

Report on the COU Academic Colleague and Council Meetings

COU Office, Toronto

October 15-16, 2009

John Logan (Carleton) and Sylvie Albert (Laurentian) as new Academic Colleagues (AC) Co-chairs chaired the AC meetings on October 15th and 16th.

Bonny Patterson, a former President of COU (1995-98) and most recently President of Trent University has become the Interim President of COU following Paul Genest's resignation. Dr. Genest became the Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of Ontario and Associate Secretary of the Cabinet. Search for the new COU President is underway.

John Logan provided the COU Executive Committee updates based on a two-hour conference call on September 11, with the committee members. Highlights of the discussion were 1) University Pensions. Ontario Government and investment managers are in discussion to find ways to achieve economy of scale. Government wants to merge university pensions. An actuarial study report at a cost of \$250,000 is forthcoming.

Ontario Research Chairs symposium held at University of Toronto on October 2, 2009 was a success and the government has created three more Ontario Research Chairs on i) renewable energy and human health (1 chair), ii) green energy and engineering (2 chairs). These new chairs will be recruited by March 2010. Quality Assurance Report was reviewed but not all recommendations were accepted as is by the OCAV. Discussion is underway on making academic accommodations to create star athletes, management of enrolment growth in GTA, e-learning, university capital funding, tuition policy and credit transfer. The government is very keen on developing a broad mechanism of enhancing college transfer (Pathway). Government is more inclined to have consultation with the COU rather than universities. The ministry appears to be in favour of university differentiation i.e. the big five (research intensive) and the rest.

Government Relations Standing Committee of the COU reported on a survey conducted by HEQAO. It revealed that in general people think positively about post-secondary institutions, However, people do not feel that universities are playing a big role in the economy nor research at the universities making a big impact on economy. They say that university's primary role, is to providing education and universities should enhance the quality of student experience (facility, service, social support). Seventy percent of students believe current tuition fees are high.

At the 7:30 a.m. meeting of the AC of October 16th, a COU presentation gave an issues update: College transfer is high on government agenda, on which, a descriptive framework is being prepared. Government wants more general approach to college transfer based on learning outcome. OCAV will set up a working group to examine the option of program to program transfer than course by course credit transfer. Executive Heads will approach the government supporting the government position on access and quality but concerns are expressed on the facts that CPI/BIUs are not inflation adjusted, class size increase and sessionals increase compromise quality.

Highlights of COU Council Meeting

Executive Director of Quality Assurance discussed issues on sustainable multiyear funding for universities, university pensions, University Day at Queen's Park and credit transfer. Three western provinces met to discuss university sports and student accommodation.

Executive Heads are very concerned about government decisions on university pension plans. Seven universities are facing solvency problem. It may double the liability of universities affecting their long-term sustainability. A working group is formed to make recommendations to the government. Reaching higher two emphasized growth, quality, multiyear university growth and accountability arrangement. OCAV will finalize the Quality Assurance report and bring out the implementation plan.

New President of AUCC, Paul Davidson, gave his introduction and national overview: Atlantic Canada is currently undertaking a higher education review, Quebec wants more government control on universities. AUCC will advocate for knowledge infrastructure as direct funding for research increased 400% within last several years but infrastructure support has not grown much. It will advocate for increased international student recruitment. He quoted that Australia has done very well in this regards and Canada has fallen behind.

John Logan introduced a colleague's paper written by Marilyn Rose (Brock) on Academic Accommodation of Graduate Students with Disabilities. The full paper will be on COU website in early November. In addition to periodic full papers, Academic Colleagues proposed mini colleagues papers (one page each) based on emerging issues. Titles of 12 such minipapers were circulated among the Executive Heads and they expressed strong interest in these mini colleagues papers.

Respectfully submitted,



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