

Report on Academic Colleagues' Meeting

COU Office, Toronto, February 13, 2009

1) Executive Committee Update

- a) John Ronson of Courtyard Group hired by the Ontario Government to develop a long-term approach to investing in university infrastructure is preparing his report after visiting all the university campuses. A technical advisory group (university) has been discussing the government approach in developing long-term capital plan considering 1) demand and enrolment growth projection, 2) labour market information, 3) educational trend, 4) current infrastructure, 5) capital financing and 6) space management.
- b) Applications received this year from secondary school students were increased by 1.1% (84,300 students) and that from non-secondary school students by 9.9% (21,188) over 2008.
- c) Accommodating accessibility for disabled persons will result 10-15% increases in cost for new buildings and renovation of old buildings.
- d) Universities are anxious to know from the MTCU about the graduate students' allocation for expansion and system design.
- e) MTCU is very interested in discussing the draft paper on greater articulation with colleges (Alister Sommer, Chair)

2) Budget and Audit Subcommittee Report

- i) Application centre is on budget. Others are in a deficit.
- ii) OCGS deficit is \$300K; increased fees for member organizations is being considered
- iii) IUTS (interlibrary loans) deficit is \$500K
- iv) COU deficit is running about \$423K deficit.

Based salary freeze for COU staff, plus other cost cutting measures implemented. COU is putting bid for a new accountant. Implemented enhanced monitoring and enforcement rules.

3) Quality Assurance Task Force

- a) Significant changes are underway for quality assurance at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Oversight of the graduate quality assurance is transitioning to the OCAV from the OCGS.
- b) New guidelines for graduate and undergraduate quality assurance are being prepared.
- c) A separate body called Ontario Universities' Council on Quality Assurance (OUCQA) will be established to ensure academic quality and accountability in Ontario universities.

d) Taskforce on Quality Assurance hopes to release its report by March 2009.

4. Colleague's Paper on Ontario Transfer Credit System (Philippe Constanlineau, RMC)

Second draft of this paper was discussed. The following are the highlights:

- a) Existing credit transfer system is arbitrary and unsatisfactory. It rarely involves academic departments and often done in most institutions by one office staff.
- b) Block transfer of credit without specific names of the courses in the transcript makes it impossible to assess the qualification.
- c) British Columbia and Alberta have names of credit transfer courses in the transcript and maintain a database. Ontario does not mention course names nor it maintains a data base.
- d) Credit transfer is made based on subjective consideration such number of as hours of instruction not quality of instruction or instructor's qualification.

5. COU Update (Paul Genest, President, COU)

- a) Deferred maintenance remains a serious challenge for the university. Quick start project with new construction is attractive to stimulus package funding.
- b) System wide deficit in Ontario universities is \$510M. Responsible Ministers are made aware of this.
- c) Ontario Premier considers universities as key vehicle for infrastructure spending. He recognizes the need for training more graduate students. Ontario tuition fees are lower than the United States.
- d) Increased growth in GTA but one-third of the GTA students apply outside GTA.
- e) Opportunities for growth in Aboriginal higher education.
- f) Economic meltdown is jeopardizing university sustainability. Meeting pension obligation has been difficult. Ontario universities are faced with \$560M pension deficit. Universities are seeking relief on or exemption of solvency obligation.
- g) There is a working group seeking long-term solution to this very pressing issue. Increase in tuition fees being considered as part of the solution.

Respectfully submitted,

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