

COU Academic Colleagues Report
For Lakehead University Senate Meeting on October 19, 2012

COU Academic Colleagues met in Toronto on Friday, September 28, 2012 for an orientation and retreat. New Colleagues were welcomed and introduced, and then given overviews on the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) and the role of Academic Colleagues.

The Council of Ontario Universities consists of the President (or Principal) of each of the 20 provincially assisted universities in Ontario plus one colleague from each of these universities, selected by the academic senate ("Academic Colleagues"). The purpose of the Council is to promote cooperation among the provincially assisted universities of Ontario and between the universities and the provincial government, and generally to work for improvement in higher education in Ontario. COU is independent of the provincial government and has existed in one form or another since 1962. Currently the Council as a whole meets twice each year.

In addition to attending and voting in Council meetings, Academic Colleagues meet 5 times each year to discuss action within Council and matters that affect the wider university community. Often these thoughtful discussions lead to Academic Colleagues Discussion Papers, written collaboratively under the leadership of one or two Colleagues and presented to Council for discussion at one of their 2 meetings each year. Academic Colleagues also serve on COU standing committees, task forces and working groups. At this meeting I was elected to serve on the COU Teaching and Learning Task Force. At each meeting Academic Colleagues are updated by COU staff on initiatives and issues within the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) as they pertain to the university sector. Finally, Academic Colleagues are expected to report to their respective academic senates on COU activities.

COU staff updated Academic Colleagues on the Minister's call for "accelerated change" in the Ontario university sector and the requirement that each university submit a strategic mandate agreement (SMA) by the end of September for review by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO). Each university worked independently on their SMA, which was to focus on innovation to create productivity improvements.

The first Council meeting of the year and the next meeting of Academic Colleagues are scheduled for Thursday, October 11, 2012 in Toronto.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Louise Hill
COU Academic Colleague for Lakehead University