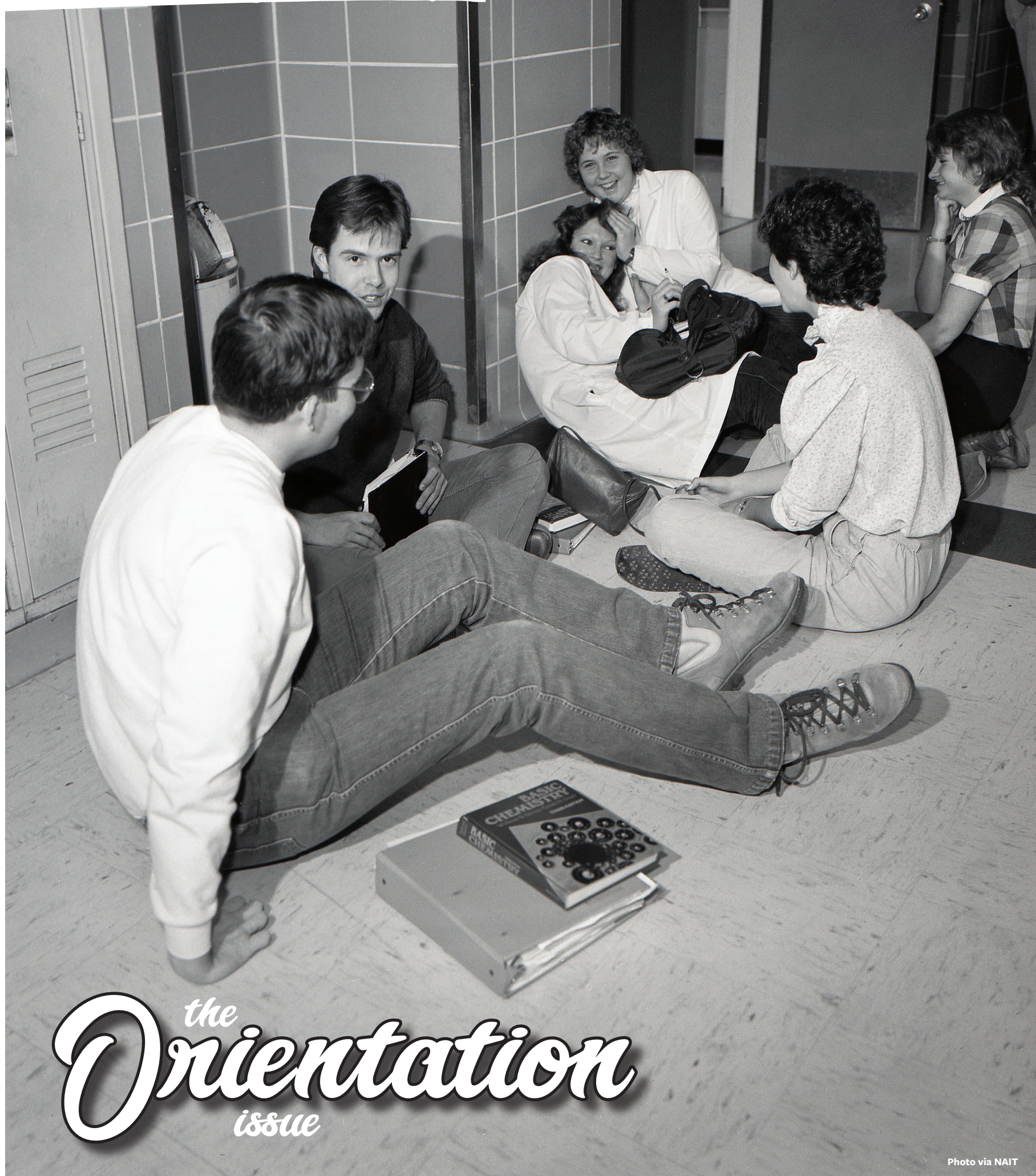


NAIT NUGGET

NAIT'S INDEPENDENT STUDENT NEWS

Wednesday, August 19, 2026
Volume 67, Issue 1

thenuggetonline.com
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the
Orientation
issue

Photo via NAIT

WTF is the ASC?



A digital rendering of the Advanced Skills Centre, designed by GEC Architecture and DIALOG. The building will be built by PCL Construction. Photo supplied

By Alleah Boisvert, Senior Editor

As a member of the NAIT community, you’ve probably heard about the Advanced Skills Centre, or the ASC for short. But if you’re a new student, you may be wondering... WTF is the ASC?

The ASC is a massive new project on NAIT’s main campus. The future trades and technology centre, which will train 15,000 students across almost 30 NAIT programs, will help contribute to Alberta’s skilled trades industry and provide opportunities for skilled trades students.

The idea of the ASC is to have students work side-by-side in a hands-on, cross-industry environment to help them prepare for real-life situations in their careers.

Construction for the ASC started this summer, and students and staff will notice major construction work on the site, located outside of the V Building near 118 Avenue and 106A Street.

The ASC will be 625,000 square feet — 75,000 sq. ft. bigger than the CAT building, NAIT’s current largest building. And not only will the ASC be NAIT’s biggest construction project yet, it also received a “historic” investment from the Government of Alberta: \$384 million over three years.

The remainder of the ASC’s funds will come from internal resource allocation, donations and industry support. According to NAIT, the ASC’s current phase —



Aerial view of the future site of the Advanced Skills Centre. Photo supplied

siteworks and early construction — was started one year ahead of schedule. The project is scheduled to be completed in Fall 2030.

For more information about the ASC or to sign up for updates about the project, visit NAIT’s website.

THE NUGGET

Informing and entertaining the NAIT community since 1964

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Your summer news recap

By Amy St. Amand, *Editor-in-Chief*

There may be less students on campus during the summer, but news never stops! Here’s a recap of the major things you missed.

NAIT will have a new president in 2027

Laura Jo Gunter, NAIT’s current president and CEO, announced that she will not be seeking reappointment. However, she plans to keep working until her contract expires in October 2027.

That means that NAIT has just over a year to find someone new to lead the polytechnic and become the institution’s eighth president. The search will be led by NAIT’s Board of Governors.

Gunter was NAIT’s first female president. She was appointed by the Board of Governors in 2020 and served a five-year term, before being re-appointed for a second term of two years, for a total of seven.

New VP students and campus experience selected — and it’s a familiar face

Clayton Davis has been selected as NAIT’s newest executive, taking up the VP students and campus experience position. The role (formerly called VP students and campus life) sat empty after the termination of Gerard Hayes in October 2024.

Davis is no stranger to NAIT; he started in 2005 and has held a number of roles since then, including: executive director, human resources in 2014; associate vice-president, human resources and legal services in 2021; then finally became interim VP students, human resources, and international in 2025.

His portfolio will include strategic leadership of student services and overseeing legal services, international and human resources.

NAIT’s Academic Council decided on 17 of 18 paused programs

In May 2025, NAIT paused 18 programs, and NAIT’s Academic Council has been working their way through the list to decide these programs’ fate. After the council finished for the year, 17 of the 18 programs had been decided on.

- 2 were reinstated
- 14 were recommended for suspension to the Board of Governors, with intent to terminate
- 1 suspension was defeated

The remaining program, CNC Machinist Technician, will be discussed at Academic Council’s first meeting of the 2026/27 school year.

NAITSA VP external resigned to further political career

After serving less than three months of his term as NAITSA’s latest VP external, Vladyslav Bondarchuk resigned. Bondarchuk was elected by students in February 2026 and began his role on May 1. He announced his resignation in a LinkedIn post on July 16, followed by a post on NAITSA’s website on July 17.

“Due to personal circumstances, I have made the difficult decision to resign from my position.” Bondarchuk wrote that he is “deeply grateful” to those who supported him and said he is proud to have represented students despite his term as VP external being “shorter than [he] had anticipated,” he wrote on LinkedIn.



L-R: Danielle Libunao, Vladyslav Bondarchuk, Lilly Houcher and Teaira Current made up the 2026/27 NAITSA Executive Council before Bondarchuk resigned. Photo via NAITSA

Bondarchuk told *the Nugget* that because NAITSA is a non-partisan organization, he felt he couldn’t pursue the opportunities he wanted.

“I was between either staying here, getting more experience, or actually leave and start acting.”

For now, NAITSA President Lilly Houcher will pick up the duties of the vacated role and serve as acting VP external. When NAITSA’s Senate begins in October, they will decide what to do — either hold a byelection, or let Houcher continue as VP external and run with three executives for the year.

Learning Services developed a streamlined online resource for accommodations

The Accommodations Dashboard launched on May 1, and it’s completely unique to NAIT. Students and instructors can use the dashboard to get information, book exam accommodations or view and send service plans. It’s a one-stop shop for everything related to accommodations at NAIT.

Gifty Amakye, the manager of learning services, said the idea has been in the works for three years.

“We realized, ‘Oh, the information that students are seeing and also instructors are seeing is not sufficient enough to help them understand what’s supposed to happen next or what they should or shouldn’t do,’” she told *the Nugget*. “What we’re hoping this does is give a really smooth, central place to access that information again.”

The custom-built dashboard took NAIT’s IT team eight months to build “from the ground up.” Working in-house, instead of outsourcing, creates a more secure system, said Amakye. She called it “the unicorn.”

“It’s like, yes, you can buy your car off the lot, or you can go to the factory and speak to the designer and get exactly what you want. And that’s what we’ve done here.”

Timeline of NAIT presidents



1960-1962
Jack Mitchell



1962-1971
Dr. William A.B. Saunders



1971-1979
George Carter



1980-1997
Dr. Stanley Souch



1997-2010
Dr. W. A. Sam Shaw



2011-2019
Dr. Glenn Feltham



2020-2027
Laura Jo Gunter

What is the NAITSA senate, and why does it matter?

By Ibrahim Basim, *Junior Reporter*
Alleah Boisvert, *Senior Editor*

When students normally think of NAITSA, they may visualize events, services or the U-Pass. But offstage, behind closed doors, the NAITSA Senate plays a crucial role in student governance — drafting and passing bylaws and holding the executive council accountable. Decisions made in the Senate influence all NAIT students, either directly or indirectly, even if they don’t often realize.

The Nugget interviewed Danielle Libunao, who served as a student senator for two years before assuming her current position as NAITSA’s VP academic. According to Libunao, students should care about the Senate because it’s the governing body of NAITSA.

“Every student who’s taking a course, a credited course at NAIT, pays a NAITSA fee. And if you’re part of the senate, you have a better idea of how those fees are being spent, how the students’ association is creating services for students to benefit from,” she explained.

For Libunao, the senate became more than a governing body; it was a turning point in her time at NAIT.

“It meant a second chance for me to get involved on campus,” she said. “I was trying all these different things out and I was like, ‘Oh, Senate, let’s give it a try.’”

That idea opened unexpected doors. “I learned that I really love governance because it really related to my area of study of HR and professional development,” she said.

Senators serve on subcommittees, and Libunao, a business student studying human resources, challenged herself by choosing the finance subcommittee over governance. “I was like, ‘let’s do this.’ And I learned to love it. A lot.”

Decisions have real life impact

Bylaws passed by the Senate affect students in real life. Libunao experienced this herself when she ran for NAITSA VP academic and found herself bound by the voter interference bylaw she had helped pass as a senator. “It became a really pressing issue and it was the first time we had to put something forward like that since it was sort of happening consistently,” she said.

“I was part of that board that passed this bylaw. So it directly affected me as well and it just gives you a really good idea of, okay, that’s the board that makes these types of decisions, no one else.”

Beyond bylaws and budgets, the Senate helped her build lasting connections. The senate consists of 12 elected student senators representing a total of five electoral zones across campus. Libunao said the Senate was an opportunity to hear “everyone’s perspectives on things and being able to contribute together in that.”

“We’re all students and you could see the different types of students there are, and it’s very diverse,” said Libunao.

The student senators and senate meetings are facilitated by the chair of the Senate, an outsourced student governance professional with no ties to NAITSA. The chair provides guidance to senators and helps the elected students learn how professional meetings are run.

For student senators, Libunao believes courage matters more than experience. “I think you could build confidence in this role. Just because you are in a meeting with executive council, for some students it could be intimidating.”

But as a former senator and now a member of the Executive Council, Libunao says she wants to give students the impression that ECs are students, too. “We’re all in the same boat.”

Students should stay informed

Even for students who aren’t a part of the Senate, there are ways to stay engaged and informed. The 10 meetings each year are livestreamed, and “all students are welcome to attend our board meetings as an observer” by request, according to NAITSA’s website.

Libunao says students can contact Executive Council members to bring any pressing issues up. “Maybe this is something we could advocate on their behalf, or bring up to Senate.”

Some students may be hesitant to engage in campus politics, but student governance ensures their NAITSA fees are being spent effectively. “I say try and come to the idea of Senate with an open mind,” Libunao said.

Student senators are elected by the student body, so students have a choice in who sits on their governing board with the Executive Council.

Nominations are open from Aug. 25 to Sept. 23 at 4 p.m. For more information on the NAITSA Senate, visit the NAITSA website.



2025-26 senators at NAITSA’s annual awards night.

Photo via NAITSA

Goodbye ping pong tables, hello ‘one-stop shop’:

South Lobby revitalization project will streamline student experience

By Amy St. Amand

If you're brand new to NAIT, you missed the glory days of the ping pong tables in South Lobby. No matter what time of day you walked by, there was someone playing ping pong. It was a beautiful example of the power of community and the way sports bring us together.

And that's still happening on campus. It's just not happening in South Lobby, but for a potentially very worthy cause.

It may look like the tables were moved for no reason, but behind the scenes, the area is getting gutted for a three-year long, \$12 million project designed to streamline the student experience.

“Our aim is to consolidate some student services in one space, to really streamline the student experience,” said Petrina Ferreira, NAIT’s associate vice-president, students and campus experience.

Currently, if students need support, they have to go to various places on campus — W-building for mental health support through NAIT’s counselors, E-wing for Learning Services, O-wing for the students’ association... you get the picture. On a good day, you find what you need at the first stop. On a bad day, you’re getting your steps in to speak to the right person.

The project aims to make South Lobby a “true one-stop shop” for students, said Ferreira.

“This project will really solidify the support they need in one space, and really eliminate the guesswork,” she told *the Nugget*. “Students are the ‘why’ behind this project, and their voice is critical.”

That student voice has been heard through a few different avenues, including posters, outreach sessions and in-person opportunities for students to give feedback. NAITSA also has representatives on the planning committee, including President Lilly Houcher, who said that continuing to hear from students will be important.

Houcher also emphasized the need to consider NAIT’s growth when conceptualizing the space. “The services that are here today might not be here in three years or five years or beyond,” she said. “But the idea and concept of it is, I think, very beneficial for students.”

South Lobby is the ‘heart of campus’

While some students may think of CAT as more of a campus hub, Eduardo Sosa, NAIT’s associate vice-president facilities, said there was “no question” that South Lobby was the perfect location for this project.

The location is physically central for the Main Campus — Sosa highlighted that South Lobby is close to W-building, CAT and the future Advanced Skills Centre. It’s also near NAITSA’s office, Athletics and Recreation and the Centre for Community and Belonging.

And it’s a huge space — there’s 37,000 square feet (about two NHL hockey rinks!) hidden behind the lobby walls, along with remnants of NAIT’s former eras. The space used to house numerous departments: student services, which moved to CAT in 2018; a health clinic, which is now located in the S-building; and once upon a time, it was the registrar.

Currently, the planning team is in the “detailed design phase,” said Sosa. “We are going to be basically outlining what are the specific requirements of the space.”

Ferreira said they are looking at a “holistic” approach to the final decision on what will be in the space.

“We’re not thinking linear in terms of reporting line ... we’re really looking



A digital rendering of a potential design for South Lobby.

Photo via NAIT



This hallway, which runs the length of the courtyard, will be opened up to bring light into the space, said Ferreria.

Photo by Amy St. Amand/The Nugget

at the student at the centre and what they may need throughout that kind of messy middle and their journey at NAIT holistically.”

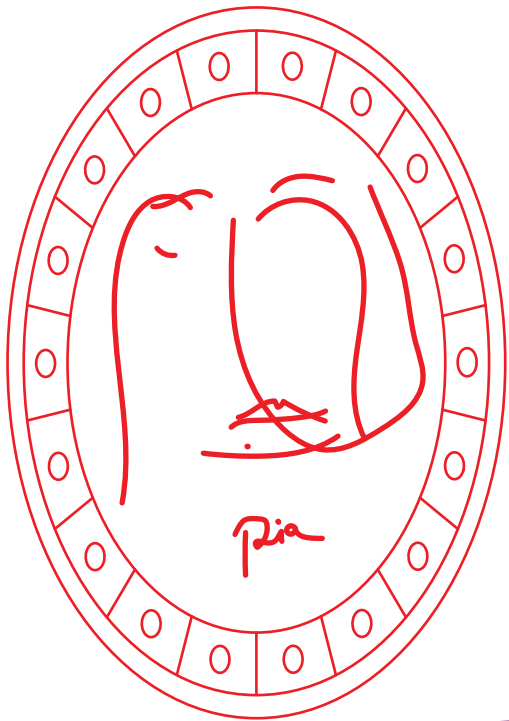
Houcher said the deliberation on what services will move to South Lobby “has to be executed properly.”

“I think it’s really important that it’s a smooth process, or it could make it really frustrating for students,” she said. “But the concept of it, one stop-shop, that is what is best for students.”

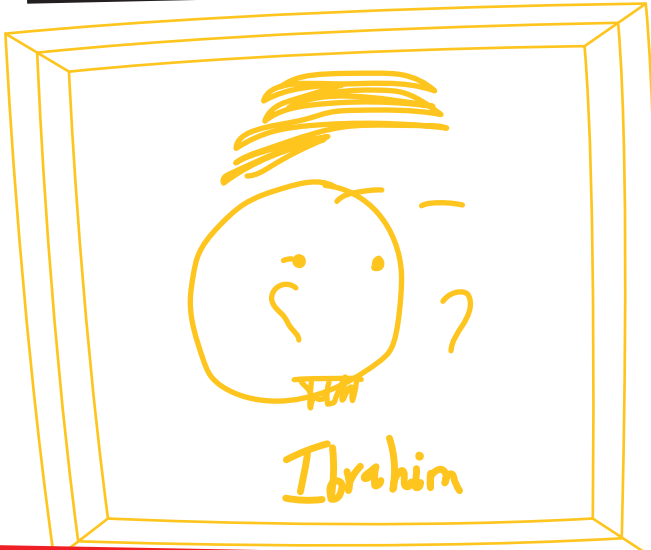
The goal is to have the project completed by Fall 2028, and while it may not currently look like much is happening, Sosa said there has been a lot of work behind the scenes.

“We’ve done a really good job not disrupting anybody,” he said. And as the construction continues over the next three years, they want to minimize impacts to students as much as possible. “We’ve been facing the project in a way that disruption is minimized, so we don’t shut down the entire space at once.”

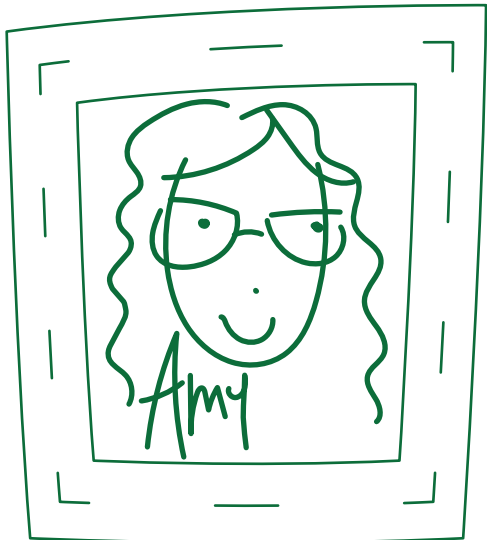
In the meantime, the ping pong tables (and their less popular cousin, the foosball tables) have found new, permanent homes on campus. Look for signage with QR codes pointing students in the right direction, or visit NAIT’s website for an interactive map.



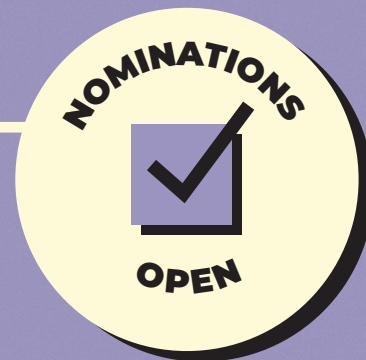
Introducing the
2026/27



NUGGET EDITORS



GROW YOUR CAREER. JOIN STUDENT GOVERNMENT.



NAITSA SENATE ELECTION 2026-2027

NOMINATIONS OPEN AUGUST 25 – SEPTEMBER 23 AT 4:00PM

**DISCUSS AND MAKE DECISIONS ON BIG PICTURE ISSUES
THAT CONCERN NAIT STUDENTS**

- 12 student Senators will be elected
- 10 meetings throughout the year & sub-committee meetings that include dinner
- Honorarium up to \$760
- Leadership Experience & Professional Development
- Your position will be recognized on your Student Involvement Record
- Most meetings will be on Wednesday evenings

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A SENATE MEMBER?

NOMINATIONS CLOSE AT 4PM, SEPTEMBER 23

For more information and to download an election Nomination Package, visit naitsa.ca/elections

naitsa

5 things to do in your first month at NAIT

By Alleah Boisvert, Senior Editor

Your first month at NAIT as a new student is exciting, nerve-racking and will fly by in no time. Make the most of September with these five things to help you integrate into NAIT campus life.

✓ ATTEND AN EVENT

If you're looking to get the most out of your campus experience, events are a great place to start — and there's lots of 'em. You can find and RSVP to events on Ooks Life, the online hub for all sorts of campus activities hosted by different departments and clubs. Ooks Life events include all the details about each event, and can even be sorted by date, branch, theme, category and included perks of attendance (like free food!).

You'll see events like volunteer opportunities, learning seminars, recreational and social activities and so much more. But to start, we recommend checking out Nest Fest on Sept. 10 and 11. It's an annual back-to-school celebration with food and beverages (boozy, if you prefer), performances, games and contests.



NUGGET TIP

Take a screenshot of your Event Pass on Ooks Life to save yourself having to log in every time event staff asks to see the QR code. It's the same for every event you attend, the entire time you're at NAIT!

A student plays spike ball at Nest Fest.
Photo by Ana Kostyrko/The Nugget

✓ JOIN A CLUB

Campus clubs make up a large part of all the fun events hosted on campus. Where can you find clubs? You guessed it — Ooks Life! You can peruse all the different campus organizations, from student-led clubs to NAIT departments like Learning Services. Some organizations are student clubs dedicated to a specific program or interest, and others are NAIT departments you can join to get frequent updates on what's happening.

For new students wanting to meet friends, special-interest clubs like the Ski and Snowboard Club or the Super NAITSA Anime Club are good options. There are also clubs for students from different cultures, like the Bayanihan Club at NAIT and the PUNJAB Club at NAIT. Clubs are a great way to meet people, but they also provide opportunities for club leadership and involvement. Clubs and club executives are even eligible to win awards in the spring.

NUGGET TIP

Don't know which club to join first? Many NAIT programs have student-led, program-specific clubs. Don't see a club that suits you? Start your own through NAITSA Campus Clubs.

✓ GO TO THE NEST

Maybe joining a club isn't your thing, and that's okay. You could always grab

a solo bar seat at our award-winning campus bar, the Nest Eatery, and see what happens. Maybe another solo bar-goer will sit next to you and you'll meet a new friend. Maybe you'll just enjoy the atmosphere by yourself with a cold drink and a snack. Either way, the Nest is a vibe for both introverts and extroverts.

And, it's probably one of the better spots to grab food on campus. It has a menu full of pub favourites, like chicken wings and burgers, and a bar that features local craft beer on tap. It also has pool tables, TV screens and hosts popular student events like Dirty Bingo. Every day of the week, the Nest has a different food and drink special. Plus, the prices on regular menu items ain't bad!

The Nest reopens for the school year on Sept. 1. Check it out on weekdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

✓ FIND A STUDY SPOT

While the Nest is a good spot to study if the buzz of other students keeps you focused, you may want to find another go-to spot to lock-in, too. You're not limited to the building where most of your classes are in — the search for a study spot may even help familiarize you with the campus and what it has to offer.

NAIT has plenty of study and seating areas, like the library in U310 or the student common area on the second floor of CAT behind the Tim Hortons.

If you're looking for total silence, U210 below the library has a dedicated silent area complete with study pods. But sometimes, it's that random seat in a quiet hallway that really does the trick.

✓ PET SOME DOGS

That's right. You can pet dogs on campus. This is obviously the most important thing on this list.

NUGGET TIP

Not a dog person? Pet other animals at the NAITSA Petting Zoo on Sept. 14. Get all the details on (surprise) Ooks Life.

The Pets Assisting With Student Success (PAWSS) program was introduced by MacEwan University in 2017 to help reduce student stress and increase wellbeing through animal interaction.

Now, NAITSA has its own roster of PAWSS dogs, and students can see which dogs are in and when using the PAWSS schedule on the NAITSA website.

If beagles are your favourite breed, you're in luck — there are three on the roster. Drop by the NAITSA office at O108 when the PAWSS residents are in and pet some dogs. It's for your own good.



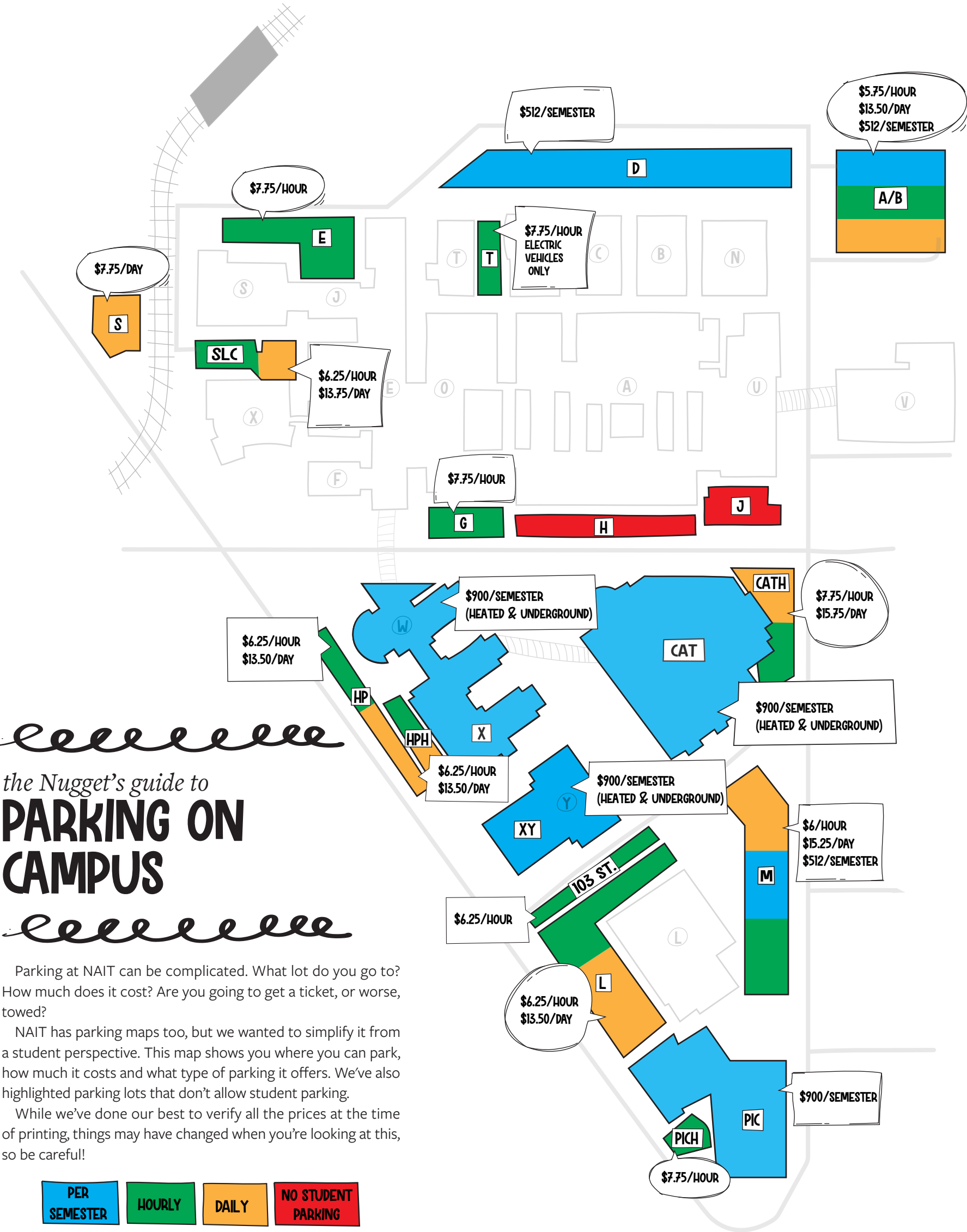
Tricks, one of three beagles available for pets through NAITSA's PAWSS program.
Photo via NAITSA

NUGGET TIP

If you're in a hurry, you can order food from the Nest online for pick-up. And if you're going to order anything, it should be the Cajun Chicken Burger with crosstrack fries. Trust us.

NUGGET TIP

You can book your own private study room for an hour or two through your MyNAIT Portal.

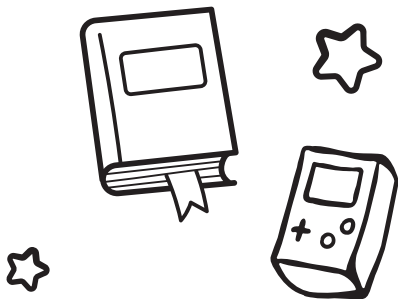


~~~~~  
the Nugget's guide to  
**PARKING ON  
CAMPUS**  
~~~~~

Parking at NAIT can be complicated. What lot do you go to? How much does it cost? Are you going to get a ticket, or worse, towed?

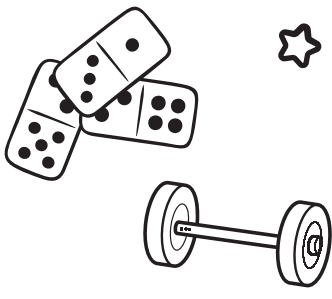
NAIT has parking maps too, but we wanted to simplify it from a student perspective. This map shows you where you can park, how much it costs and what type of parking it offers. We've also highlighted parking lots that don't allow student parking.

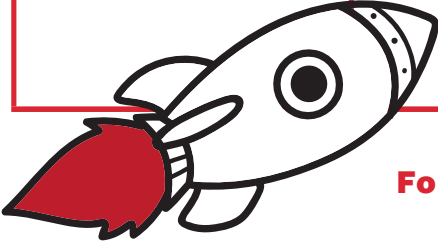
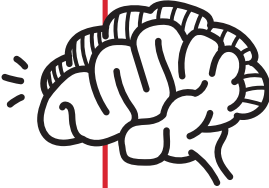
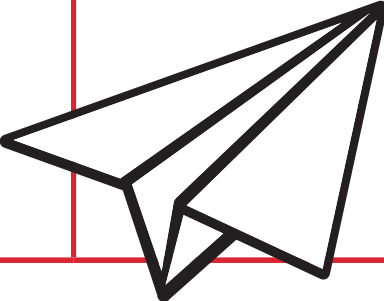
While we've done our best to verify all the prices at the time of printing, things may have changed when you're looking at this, so be careful!



SEPTEMBER

Monthly Events



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	1 Pancake Breakfast 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. South Lobby Rec Days 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. CAT Crossing	2 Pancake Breakfast 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. CAT Quad Rec Days 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. CAT Crossing	3 Dirty Bingo 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Nest Eatery Join <i>the Nugget</i> Info Session 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. O105	4 Sept. 6: Ooks soccer game 12 p.m. Strathcona Athletic Park
	7 Join <i>the Nugget</i> Info Session 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. 	8 Meet the Ooks 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Entire Campus Peer Support Fall Opening 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. J209	9 Popcorn & a Paper 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. NAITSA (O108) Writing Centre Open House 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.	10 Nest Fest 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. CAT Quad Nísôhkamâtôtân Centre Open House 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. E121
	14 Learn to Pickleball 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. NAIT Gym Petting Zoo 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. CAT Quad	15 Birdie Bash 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. NAIT Gym Free Drop-in Tutoring W203 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.	16 Back to School Brain Freeze 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. CAT Mario Kart Tournament 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. CAT Glass Box	17 Karaoke at the Nest 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Nest Eatery Cricket in the Quad 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. CAT Quad
	21 President's FitWalk 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. CAT Glass Box	22 NAIT Treaty Days 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. CAT Quad Ping Pong Tournament 11:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. CAT Crossing	23 Roots for Trees 3:45 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. North Lobby	24 Learn to Swim 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. MacEwan Pool Trivia Night 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Nest Eatery
	28 Walking Together: Reflections for Orange Shirt Day 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. W Building	29 Singles Badminton Tournament 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. NAIT Gym	30 National Day for Truth and Reconciliation 	

For more events, info and to RSVP, head to ookslife.ca

Men's hockey coach moves on after 14 years

Scott Fellnermayr looks back on long history with the Oaks

By Alleah Boisvert, Senior Editor

On Aug. 5, NAIT's Athletics and Recreation department announced that the Oaks men's hockey head coach Scott Fellnermayr would be stepping down after 14 years with the program.

Fellnermayr worked at NAIT for nearly a decade and played with the Oaks for four years prior. Undoubtedly, he's left a long-lasting legacy on campus.

But when he moved to Alberta in 2012, Fellnermayr never intended to play for the Oaks. The men's hockey coach at the time, Serge Lajoie, took a chance on him.

"I didn't think I would stay very long," Fellnermayr told *the Nugget* in an emotional interview. "I thought I would play a couple years and go back to my hometown in Kelowna. A decade and a half later, I'm still living here. I'm really grateful for that."

In his first season with the Oaks, Fellnermayr saw NAIT's first championship in 17 years. Then, the Oaks went on to win provincials again in his third and fourth year. "We went undefeated that year [2016], which was extremely special," the former Oaks captain recalls.

After graduating, Fellnermayr took a year off to play pro hockey. He returned to NAIT and worked for the men's hockey team as video coach, then assistant coach, then interim head coach after COVID shut down campus sports. Then, at just 28 years old, he became head coach.

"I was really new to coaching to have a head coach role at such a prominent school," Fellnermayr said, adding that it was overwhelming at first. But both the Oaks Hockey Alumni Association and NAIT's director of athletics and recreation, Jordan Richey, saw his potential.

"We won [provincials] that year," said Fellnermayr, recalling the 2021-22 season — his first as head coach. "We had a really good leadership group that was supportive of me, even though I was new and struggled with some of the things that were required to coach, and we pulled through."



"I'll be here right away ... I want to see them do well so, so badly."

Richey says he's seen Fellnermayr grow up.



Fellnermayr (left) celebrates after the team's 2021-22 provincial win.

Photo via NAIT Oaks

"He's been a part of NAIT, so it's weird to see him move on," he said, but Richey said he knew that Fellnermayr would eventually take the next step.

"He's trying to get to the highest level possible for hockey. So we're very happy for him, but also sad to see him go," said Richey.

Now 35, Fellnermayr is moving on to a new associate coaching role with the Sherwood Park Crusaders, which are under the British Columbia Hockey League, an independent Canadian junior hockey league with teams across B.C. and Alberta.

Fellnermayr said he initially applied for the Crusaders' head coach position when it opened. Though the head coach position was filled, the Crusaders liked Fellnermayr's application and asked what it would take to bring him on.

"As much as I really wish I could coach *this* team [the Oaks], *this* year, for my career, it just made sense," he explained. Still, Fellnermayr is confident that the Oaks are in a good spot without him, and he's proud of the impact he's made on the team.

"Even if people don't understand it right now, I think they'll understand pretty soon when the team comes out and hits the ice in October," Fellnermayr said.

"We have a very strong team coming in to play,

and that's testament to Scott's recruiting ability," said Richey. "The new coach is going to be put in a very favourable position because of the hard work Scott put in."

Richey believes the Oaks men's hockey team is one of the top college programs in the country, and Fellnermayr was "a big part of it."

By the end of August, the men's team will have a new head coach — someone adaptable and flexible who can "maintain that high standard that NAIT athletics expects of our men's hockey program," said Richey.

The foundation for the year is already planned out for the team, who will be travelling to Vancouver to play exhibition games against the UBC Thunderbirds in October. NAIT will also be hosting the Chinese national hockey team again, led by former NAIT coach Perry Pearn.

As for former head coach Scott Fellnermayr? He'll be back to watch an Oaks game as soon as he gets a chance.

"I'll be here right away," he said, holding back tears as he spoke about his desire to continue supporting the team he'd spent so many years with.

"I want to see them do well so, so badly."

State of the Ooks: 2026-27 season preview

By Alleah Boisvert, Senior Editor

The Ooks had one hell of a run last season. They competed in every possible Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference (ACAC) sport, and most teams made the playoffs. The Ooks medalled in 11 provincial championships and three national championships. Many Ooks athletes and coaches were recognized for their accomplishments.

The hype could be felt across campus — notably in NAIT’s newly renovated gym — and athletics and recreation director Jordan Richey said 2025-26 was one of the most successful seasons he’s seen.

After a fantastic 2025-26, this is what’s next for the Ooks in 2026-27.

Women’s soccer

Home opener: Aug. 29 vs. Portage College Voyageurs

Things start fast for the Ooks women’s soccer team, with tryouts taking place just over a week before the official season begins. In 2025-26, the team had a 9-2-1 record and an average of 4.17 goals per game, ending the season with a silver medal at provincials after nearly winning gold.

Since March, the Ooks have signed eight new recruits: Emily Narayan, Alanna Vos, Cadence Muir, Trinity Ruys, Rilyn Clement, Gracey Smithson, Kaley Dillon and Grace Jones. Narayan represented the U19 Fiji Football Association’s national team, while Clement and Smithson already have experience with previous ACAC programs (Smithson is a three-time ACAC all-conference winner).

The growing program has 2025 ACAC North Women’s Soccer Coach of the Year Dhee Govender leading it, and the addition of strong new players could bring the women to a season run comparable to the men’s.

Men’s soccer

Home opener: Aug. 29 vs. Portage College Voyageurs

The Ooks men’s soccer team had a deep 2025-26 run, winning gold at provincials and bronze at nationals in Quebec. NAIT will be the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA) men’s soccer nationals host this year, giving the men a chance to go for gold on home turf this time. Well, as close to home turf as we can, since we don’t actually have a soccer field on campus.

Experienced head coach Jeff Paulus was looking to recruit new international athletes and aspires to win CCAA nationals, ACAC futsal and ACAC soccer (again). The men gained technical experience playing futsal later in the 2025-26 season, and it seems like there’s no slowing down for the team’s success.

This is a stacked year for soccer fans. First the World Cup, and now CCAA nationals at home? It’ll surely be another exciting year for the Ooks.

Cross-country and Indoor Track

First cross-country race: Sept. 5

2025-26 was the inaugural season for Ooks indoor track, and the runners proved they had the chops to compete. It was also a great season for cross-country, another newer program at NAIT, now in its fourth year. The cross-country athletes stayed in the ACAC’s top three throughout the season and nearly medalled at provincials.

The Ooks boast some star track athletes, including ACAC all-conference

winner and team captain Brynn Hebert, and Malachi Muir, who is set to run for the Ooks again after winning ACAC all-conference rookie of the year last season (plus multiple gold medals).

Golf

First regional: Sept. 13-14

2025-26 was another strong year for Ooks golf. The men won silver at provincials while the women won bronze. Then, the program qualified for nationals for the third season in a row and sent their largest group of players yet.

With the departure of award-winning dual athlete and golf captain Mason Gorski, 2026-27 will see some changes. But Gorski’s presence as an Ook since 2023 leaves the team with a strong legacy and a remaining roster of strong players, including new recruit Nicole Dugas, a competitive golfer with winning experience.

Edmonton is already hosting the 2026 CPKC Women’s Open in August — hopefully, the competitive feel in the city will help prepare the Ooks athletes for a great season.

Men’s hockey

Home opener: Sept. 26 vs. Portage College Voyageurs

2025-26 was a rollercoaster of a season for this team, who will have a new coach after the departure of head coach Scott Fellnermayr this summer. After a rough season start, the men ranked third in the regular season. But at the ACAC semifinals, the Ooks ended their underdog run with a loss against SAIT.

Despite the loss, the Ooks are tenacious, even capable of giving the Chinese national team a run for their money. The team has seven new talented recruits, including three defensemen to provide support for former Spruce Grove Saints goaltender Ryan De Kok, a new Ook, and three forwards to bring up their average goals per game.

The addition of two Melfort Mustangs players, former team captain Zayden Sadlemyer and defenseman Danton Cox, could be the beginning of an Ooks star duo.

A fresh outlook could mean a new start for this dark horse team, but it could also mean another up-and-down season. Fortunately, according to athletics and recreation director Jordan Richey, Fellnermayr left a great foundation with top notch recruits. The Ooks men’s hockey program is full of heart, and it’ll be interesting to see how they handle the program’s changes.

Women’s hockey

Home opener: Oct. 2 vs. Medicine Hat College Rattlers

The Ooks women’s hockey team also made it to ACAC semifinals last season, but were eliminated yet again by rivalry playoff team Red Deer Polytechnic Queens. Still, they finished third in the conference with a 14-11 record — even with half of their roster in their first or second year.

With the playoff and exhibition experience the women got last year, plus the upcoming Blue Gold Tournament at the beginning of September, the Ooks can only fly upwards.



Photo Credits: TOP: Ana Kostyrko/The Nugget; BOTTOM: Abraham Arrieta/The Nugget; RIGHT TOP: Nino Aguilar/The Nugget; RIGHT BOTTOM: Ana Kostyrko/The Nugget



In fact, last year's Blue Gold Tournament gave the program a head start on 2026-27 recruits.

The Oaks have some experienced returning players, including goalie Ella Howard, who won silver with Great Britain Ice Hockey at the IIHF Women's Worlds Division in Spain last April. Plus, the program has signed two players from British Columbia: Louella Rempel and Kasey Ditner. It'll be a promising season for the ACAC 2024 champion team and head coach Brendan Jensen.

Badminton

First tournament: Oct. 18

NAIT's badminton program is arguably the best in the country right now. The men's doubles won gold at nationals last season and the Oaks brought home bronze in women's singles, women's doubles and mixed doubles.

The athletes performed well at provincials, too, earning three silvers and a gold ACAC win. Head coach Alan Chow also had an ACAC win — 2026 badminton coach of the year. Chow won the same award in 2023.

The team will see a lot of changes, but the success of last season will guarantee some strong recruits who will carry on the wins under award-winning coach Chow and the Oaks' desirable badminton program.

Men's volleyball

Home opener: Oct. 17 vs. Olds College Broncos

2025-26 was a final chapter for many of last season's veteran players, including athletes who won the Oaks their first national championship in over a decade, like player of the year Josh Watson. In total, the Oaks men's volleyball team will be losing 11 players to graduation.

The fourth and fifth-year players who have helped the Oaks volleyball rookies grow have built a legacy, though. The tight-knit team has learned many lessons after placing sixth at provincials last year and being eliminated from bronze semi-finals at nationals.

The Oaks stepping up to lead in 2026-27, like former U19 Team Canada athlete and 2025-26 Oaks recruit Ben Weiss, have proven that they, too, can make an impact against strong opponents. And the program has signed nine new experienced players to help the men gun for gold again. Ben McLaughlin, a left side player from Newfoundland, has a list of athletic achievements and honours, including some gold provincial wins in his teens.

Though it'll be a vastly different year for the Oaks, the program has attracted strong recruits under coach Phil Dixon. Plus, Oaks 2026-27 transfer Jackson Hawkswell will be playing his former team on Oct. 17, which will make for an interesting home opener.

Women's volleyball

Home opener: Oct. 17 vs. Olds College Broncos

The Oaks women's volleyball team took home a provincial bronze last season — their first medal since 2013. Since head coach Erminia Russo Thorpe joined the program in 2021, the women's team has been improving, and there's a great chance they can only go up.

Though some veteran players like Addysen Noble have been lost to graduation, Russo Thorpe is ready to "reload" for another strong year — and she thinks 2026-27 will lead these Oaks to top two.

With CCAA all-Canadian Rachel Mallett and four new recruits on the roster, including international student from Switzerland Lisa Buchard, it's looking good

for the Oaks. Buchard is a "quick and agile" middle with a competitive attitude, and along with the other recruits, could help lead this team to silver or gold.

Men's basketball

Home opener: Oct. 30 vs. St. Mary's University Lightning

The men's team didn't have quite the same success as the women in 2025-26, but head coach Adika Peter-McNeilly has been on the move, scouting young athletes with great potential — like Ross Sheppard graduate Cohen Pratt, a promising young guard who showed continuous improvement on his high school team.

Despite the program not medalling at provincial championships last season, the Oaks men's basketball team is viewed as a strong option for both budding and experienced athletes. The Oaks will gain 11 new recruits for 2026-27, including Pratt. There will be new Oaks from Toronto and Montreal — plus some experienced Albertan players who are excited to join the program. Mathias Gbeblewu, who is returning to Edmonton after playing at Illinois' Augustana College, will be a player to watch.

With Peter-McNeilly's guidance, which has gradually built the Oaks up year by year, and the hype around these new athletes, this season and next will be ones to remember.

Women's basketball

Home opener: Oct. 30 vs. St. Mary's University Lightning

The Oaks women's team will be losing some key players this season to graduation, including Payton Neilson, ACAC's second-leading 2025-26 scorer, and Mikah Reed, who made ACAC history last December with 14 three-point conversions. Neilson and Reed were a dynamic duo for the Oaks, but no fear — things are still looking good for the women.

The program has signed four new athletes, including Ruka Araki, a guard from Shiga, Japan. And it's no wonder the Oaks women's hockey team is a place of interest for an international recruit; the team burned through 2025-26 to make the CCAA semi-finals. Despite the loss of Neilson and Reed, head coach and 2026 CCAA Women's Basketball Coach of the Year Kiera Lyons is here to help the team reach the well-deserved glory they were so close to at nationals last March.

If the women's basketball team continues their trajectory even after losing two iconic athletes, they will be a force to be reckoned with in 2026-27 and beyond. But can these Oaks beat last season's success of being fifth in Canada?

Curling

First tournament: Nov. 20-22

Last year, the men had a strong season, winning a CCAA silver medal and being named the CCAA Second Team All-Stars for the entire team's strength throughout the national championships. Head coach Karynn Flory-Simmons also won CCAA coach of the year, and the Oaks curling program has grown under her leadership.

The program will be losing Oaks director's award recipient Tyler Brodt to graduation, but it's still looking good for the Oaks, whose mixed team won silver at provincials last season.

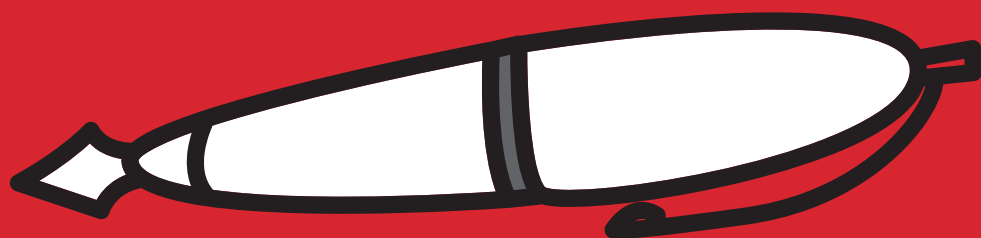
Unstoppable Oaks

Overall, it's as Richey expected for the Oaks. They seem to just be getting better and better. Make sure to follow all the teams on IG to keep up with what they're up to!



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HARD



FROM THE ARCHIVES...

Sept. 10, 1981

Aug. 31, 2004

Sept. 3, 1974

MAIN CAMPUS OFFICES AND SERVICES



LOCATIONS

EDMONTON
Main Campus
11762 - 106 Street nw
Patricia Campus
12204 - 149 Street nw
Souh Campus
7110 Gateway Boulevard nw

SPRUCE GROVE
Spruce Grove Campus
281 Tamarack Drive
Spruce Grove

BUILDINGS

- | | | | |
|------------|--|------------|--|
| A | Industrial Building | L | Continuing Education and Industry Training Centre |
| B | Centre for Manufacturing Solutions | N | Sandvik Coromant Centre for Machinist Technology |
| C | Gateway Mechanical Services Centre for Building Environmental Technology | O | Central Building |
| CAT | Feltham Centre | PIC | Productivity and Innovation Centre |
| D | Alternative Energy Centre | S | Activities Centre |
| E | Technical Building | T | Administration Building |
| F | Medical Wing | U | Learning Resources Centre |
| G | Centre for Chemical Studies | V | Industrial Technical Building |
| H | Electronics Wing | W | Centre for Information and Communications Technology |
| HET | Distribution Centre | X | South Learning Centre |
| J | Centre for Electrical Technology | Y | Spartan Centre for Instrumentation Technology |

OFFICES AND SERVICES

Arena	S-221	NAITrium	J-104	Student Service Centre	CAT-180
Athletics	E-131	NAITSA (NAIT Students' Association)	O-108	Admissions and Enrolment Support	
Centre for Community and Belonging	E-134	Nest Eatery	S-110	Advising and Career Development Services	
Corporate & Continuing Education Welcome Centre	L-159	Nisohkamâtotan Centre	E-121	Funding and Financial Aid Services	
Ernest's	U-121	OneCard	CAT-180N	Pre-Admission Immigration Advising	
Fitness Weight Centre	S-006	Parking Services	CAT-180N	Student Awards	
Gymnasium	E-140	Protective Services	D-104		
Health Services	S-105	Reflection Rooms	CAT-406	Student Study Lounges	U-210
International and Intercultural Community Centre	W-101	Shop AT NAIT	J-209		CAT-200
Learning Services	E-105	Student Artisanal Market	L-024	Study Commons , CAT	CAT-215
Library Services	U-310	Student Counselling	X-114	Study Commons, NAITSA	W-203
			O-120		
			W-111PB		