



MEMORANDUM

To: Barbara H. Eccles, Secretary of Senate
From: Dr. Douglas Ivison – COU Academic Colleague
Senate Meeting Date: 11 May 2020
Subject: COU Academic Colleague Report

The Academic Colleagues held a Zoom meeting on April 23, during which we discussed our personal and institutional experiences during the rapid transition to online and remote instruction for the final weeks of the Winter term; the impact on faculty of the lockdown (particularly the impact on faculty workload and faculty research); the role of Senate (or the equivalent) and faculty members in decision-making as universities responded to covid-19; and possibilities for 2020-21.

The Colleagues also received a report from COU staff on its response to covid-19. COU, Executive Heads, and COU affiliate groups have been meeting frequently since early March to work on rapidly evolving issues related to the covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to sharing and coordinating responses to the situation, the COU advocated for emergency student financial support; policies to support research and innovation; supports for moving to online program delivery; and funding and other supports to ensure the financial stability of universities.

The Ministry of Colleges and Universities responded to this advocacy by providing \$25 million in emergency relief funding for colleges, universities, and Indigenous institutes; postponing the implementation of SMA3 and outcomes-based funding until “Ontario has reasonably moved past the current covid-19 outbreak;” and committing to continue to process payments for all current Ontario Research Fund and Early Researcher Award programs’ projects. In addition, federal and provincial governments suspended student loan repayments and interest until September 30, 2020.

Working with the Executive Heads, COU created better structures to coordinate and respond to issues related to covid-19. COU ensured that each institution identified individuals to help COU manage and provide data to respond to provincial government requests for information; identify appropriate experts from within the sector, or their institution, who can assist in work related to covid-19; ensure that institutions are informed of new information and policy directions; and facilitate information-sharing among member institutions.

Executive Heads also approved the creation of three working groups to help guide the sector’s planning and advocacy on student supports, alternative program delivery, and

government relations. An Academic Colleague will be appointed to the Working Group on Alternative Program Delivery.

In addition to the above work on covid-19, the search for a new COU President and CEO continues. One Academic Colleague is serving on the Search Committee, and Academic Colleagues were given an opportunity to provide feedback on the position description. In addition, as full members of the Council, Academic Colleagues will have individual 30-minute discussions with the executive search consultants handling the search to discuss the role of the President and CEO.

The Academic Colleagues will be holding their last scheduled meeting of 2019-20 via Zoom on May 13.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Douglas Ivison
COU Academic Colleague