

Council of Ontario Universities
Academic Colleagues Report
Meeting of Academic Colleagues February 6-7, 2014

Academic Colleagues met for a working dinner on Thursday, February 6 at the COU offices in Toronto. The topic for our dinner conversation was international students. We discussed the current government push to recruit foreign students in light of the lack of government funding to support these students. It is difficult to discern whether MTCU's motivation is a desire to internationalize our campuses or an interest in collecting a per-student fee from the universities for each international student enrolled.

On the morning of Friday, February 7, Academic Colleagues met again at the COU offices. Peter Gooch of COU provided an update on COU and MTCU activities. Paul Genest, special advisor to MTCU, has met with most universities to discuss their Strategic Mandate Agreements. MTCU's process and expectations continue to evolve and it remains unclear how the SMAs will be used. MTCU has announced funding to support the development of a new Centre of Excellence in Online Education. The steering committee being formed to provide direction for the establishment of the Centre includes representatives from colleges, universities, Contact North, and various other organizations and councils. Academic Colleagues discussed the effectiveness of online education and requested support for blended courses in addition to fully online courses.

The Teaching and Learning Task Force asked Academic Colleagues to consider possible metrics based on teaching evaluations. There was consensus that results from teaching evaluations are not an appropriate metric. This will be reported back to the Task Force.

Academic Colleagues heard that COU Executive Committee is concerned about the province's proposed accountability legislation, including the possible requirement that executive compensation be fully disclosed. The Executive Committee considered new anti-spam legislation that comes into effect July 1, 2014; it is unclear how this might impact university recruitment activities. The Executive Committee also discussed Bill 151, an omnibus bill that includes proposed amendments to the MTCU Act. The amendments would strengthen the authority for MTCU to collect personal information about students from universities and colleges. The relationship between this legislation and FIPPA has not been explored.

The next meeting of COU will be held at Lakehead University on April 2-3, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Louise Hill, COU Academic Colleague for Lakehead University