Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, while deepening understanding of cultural traditions, community practices, and historical context.



### Alignment with the Strategic Plan



This event aligns with the *Advancing Societal Impact* theme of *Shaping the EvoLUtion*, fostering cultural awareness and inclusive dialogue across the University community.

### President's Goal Alignment:

**Transformative Student Experience:** Deepened students', faculty's, and staff's understanding of Indigenous history, culture, and perspectives, enriching learning and engagement across the University.



## Leaders Luncheon – Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, January 14, 2026

On January 14, the President, along with members of the Executive Team, university staff, and a student leader from the Lakehead University Student Union executive, attended a Leaders Luncheon hosted by the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce at Chanterelle on Park. The event featured the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Federal Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for FedNor.

Minister Hajdu provided insights into the federal budget and shared perspectives on Canada's economic outlook, workforce development, and regional investment priorities, with particular relevance to Northwestern Ontario. Attendance at this event supported ongoing relationship-building with government and business leaders and reinforced Lakehead University's role as a key contributor to regional economic development and long-term prosperity.



*Left to Right: Felix Ikkwu VP Operations & Finance LUSU, Gillian Sgambelluri: University Advancement, Dr. Jason Lisi: University Secretariat, The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Dr. Gillian Siddall, President & Vice Chancellor, Rosanna Scaffeo, Chief of Staff and Mike den Haan, VP of University Advancement*

### Alignment with President's Goals:

**Transformative Student Experience:** Supports opportunities for students through local partnerships and workforce connections.

**People & Culture:** Engaged staff, Executive Team, and a student leader in strategic conversations.

**Financial Sustainability:** Strengthens relationships that could support future funding and regional investment.

**Digitalization and Infrastructure:** Insights may inform future program and infrastructure priorities.

**Leadership & Governance:** Enhances Lakehead's presence with government and business leaders, supporting strategic alignment.

### Alignment with the Strategic Plan





## Barrie STEM Hub – Multi-Site Expansion: January 30th, 2026

As we prepare to welcome students for Fall 2026, the Barrie STEM Hub is expanding to include **5 Ross Street** as a second hub location, complementing the first floor of 24 Maple Avenue. This multi-site model provides high-quality classrooms, specialized labs, student services, and collaborative spaces, ensuring students have the facilities they need for a **transformative learning experience** in accredited STEM programs.

- **24 Maple Avenue (first floor):** Advanced research and teaching laboratories, including dedicated labs for Motors & Robotics, Machines, Instrumentation, and Mechatronics.
- **5 Ross Street:** Flexible classrooms, computer labs, active learning spaces, student services, and offices for staff and graduate students.

The expansion leverages the availability of 5 Ross Street following Georgian College's move to a new downtown campus, creating a unique opportunity to grow Lakehead's presence in Barrie. By connecting two central sites, the Barrie STEM Hub strengthens the downtown core and fosters an **interconnected education ecosystem**, supporting pathways for local learners and talent pipelines for regional employers.

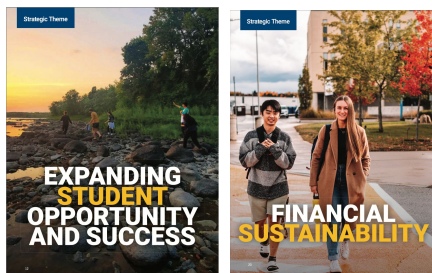
The initiative remains **cost-neutral for Lakehead**, supported by a significant investment from the City of Barrie, demonstrating responsible **financial stewardship** while enabling strategic growth. The expanded Hub also contributes to modernized **digital and physical infrastructure**, ensuring spaces are equipped to support teaching, research, and student services.

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### **Alignment with President's Goals:**

- **Transformative Student Experience:** Provides high-quality, modern labs and learning spaces to support engaging, meaningful STEM education.
- **People & Culture:** Offers collaborative spaces for faculty, staff, and graduate students, fostering engagement and capacity-building.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Expansion achieved cost-neutrally through external investment, supporting responsible resource management.
- **Digitalization and Infrastructure:** Strengthens infrastructure with flexible, technology-enabled classrooms, labs, and student spaces.
- **Leadership & Governance:** Demonstrates strategic alignment with municipal partners and Lakehead's long-term priorities, supporting oversight and coordinated growth.

### **Alignment with the Strategic Plan**





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