



MEMORANDUM

To: Barbara H. Eccles, Secretary of Senate
From: Dr. Douglas Ivison – COU Academic Colleague
Senate Meeting Date: 4 November 2019
Subject: COU Academic Colleague Report

The Academic Colleagues met in the COU offices in Toronto on September 25.

The bulk of the meeting was preparation for Colleagues' discussion with Executive Heads at the Council of Universities meeting that afternoon. The Colleagues were asked to present their feedback on **COU Thought Leadership**, and to review how their universities' strategic plans aligned with the Thought Leadership draft themes circulated in advance of the meeting. After discussion, colleagues raised concerns about some of the themes, which seemed more concerned with the operational issues, mitigating risk, and government relations than with envisioning the role of universities as sources of intellectual leadership in the coming decade(s).

Colleagues identified a number of themes (aligned with universities' strategic plans) on which university could be 'thought leaders', including environmental sustainability; reconciliation and indigenization; diversity; global engagement; and citizenship. In doing so, they emphasized the key role that engaged teaching and research serve in helping to provide such 'thought leadership.' They emphasized the importance of interdisciplinary teaching and research and of lifelong learning in producing learning and teaching outcomes that serve individual and societal needs, and challenged a more utilitarian or functional view of university teaching and research.

Colleagues shared their perspective on the Thought Leadership draft themes at the meeting of the Council of Ontario Universities in the context of the preparation for the **Ontario Universities Summit** on September 26. Initially Academic Colleagues were not invited to the Summit, but after Colleagues raised strong objections to this exclusion, the two Colleagues serving on the COU Executive Committee were invited to attend. I will hopefully have more to report on their experience at the Summit at the next Senate meeting.

In other business, COU staff provided the Colleagues with updates on the following:

- The ongoing **COU Affiliate Review**: COU affiliate members were consulted about the current structures and practices of COU. Members were generally appreciative of the opportunity to share ideas and best practices with colleagues from across the Ontario university sector, but there was consensus that a stronger sense of

priorities and better communication were needed. Given the current government's tendency to provide short consultation periods, COU needs to be better able to respond quickly to government initiatives and requests, and the university sector needs to develop the capacity to be more proactive, rather than reactive, in policy development.

- **Strategic Mandate Agreement 3:** Academic Colleagues were provided an update on the SMA3 timeline, culminating with finalized SMA agreements at the end of March 2020. Current priorities for the sector are determining the metrics on faculty workload; skills and competencies; and innovation. On September 30, Ontario universities submitted a document to the MTCU recommending that the faculty workload reporting metric only include teaching activity of full-time faculty members, that data be aggregated at the institution level, and that the metric be reported on institutional websites to allow for institution-specific narrative and context.

After the meeting concluded, Colleagues attended a reception launching the Ontario Universities Summit. It featured brief speeches by provincial government ministers and the opposition critic for post-secondary education.

The Academic Colleagues next meet in Toronto on December 10 and 11.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Douglas Ivison
COU Academic Colleague