

Academic Colleagues Report for Senate

Academic Colleagues met in Toronto on Thursday, December 15 and Friday, December 16, 2011. Since Lakehead University's Academic Colleague, Tony Bauer, was unable to attend, Mary Louise Hill attended the meetings as Lakehead's Alternate Academic Colleague.

On Thursday evening Colleagues heard a presentation by guest speaker Carolyn Eyles about McMaster University's iSci program, an elite undergraduate program for 40 gifted students integrating research into undergraduate science education. The program is costly due to its high faculty/student ratio, but otherwise seems successful. In the long term, programs like this may have positive impact on recruitment of high-achieving undergraduate science majors.

On Friday morning, COU staff member Peter Gooch updated Colleagues on COU affairs. COU is focused on working with the new government on a) a tuition framework, b) mandate agreements, and c) graduate expansion. a) Dire predictions for Ontario's revenue growth may require long-lasting government spending constraints and as a consequence tuition may be allowed to increase up to 5% annually. In Ontario, tuition now covers about 50% of university operating costs. b) The new minister (MTCU) has not yet started working on differentiation and strategic mandates. COU does not want to see the categorization of Ontario universities or required government approval for mandates (e.g. new programs). c) Some universities have not met their graduate expansion targets yet while others have exceeded their targets. The government has committed to a 6000 seat increase over 5 years beginning in 2012-13. Peter Gooch also reported that the Auditor General will audit Ontario universities for value for money. Three or four universities will be chosen for field visits and detailed audits. These audits will begin soon with a report due by the end of 2012.

Colleagues then reported on the activities of various COU committees (Executive Committee, Working Group on Financial Assistance, Audit Committee, Graduate Expansion, OUAC, Quality Assurance, Government and Community Relations, and the Teaching and Learning Committee). Colleagues also worked together on discussion papers that are in progress, including a paper on changes to federal granting agency practices that will be presented to Council in April. A discussion paper on undergraduate research is planned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Louise Hill
Alternate Academic Colleague for Lakehead University