

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Priorities Report - Fall Term

2025 - 2026



Our Board Members

A student Board of Directors governs the Students' Association and acts as your voice to the Algonquin College administration.

The Board is made up of full-time students in Ottawa, Pembroke, and Perth. Their job is to connect with students outside of the classroom, elevate student issues, and to help make critical decisions that impact the Algonquin College community.

It is crucial to the Board's work that they hear what is impacting student success, please feel free to share your concerns by stopping by the Students' Association office on your campus, by speaking with a Board Member when you see them, or by sending an email to studentsassociation@algonquincollege.com.



Vanshika Sharma
President

sharmav-c@algonquincollege.com



Ethan Lutes
Vice-President

lutese-c@algonquincollege.com



Vedant Vaghela
Director

vaghelv1-c@algonquincollege.com



Cheyanne Auguste
Director

augustc-c@algonquincollege.com



Clariella Bizimana
Director

bizimac-c@algonquincollege.com



Kylie Jardine
Director

jardink-c@algonquincollege.com



Phorcas Katto
Director

kattop-c@algonquincollege.com



Pauline Thomson
Director

thomsop-c@algonquincollege.com

An Update On Priorities

Purpose of the Report

The Board of Directors oversees the direction of the Students' Association on behalf of the student members. On top of this oversight responsibility, each year the Board selects a set of priorities to work on throughout our one-year term. These priorities are based on issues and concerns raised by students. At the Annual General Meeting in October, we announced our three areas of focus for this year: academic quality review, student leadership opportunities, and transportation access. Since then, we have been working with various teams, some internal from within the College and several external ones such as OC Transpo and the City of Pembroke, to highlight and address these concerns.

Summary of Work

On the Academic priority, we have been working with the Academic Development team from the College to identify gaps in the training and review process for part-time faculty, as well as address concerns around preparation and communication in work-integrated learning programs. Our focus has been to strengthen course delivery, communication, and how students are prepared to enter their careers. Through this, we are working on creating a better onboarding process and training for part-time faculty, developing a quality review process for part-time faculty similar to the one for full-time faculty, strengthening the resources and supports available to work-integrated learning students, and working with the Chairs of the Pembroke campus to address specific needs.

The thread of improving communication and supports continues through our student leadership priority. A lot of the areas that students were expressing that they felt were lacking or missing are actually present, but are underutilized. We are working with College teams to identify why these gaps exist and how to close them so that students can better access these programs and services. We have also made trial adjustments to the Class Representative program and are continuing to investigate ways to get these students more involved.

Finally, we are continuing to advocate for reliable and accessible transit in Ottawa and Pembroke, and to ensure that students in Perth do not get overlooked in the campus' transition. We have been leveraging new relationships established with local councilors and MPPs, as well as the new interim leadership at OC Transpo.

Academic Quality

Strengthen academic quality and work-integrated learning opportunities, ensuring students are prepared for meaningful careers.

Academics are the core purpose of the College and the underlying reason why students attend post-secondary institutions. As such, it is critical that the quality and relevance of academic materials taught at the College are industry-leading and equip students with modernized knowledge and skills to bring into their careers. Our goal with this priority is to ensure that the College is providing career-relevant course material and robust work-integrated learning supports that enable students to feel prepared to be successful entering the workforce.

Last year's Board of Directors spent a lot of time working with the College to identify weaknesses and create plans to improve the co-op search and placement process. We will continue to work with the College teams to not only put these plans in place, but also expand the focus to cover all work-integrated learning systems, such as internships and placements.

We are also committed to ensuring that the transition of the students and programs from the Perth campus to the Ottawa campus has the proper support it needs to be as smooth and seamless as possible. We are not willing to accept any drop in the quality of the programming from that campus, both through its final year and in its transition.

Academic Quality

Progress

In our work and conversations with the SVPA, there was a distinction drawn between the differences of course content versus course materials. In looking at the issues and student concerns, it was identified that course content concerns were stemming from gaps in the training and onboarding process for professors and instructors. This particularly impacts professors who start teaching a new subject or are new instructors teaching for the first time.

We met with the Quality Assurance Audit Project Manager to learn about the College Quality Assurance Audit Process. This audit identified that there is no formal review system for part-time faculty or instructors, only for full-time faculty. This lack of a review system creates quality assurance issues and inconsistencies in course delivery across the college, and even within programs.

Together with the Academic Development team, we are working to review the contract structure for part-time faculty to clarify expectations and assess the process for pre-semester tasks such as reviewing and updating course materials. While this is something that can be done at the top level, we also recognize the different needs and requirements of different schools and programs, and are working to make sure that we understand how each area operates and how changes will have different impacts.

Academic Quality

Upcoming Work

Going forward, we will continue to work with the Academic Development team to develop clearer onboarding expectations and a better training process for faculty for reviewing and updating teaching materials, better supporting part-time faculty, and developing an offboarding process for transitioning materials to new incoming professors and instructors.

Developing this process will take some time and input from a lot of different areas and includes reviewing relevant college policies such as HR10 – New Employee Orientation, and AA50 – Experiential and Work-Integrated Learning.

More immediately, concerns that are able to be addressed at a more localized level are being brought directly to Deans and Chairs, and program or class specific issues are being brought directly to the applicable Chairs.

Our priority committee will continue to gather and organize information and feedback from students and ensure it gets included in the process. The committee will also be more directly involved in the process on the Pembroke campus, as there are many different challenges and concerns students in Pembroke face by the differing natures of the programs offered there, such as courses that require certifications. We will be working directly with the Chairs on the Pembroke campus to look at ways to address these concerns.

Students in work-integrated learning programs have been raising similar concerns that were seen through the co-op priority last year. We are currently collecting more information from these students through discussions and an experience survey to identify priority concerns relating to communication and preparation.

Student Leadership



Equip student leaders to strengthen peer support, service awareness, and connection.

Our discussions with students have repeatedly raised that students are looking for more leadership opportunities, whether its through leadership skills and training or more ways to be involved in college and community initiatives.

This priority has lead us to have many meetings and conversations with numerous College faculty and staff that run various student leadership groups, and it has become apparent that there is not a lack of leadership opportunities, but rather a shortcoming in how these opportunities are presented and communicated to students. The focus of our work has accordingly shifted from ways to create more opportunities to focusing on how the current ones can be better communicated and utilized. Our main questions of focus have become:

- What communication methods/platforms are these programs using?
- What kind of communication is or isn't proving effective?
- What kind of training are the students receiving?
- What are the intended takeaways for students in these programs?

Similarly, while the Class Representative program has always been extremely valuable to us and we consistently receive very positive feedback, we know there's room for further improvement and are looking at ways that we can help make the program even more effective and able to better serve students.

Student Leadership

Progress

The first change we made was in how the Class Representative meetings were handled in Ottawa. Instead of a strictly feedback gathering session, we partnered with Counselling services to offer a modified mental health first-aid training workshop to help equip Class Reps with more knowledge and skills that they can bring back to help support their classmates. This was an initiative we received very positive feedback from and is something we will continue to look at opportunities for in the future.

We have also had the opportunity to sit down each month with several members of the College faculty and staff that run various leadership programs, where we have had been able to raise concerns about experiences and challenges with the different services around campus. Namely, students have been telling us they would like more ways to be involved with events and programs, both on and off campus. While many of these opportunities do currently exist, several areas have been identified as areas with potential for improvement in getting these opportunities out to students.

Working with the college teams, we are exploring different ways to create change going into the winter term and beyond. We are focusing on practical improvements such as enhanced training measures for staff, better use of current campus resources such as bulletin boards for awareness, and improvements to navigation and clarity on Hire AC. Some of these initiatives will be easily rolled out, and others will have a longer implementation period, such as the development of a new Student Leadership Program.

Student Leadership

Upcoming Work

The idea of the work we do with the college teams now is to create a framework for services and opportunities that can be applied to current or new initiatives. Looking forward, whether they are able to be implemented during our term on the Board, or are put in place to be continued in the future, we are working to create a better bridge between the leadership opportunities provided by the college and the SA.

We are working with the college to grow the Class Representative program to be more consistently used and understood across the college and to strengthen it as a resource that provides more empowerment for the students. We are also looking at the success of programs like the JEDI program in Pembroke and not only how it can continue to be improved, but how those lessons and values can help guide other programs..

Transportation

Advocate for improved and reliable transportation.

Our work on our transportation priority is fundamentally different from the other priorities. By nature, this priority requires us to be involved with more third-party organizations that are outside of the College, and work within their restrictions and timeframes. Because of this, our work is almost exclusively done through advocacy. But that doesn't make it any less important. We understand the importance and impact of having reliable and accessible transportation, not only to get to and from the college, but also freedom of movement to support the rest of your life as a student, whether that's for work commitments, social engagements, or doing errands.

This year our transportation work is primarily focused on strengthening relationships with local transportation organizations. In Ottawa, this means working with the City of Ottawa and OC Transpo, as well as maintaining connection with the student bodies from the University of Ottawa, Carleton University, and Saint Paul's University. For Pembroke, this means being involved with the City of Pembroke's transit committee and Left Turn, Right Turn, the company contracted to oversee the new bus system. Work in this area tends to be slower, favouring long-term changes over quick short-term ones. This means that it is even more important to stay engaged and vocal to ensure that we are able to not only maintain a seat at the table, but are also able to actively bring forward the student voice to these discussions.

This priority is being guided by three overarching goals, one for each of the campuses.

In Ottawa, our goal is to establish stronger lines of communication directly with OC Transpo so there can be a more open and continuous flow of information between them and the students.

In Pembroke, our goal is to ensure that the student voice remains an important part of decisions and adjustments made to the new public bus service.

In Perth, our goal is to ensure that students continue to have a voice and receive the appropriate supports and services from the College during the transition period, especially for those that have to change campuses.

Transportation

Progress

OC Transpo

We have had several productive conversations with OC Transpo on a few different issues. Along with the College and the other post-secondary student bodies part of the U-Pass program, we participated in talks with the City of Ottawa and OC Transpo regarding transit budget shortfalls and got them to maintain the UPass increase at the standard 2.5%.

We also had the opportunity to meet in-person with the OC Transpo's Interim GM Troy Charter and Director of Strategic Communications, Bart Cormier where, along with a representative from the City and two senior Algonquin College representatives, we were able to get a tour of the Algonquin LRT station to see progress and discuss student needs. The recent change in OC Transpo leadership has offered a doorway for us to begin a new relationship and fresh connections with incoming leadership.

City of Ottawa

On the political side, we were also able to establish a connection with both Ward 8 (College Ward) Councilor Laine Johnson, who sits on the Planning and Housing and Public Works and Infrastructure committees, as well as Nepean-West MPP Chandra Pasma, the official Opposition Critic for Education.

Both serve the College and surrounding level at either the municipal or provincial level and have been actively invested in the student experience, particularly surrounding external impacts on education. From these conversations, Johnson has agreed to host a transit townhall on campus alongside the chairs those committees to get information directly from students on their experiences with transportation in the city.

Perth

It is important to the Board that we continue to represent all of our members. Students on the Perth campus have regularly expressed concerns about having to transfer to a new campus midway through their program, particularly those who will have to find new housing or transportation for a year while they finish their program. These are important concerns that we have and will continue to raise with the College leadership teams to ensure that these students experience as little disruption as possible.

Transportation

Pembroke

The Pembroke campus is where the biggest transportation changes have occurred in the last year. In September, the City of Pembroke, under the management of Left Turn, Right Turn, launched a new on-demand bus service in the city under the Ottawa River Transit working group. This was a project that had been five years in the making and that both the City and LTRT were in close contact with both the College and Students' Association throughout, recognizing the importance of the student population in the area.

At the launch event in September, we had the opportunity to meet the deputy mayor of Pembroke, as well as other city councilors and community members that now sit on the ORTC transit committee. This committee has provided a seat for a Board member, as well as two SA staff members, and the Dean of the Pembroke Campus. Through this avenue, we are able to meet bi-monthly with all relevant parties to relay the student experience and have a direct input on the pilot program.

General

One event we had to opportunity to attend this year was the Canadian Urban Transit Association hosting a Young Leaders Summit. The focus of this summit was to discuss ways that transit organizations can engage with the next generation of riders. The General Manager of Edmonton Transit Services gave a presentation on how engaging with youth has helped ETS ridership grow significantly, and how collaborating with student unions on student-specific issues has helped their ridership grow to 19 per cent higher than pre-pandemic levels.

This summit let us meet and have discussions with several other student body leaders and industry professionals about different initiatives and programs that are being implemented and tested in various regions. This helped to provide an understanding of what the successful roll-out of different initiatives looked like for these different services and will help to guide our conversations with OC Transpo, the City of Ottawa, and ORTC going forward.

Transportation

Upcoming Work

Looking forward, we will be hosting the transit townhall in Ottawa with the city councilors and committee chairs on January 29th. This will be an excellent opportunity for the wider student body to share their feedback and input directly with the City and OC Transpo. We are also in regular contact with OC Transpo regarding UPass service level agreements and how to improve the bus connections to the College, until and after the LRT station opens.

We will also continue to keep the Perth students access to supports and service leading up to, during, and after the transition as a top priority for the College. We understand that there are many logistical challenges the College is working through with the transition, so we are working to make sure that the student voice remains heard and attended to throughout the process.

So far, the new bus system in Pembroke has been very successful and continues to build in usage. Throughout the winter months, we will continue to promote it to students and represent their interests within the committee and to Pembroke city council. We continue to work with LTRT and the City to find ways to increase the ease of accessibility for students and to promote the service on campus.

Looking Forward

As always, the Board has taken the SA's mission to heart. Over the course of this term, we have dedicated hundreds of hours to listening to students and understanding the issues they identify as most critical to their success.

We have worked closely with our partners on the Algonquin College Executive Team (ACET) and their delegates to ensure student feedback reaches the appropriate channels, and have collaborated to pursue meaningful, large-scale solutions that reach as many students as possible. We know that this work is ongoing – the steps we take today will continue to grow and evolve for generations of students that come after us.

This term has marked significant progress, and I am looking ahead to Winter 2026 with optimism. While our partnership with ACET will continue, our shared focus will increasingly shift toward implementing the solutions and recommendations developed through our work.

Student success is not a one-size-fits-all concept, and engaging with its many dimensions remains deeply fulfilling. I look forward to the following term – being fully immersed in the student experience, continuing to advocate for tangible improvements across our priority areas and beyond.



Vanshika Sharma
President

sharmav-c@algonquincollege.com

