

COU Academic Colleague's Report

June 2008

Academic Colleagues met in Toronto on Friday, May 23, 2008. Colleagues heard about recent meetings of the COU Executive Committee and COU Budget Committee. Although the COU annual budget is typically approved at the spring meeting of Council, the budget will be presented to Council for approval by teleconference this year due to some financial irregularities that have been under investigation.

Jamie Mackay (COU) updated Colleagues on several issues facing COU and the Executive Heads. There is continuing concern about operating grants for Ontario universities. Recently released NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) results indicate that there is less engagement between faculty and students at universities in Canada compared to those in the U.S., possibly due to the much higher student/faculty ratio in Canada. Quality issues such as this were not addressed in this year's provincial budget, although there was new funding for facilities renewal. COU plans to make increases in university operating grants its top advocacy issue this year.

As of May 22, 2008, secondary school confirmations (acceptance of university offers of admission) were up 8% over last year. This increase exceeded expectations based on the number of applications and offers made this year. MTCU is consulting with universities on potential policy directions for operating grants, and funding formula review is being discussed. However, there is little appetite for this exercise at the present time; universities need more funding rather than more discussion regarding how best to divide the insufficient funding that currently exists.

The latest Academic Colleagues Working Paper, "The Challenge of Participatory Technologies for Teaching and Learning at Ontario Universities", by Sylvie Albert (Laurentian University) and Brian Campbell (UOIT) will be available on the COU website soon. Next year, Colleagues will prepare working papers on accommodations for students with disabilities, and on college-university pathways and collaborations.

Respectfully submitted,

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