

Report on the COU Academic Colleague and Council Meetings

York University, Toronto, April 2-3, 2009

The academic colleagues (AC) met in the afternoon of April 22, 2009 and in the morning (7:30 to 9:00 a.m.) of April 3, 2009 followed by a full council meeting from 9:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. Highlights of these meetings are as follows:

1) Executive Committee Update

In the recently announced graduate space allocation “have not” institutions did not do well. It appears that the decision was based on a classification of Ontario universities – research intensive and others. It created unhappiness among the smaller institutions.

MTCU has been pressing ahead in designing and implementing a system for Credit Transfer and Student Mobility across the province. MTCU Deputy Minister Debra Newman is leading the initiative. A Pathway Steering Committee has been formed. The current timeline is an incremental roll-out of a province-wide system beginning in September 2009 with full implementation by 2012. The steering committee consists of three representatives from universities including Alastair Summerlee, President, University of Guelph and three representatives from COU. The first steering committee meeting was held on March 24, 2009, that identified the need for a) respecting the existing bilateral articulation agreements, b) ensuring not only content and quality but also the constraints imposed by professional accreditation bodies, and c) explicit account of cost associated with the transfer. Dr. Philippe Constantineau presented a colleague paper on this very subject at the council meeting.

2) Colleagues Subcommittee Updates

John Logan reported that the current auditing firm of COU is providing satisfactory service in bringing transparency and accountability. Brian Camble reported from the government relations committee that three topics dominated their agenda: i) infrastructure, ii) operating funds, and iii) tuition. He suggested that working with the government in a conciliatory fashion is a desirable approach to get the best results for the university.

Quality Assurance Task Force update was provided by Marilyn Rose who noted that a draft terms of reference for establishing, monitoring and overseeing the process for both undergraduate and graduate program would be available for comments in October 2009. Implementation of the guidelines is scheduled for September 1, 2010. University community should review this document carefully and comment on it as there are many changes proposed.

3) Second AC Meeting

The issue of sessional and part-time instructors were discussed and debated with respect to dignity of labour and exploiting the vulnerability of these colleagues. It became clear that treatment of this workforce varies across the universities and disciplines. Interest was expressed to develop a colleague’s paper on this subject.

4) COU President Brief

Budget was better than expected in a difficult time. Next year’s budget will have a higher allocation for five years. Ontario introduced the concept of academic (university) infrastructure in the federal stimulus package. There is a shortfall of \$560M in the university pension plan. COU is asking for a regulatory relief of solvency obligation on the argument that universities are unlikely to go out of business. The government is not open to sector-specific pension

solution for universities only. However, the 2009 budget included some enhancements which will reduce the deficit from \$560M to \$330M.

5. Council Meeting

COU Holding Association Inc. Annual General Meeting passed an increase of \$10 (9.5%) application fees. Quality Assurance Task Force Chair, Dr. Neil Gold, presented a draft Policy Directions and Summary of Major Elements of the New Quality Assurance Framework. Defining New Program has been challenging. Implications for initiating new programs and substantially changing an existing program was discussed. Onus is on the university to make a convincing case for the renewal of their programs.

Drs. Peter World and Judy Brilnell made a presentation on Teaching and Learning Initiatives. They emphasized the value of Scholarship of teaching and learning.

6. Academic Colleagues paper

On behalf of the AC, I volunteered to introduce the Colleagues Working paper entitled *The Ontario Transfer Credit System: A Situation Report* by Dr. Philippe Constantineau of Royal Military College. This is a very timely document as MTCU is actively engaged in developing and implementing a system wide policy for credit transfer and student mobility between colleges and universities. The author argued that since all colleges and universities in Canada belong to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), universities have an obligation to allow credit transfer from colleges to universities. The paper first examined the existing credit transfer system across the country from a historical perspective, then highlighted the challenges and opportunities in the existing system, and ended with recommendations as to how Ontario should move forward to enhance the credit transfer systems in a practical and cost-effective manner. The existing credit transfer system in Canada can be divided into three categories: i) transfer by *design*, ii) *entrepreneurial* response and iii) *student driven*. British Columbia, Alberta, and to some extent, Quebec credit transfer happens by *design* while in Ontario it occurs through *entrepreneurial* and *student driven* processes. The author attributed this difference to the historical development of universities and colleges between the western provinces and that of Ontario. His research indicates that community college programs in western provinces were designed to “ladder” into university programs. Ontario universities differ in their academic regulations, residency time and minimum grade requirements and maintain their individual autonomy. In Ontario college credit transfer is often initiated by the community colleges through bilateral articulation agreements. Some universities offer portfolio assessment services where a college student or a mature student’s portfolio is assessed for university credit transfer in exchange of a fee (the student driven approach). The author suggests that because of the autonomy and difference in tradition among the Ontario universities devising and implementing a unified system wide policy would be very difficult. Instead, he recommends a) enhancement of best management practice by building on the existing bilateral articulation agreements, b) refining student driven course assessment by academics, c) avoiding the currently used block transfer, and d) recognizing PLAR. He strongly suggests developing a pan-Canadian data base for the college transfer system to be used by the universities and colleges in Canada.

Respectfully submitted,

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