

## COU Academic Colleagues Meeting Report December 12 & 13, 2017

Academic Colleagues met on December 12 and 13 at the COU office in Toronto. Dr. Bill Cormack, President, University of Guelph Faculty Association provided his reflections on faculty leadership from the perspective of the faculty association at the evening meeting on December 12. Dr. Cormack noted that the provincial government supports postsecondary education and the government is steering and directing the university education system towards performance metrics and accountability frameworks. This causes some tensions between stakeholders, and emboldens the development of top-down change mandates, including changes related to pedagogy. This environment threatens the autonomy of institutions. Dr. Cormack also suggested that faculty members are often kept out of some important campus discussions, such as the SMA process. Faculty senates are not necessarily serving as spaces for open dialogue. It tends to dominate housekeeping activities associated with academic programs rather than discussion on broader issues affecting the institution as a whole. He indicated that one option for addressing this challenge is to dedicate resources to support the development of grass-roots change efforts. Some campus leaders, including Deans, are constrained in their abilities to speak out against misguided initiatives proposed by the government. Faculty associations may have more opportunities to speak out. However, because their mandate is focused on faculty working conditions as articulated in collective agreements, faculty association input is not necessarily valued by institutional leadership. Colleagues discussed some options for enhancing faculty engagement. One suggestion was that faculty and institutions need to be better coordinated. However, it is risky for one institution to resist a government initiative. If all institutions work together, the impact would be magnified. It was suggested that COU and OCUFA could communicate more to affect coordinated initiatives. There are likely many common issues on which the two associations could work together. Colleagues discussed that faculty associations across institutions are diverse, and have different engagement with provincial initiatives. Some may operate from a more reactive position (responding to issues as they relate to the collective agreement). Other associations may comment in a more proactive way, depending on their risk tolerance. Colleagues noted that a division traditionally exists between faculty (labour) and management (administration). If issues are addressed from within this framework, resolutions will continue to be challenging. One suggestion considered by colleagues was that senate meetings could be reinvigorated by providing time for broader academic discussions. Colleagues posed the question: how can the structures and processes of collegial governance be improved? Discussions at senate meetings may be structured around concrete topics and issues, rather than more general concerns. The conversation could be more productive if senate members are focused. Colleagues indicated support for faculty associations to take a more active role in discussions related to change initiatives. It was also suggested that Colleagues and faculty association representatives might benefit from more frequent conversations. Colleagues noted the importance of challenging the traditional divide between labour and management. This framework is hard to disrupt, but it will be helpful to move away from a framework established on division. Colleagues reflected that faculty associations are very different across the sector. It may be useful to hear from an OCUFA representative so that we hear the range of perspectives. Colleagues are interested in inviting the current OCUFA president to an upcoming meeting. Colleagues indicated interest in thinking and talking about how they can play a role in bridging the gap between faculty and administration. Colleagues are interested in talking with a (former) university board chair or board member because they can provide important perspectives on issues discussed earlier.

Meeting on December 13<sup>th</sup> concerned several topics: **1) OCAV (Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents) Task Force on Quality Indicators.** Its proposal for SMA2 metrics were approved and included in the SMA2 process. OCAV members noted the

importance of developing better metrics for SMA3, which will likely be attached to some performance-based funding. **2) Sexual Violence Climate Survey.** Universities have initiated ethics review for the climate survey. Feedbacks have been collected from some focus groups, as well as college and university staff. Universities are supportive of this initiative and the goal of eliminating sexual violence from campus. **3) Graduate Programs Outcomes Survey (GPOS).** A total of 37,784 Master's and PhD graduates in the cohorts of 2009-2014 responded to the survey and the results are very positive. Highlights of results are, i) The median salary for full-time PhD graduate is about \$95,000, ii) Median salary for master's graduates is about \$88,000, iii) Employment rates across the cohorts averaged 97%. **4) Faculty at Work Project Update.** Mike Snowdon (COU Senior Policy and Data analyst) provided an overview of findings from the Faculty at Work survey project. Highlights are as follows: i) Roughly half of faculty included in the data set are part-time (52%). ii) The highest proportion of part time faculty are in education and law; the lowest are in engineering and sciences. iii) Approximately 45% of teaching is done by part time faculty (mostly at the undergraduate level). **5) Overview of the Landscape of Accessibility Project.** Dr. Mahadeo Sukhai described the project currently underway through the National Educational Association of Disabled Students. The main goal of this project is to close the gap in postsecondary education opportunities between Ontarians with and without disabilities. Most universities have seen a rise in the number of students with reported disabilities. Recent research has shown that 40% of students with disabilities live with multiple disabilities. Much progress has been made with respect to universal design and accommodations, but there is still work to do. This project will provide information on best practices in place across Canada. This presentation was followed by several committee reports. The meeting ended at 3:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Azim Mallik  
Academic Colleague