



## MEMORANDUM

To: Barbara H. Eccles, Secretary of Senate  
From: Dr. Douglas Ivison – COU Academic Colleague  
Senate Meeting Date: 2 March 2020  
Subject: COU Academic Colleague Report

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The Academic Colleagues met in the COU offices in Toronto on February 11 & 12.

The topic of discussion for the dinner meeting on February 11 was the role of Academic Colleagues at our various institutions. We compared the ways in which Colleagues report back to their institutions, how they're selected, and their formal relationship with university administration:

- Nearly all Colleagues submit a written report to Senate, some an oral report.
- According to the COU constitution, Academic Colleagues are supposed to be selected by Senate, but in some cases they are essentially appointed by university administration. In one case, the Academic Colleague is selected from amongst the Deans.
- In most cases, the Academic Colleague has no formal relationship with the President, but in a few cases the Colleague meets regularly with President and Provost in advance of COU meetings. In some cases, the Academic Colleague is a member of the Senate Executive Committee (or the equivalent) and/or priorities and planning committees. In most cases, the only formal role of the Academic Colleague is on Senate.

Academic Colleagues are full voting members of the Council of Ontario Universities, along with their respective Executive Head. Academic Colleagues are represented on the COU Executive Committee and other committees (I serve on the Budget and Audit Committee), and are invited to participate in task forces and other bodies such as the Search Committee for the President of COU. However, the role of Academic Colleagues has diminished over time, as reflected in the fact that the full Council now only meets twice yearly for about an hour. Colleagues expressed concern about their role, and expressed a desire to discuss how Colleagues can make a meaningful and productive contribution to COU, and to their institutions. This will be a topic of discussion at the next meeting of Colleagues.

We received updates from COU staff on a number of issues:

- **SMA3:** The second round of discussions has begun with a focus on institution-specific metrics, with final drafts due in late February. Agreements must be signed by late March. The Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) has updated some guidelines, introducing a bit more flexibility. For example, universities may reweight the metrics three times during the term, rather than only once. For institutions that are 'top and steady' (top quartile, less than 2% band of tolerance) in some metrics, the continuous improvement requirement may be waived. In the case of the metrics regarding employment rate, graduation rate, and tri-council funding, 'consistent performers' (institutions that met their performance target for the first three years) will have the continuous improvement requirement waived. The innovation metric has been expanded to foundations and non-profits as well as businesses. The details of the faculty workload metric have been deferred until after the signing of the agreements. COU has recommended that it focus only on teaching and be called teaching activity, be reported in aggregate at the institutional level, and that the results be published by institutions on their own websites.
- **Collaborative Nursing programs:** After extensive lobbying by the colleges, MCU has announced changes to nursing programs. Colleges will now be allowed to offer stand-alone 4-year Bachelor degrees. In cases of existing collaborative programs, both parties will have to negotiate the dissolution of collaborative programs (if desired) and the distribution of seats in those programs. No extra spaces are being created. The MCU argues that this change will promote access to nursing programs in small and rural communities and improve retention in those communities. COU expressed some concern about the impact on existing programs, but also about the potential that this will lead to calls for colleges to offer 4-year degrees in other professions, such as teaching and engineering.
- **Tuition framework for 2021-22:** COU is beginning to plan its engagement with MCU on the development of the new tuition framework. The current framework resulted in a sector-wide loss of \$380 million this year and \$1.1 billion over two years, and the impact of the tuition reduction and freeze will be felt in years to come.
- **Student mental health** is a key priority for COU. The *In it Together* report developed in collaboration with colleges and student groups is being updated and will be launched soon. It will call for more on-campus mental health support; improvements in K-12 mental health support; and more support for students as they transition into and from university.
- **Intellectual Property:** The recently released expert panel report on intellectual property argues that IP is important to the future of Ontario and that the province is failing to successfully commercialize university-developed IP. It recommends better IP education for innovators; better support for capacity for IP knowledge transfer and commercialization; and an emphasis on developing IP within Ontario.

- **Digital Learning:** The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario released a report on Digital Learning, arguing that it can improve student access, improve quality of post-secondary course offerings, and provide more options for students.
- **Student Voices on Sexual Violence survey:** The survey was conducted in 2018, and preliminary results were released in March 2019. As of February 12, MCU had not yet released data to universities, but COU is expecting to receive some further reports which will be posted on the COU website.

The Colleagues next meet in Toronto on April 1 and 2, with the full Council meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Colleagues will continue their discussion regarding their role in COU, and hope to engage Executive Heads on this issue. As well, Colleagues will be discussing the issue of student mental health amongst themselves and at the Council.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Douglas Ivison  
COU Academic Colleague