

President's Report to OIEC: February 4th, 2025

I am pleased to present my first report to OIEC for the new year, reflecting on recent accomplishments and providing updates on our shared goals as we continue to shape a bright future for our university community.

Lakehead University to Open STEM Hub in Barrie

Barrie's city council has approved a partnership with Lakehead University to establish a STEM Hub (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) in downtown Barrie, set to open in fall 2026. This milestone reflects months of planning and negotiations, supported by the City of Barrie's commitment to our mission.

This cost-neutral expansion will strengthen Lakehead's financial sustainability and support our strategic growth. Inclusive planning and communication will guide the next phase, ensuring this initiative meets the evolving needs of our communities.

Meetings with Research Agencies in Ottawa

On November 28 and 29, I had the opportunity to meet with the Presidents or representatives of NSERC, CIHR, and CFI in Ottawa, along with VPRI Andrew Dean and Executive Director of Government Relations Michael Nicin. A meeting with the president of SSHRC will be scheduled for another time. These meetings provided an opportunity to showcase and promote some of the groundbreaking research initiatives at Lakehead University. Additionally, the visits allowed us to gain valuable insights from the agency leads about any changes occurring at their organizations and receive guidance on enhancing our success with their funding programs. I also met with Heather Jeffrey, President of the Public Health Agency of Canada, as well as with Dr. Theresa Tam, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada. Ms. Jeffrey and Dr. Tam visited the Thunder Bay campus on November 22nd 2023, and we are looking at dates for them to visit again in the near future.

Lakehead University Welcomes New and Renewed Canada Research Chairs: December 12, 2024

Lakehead University proudly announced the appointment of Dr. Melissa Twance as the Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in Land Pedagogies and Indigenous Futurities. Dr. Twance's groundbreaking five-year research program will



focus on land-based learning and Indigenous pedagogies, aiming to decolonize education and make it a more affirming and empowering experience for Indigenous youth.

Dr. Twance, a member of Netmizaagamig Nishinaabeg (Pic Moberg First Nation), will use a community-engaged, arts-based approach, such as sharing circles and beading circles, to explore how traditional Indigenous ways of knowing immerse youth in culture, language, and values that support their development. Reflecting on her own experiences, she shared, “Bringing about transformative change means we need to go against the colonial norm infused throughout Western education and validate Indigenous knowledge as its own form of knowledge.”

Additionally, the Canada Research Chair program renewed Dr. Maryam Ebrahimi’s Tier 2 Chair in Molecular-based Low-dimensional Nanomaterials for a second five-year term. Dr. Ebrahimi, Assistant Professor in the Department of Chemistry, continues to advance her research at the intersection of chemistry and physics, focusing on the properties of low-dimensional nanomaterials.

These appointments reflect Lakehead University's ongoing commitment to fostering innovative research that addresses local and global challenges.

Giving Tuesday Success

On Giving Tuesday (December 3rd, 2024) our community united in an inspiring display of generosity, raising an extraordinary \$383,436.56 in support of our students. Alumni, staff, faculty, donors, and friends demonstrated the strength and compassion that define Lakehead University. Every gift, big or small, highlights the profound impact we can achieve together.

A special thank you to our entire University Advancement team for their exceptional efforts in making this achievement possible.

A Transformative \$15 Million Investment from the County of Simcoe to Expand Lakehead University Orillia Campus

The County of Simcoe has made a transformative \$15 million investment over 10 years to expand Lakehead University’s Orillia campus, starting with a \$1.5 million installment this year.

This funding builds on the County’s initial \$10 million contribution in 2009, which helped establish the campus. The expansion will include a new building to support 10 additional academic programs, new teaching spaces, an Indigenous Learning and Gathering Centre, and a centralized Student Services Hub. These enhancements will allow the campus to grow from 2,100 to 3,500 students, increasing access to education and creating new opportunities for students to succeed in Simcoe County.



Since its establishment in 2006, Lakehead Orillia has significantly impacted the region, increasing university enrolment by 147% and contributing \$328 million annually to the local economy. This new investment will help address regional workforce needs, ensuring students are prepared for in-demand jobs while supporting the long-term economic prosperity of Simcoe County. We are grateful to the County of Simcoe for their continued partnership and commitment to education, which will benefit our students and communities for generations to come.

Respectfully submitted.

Dr. Gillian Siddall
President & Vice-Chancellor