

Report on Academic Colleagues meeting  
February 16-17, 2017

The last Academic Colleagues meeting was held at the COU office in Toronto. At the working dinner (6 – 9 pm) on February 16th we had a lively discussion primarily focused on experiential learning. This is a concern based on the perception that the university graduates are i) not engaged in the wider community and ii) ill equipped with readily transferable skill sets that match employer expectations. Although it has been acknowledged that unlike community college, university offers holistic education but the university graduates are not able to properly articulate their abilities and fit to the jobs they apply for. University transcripts are not sufficient for the potential employers to judge how they would be a good fit for the position. The employers want to know more about the candidates over and above the data in their transcripts, which merely list the courses taken and grades obtained. Many employers argue that the academic transcript is little or no use in determining whether an applicant has the skills required to succeed in a specific position. Co-curricular transcripts (CCTs), competency transcripts, experiential transcripts and data enabled electronic transcripts can together create a new generation of electronic credentials that can better inform the potential employers. Many universities in the US (Northern Arizona, Santiago State, SUNY, Elton) and Canada (Wilfred Laurier, McMaster, and Lakehead University) have already developed such credentials for their graduates by officially recognizing their community engagement, experiential learning, communication skills. In the discussion concern was raised that often the potential employers are not willing to take the time to read through lengthy accounts of their experiential learning. In Ontario Wilfred Laurier University is leading the way with their innovative co-curricular activities for all graduates with a variety of experiential learning records such as volunteer activities in communities, research internships, part-time jobs, athletic and co-op programs etc. The CCTs and electronic transcripts do not have to be uniform across the university system and universities may create their own co-curricular program for student engagement based on their strengths considering an outcome based broad conceptual framework.

Co-curricular learning also dominated the meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> starting with a presentation from Peter Gooch, who reported that the ministry wants to see all Ontario university students to have at least one experiential learning opportunity that will reflect their community engagement, leadership and communication skills before they graduate. Mr. Gooch also talked about undergraduate enrolment and funding. Consistent enrolment increase over 3% or consistent decrease below 4% may result in funding cut but the ministry is receptive to increased masters and doctoral programs. The ministry will be looking for outcome based funding in the future. System wide differentiation implementation will be considered based on student experience, teaching and research excellence, accessibility etc. Incorporation of indigenous contents (accessibility, culture, natural resource conservation, language, justice system) in the curricula was another topic widely discussed. Mandates of Indigenous Educational Working group was discussed with a possibility of inviting an indigenous leader for a presentation at next meeting

The next meeting will be held in April at McMaster University in conjunction with the Council meeting.

Respectfully submitted

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