

## **COU Academic Colleagues Meeting Report April 11 & 12, 2018**

University of Windsor was the host of the last Academic Colleagues (AC) and COU Council meetings held on April 11 and 12. Colleagues developed the following question for discussion at the Council Meeting:

“To what extent and in what ways will individual faculty members, academic departments and senior management have to function differently as a result of the objectives negotiated in the SMAs?”

After discussing various options Colleagues decided that at the Council meeting the Co-Chairs would provide a brief introduction and then put the question to the group comprising AC and Executive Heads. Each lunch table discussed the question and reported back to the larger group. Take home messages were as follows:

Faculty have not necessarily been involved in the development of SMAs. Do faculty need to be involved? Some might say no—the SMAs are administrative document and we may not want all faculty to be involved in the policy development process. Maybe the leadership will protect faculty and let them do their jobs (teaching and research). However, faculty need support for implementing any changes. Clear and accurate information should be communicated to faculty and across campuses. SMA1 was focused on programs and graduate caps. Except those interested in new programs faculty involvement was very little. SMA2 had more time for development, but universities may have decided not to change much. SMA3 could look very different if we have a change of government. The current metrics may not generate a lot of enthusiasm for faculty; a different set of metrics may be more worrisome. Curriculum mapping is something departments may be asked to do and few faculty may know how to do this. There are regional differences we should acknowledge which, may result in advocacy differences. For example, in the north, there may be advocacy regarding first generation students (including Indigenous), students needing accommodation, and bilingual communities. Differentiation factors need to remain priorities; this might shift with a new government. If it is important to actually achieve metrics, how are faculty engaged to impact this achievement? There are ways to approach this with right support people in place. How will we adapt to respond to forthcoming changes? One of the mandated changes is that we have to provide programs that attract students. This may be our biggest challenge. We have seen an increase in accountability in our context (SMAs are a good example). This is not a game-changer—it is a focus on more specified data regarding objectives and consequences. It is a sharpening of the accountability environment, at every level specified data need to be gathered. Ultimately, “what counts” is what you can count. However, there’s much we can’t count, that counts. Information should be provided how the faculty can be engaged. Colleagues talked about follow-up questions such as:

“What have executive heads (EHs) done to communicate the SMAs on their own campuses? How has the process involved or engaged faculties? If EHs need Colleagues to speak up, how can we help? What changes might the election bring? How does this affect us?”

There may be workload implications. It may be necessary to align policies with the goals of the SMA. Possible barriers need to be addressed. Experiential learning is a good example: what are all the layers that will be impacted? Pilot projects are another example. Belief is critical, what do EHs believe?

Retention rates will be important and engaging faculty will be helpful in meeting goals. A focus on retention can lead to competition between departments who will try to retain all students, despite the fact that there may be a better fit somewhere else (in a different department or program). Getting involved and talking to faculty can help avoid some possible mis-steps. Are there opportunities in the SMAs? What should we leverage? Might they be used to assist EHs to implement needed change?

Colleagues were generally pleased with the discussion. Some of the tables had only one EH, which meant not hearing multiple perspectives. It is important to have a strong EH turnout. The format of discussion tables was useful. Some of the comments from the tables were discussed. For some, the SMAs represent business-as-usual--a formalization of things that have been developing over several years. Many talked about the election and the changes it might bring.

## COU Update

*International Strategy:* The Ministry is finalizing its internationalization strategy document. A draft was made available to COU. COU recommended a broad approach, with a focus on economic development in the province. The early drafts focused more on risk mitigation and regulation. The 2018 Ontario Budget emphasised Internationalization, Domestic student scholarships to study abroad, International student support services and Promotion of French language education.

*Sexual Violence:* The Student Voices on Sexual Violence Survey was conducted from February 26 – March 26, 2018 involving graduate students. Data will likely be available to universities late in the summer.

*SMAs and Metrics:* SMA3 is likely to include metrics tied to funding. Negotiations on SMA3 are expected to begin in winter, 2019.

*Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act:* COU has been working with a small number of universities to understand the potential impacts of the legislation.

*Career Ready Fund:* On behalf of members, COU proposed a website that will provide information to employers who may be seeking opportunities to develop experiential learning opportunities for students.

*Ontario Budget 2018:* The budget was released on March 28. COU provided a summary to members. The budget included only a few PSE announcements: Increases to MAESD (\$660M) to cover increases in OSAP costs and the new Talent Advantage Investments; \$3B in capital investments (over ten years); \$132 M over three years for the Talent Advantage Investments; \$125M (colleges) and \$32 M (universities) one time funding to support quality and student outcomes; and \$11.7M in mental health funding to support mental health workers on PSE campuses. The government indicated support for the new French language university, and Indigenous institutes.

*Election 2018:* The COU Government Relations team is working to provide information to all candidates. Though the outcome of the election may result in some changes, COU anticipates that SMAs and metrics tied to funding will be retained.

*Planning for 2018-19.* Colleagues discussed topics of interest for next year's meetings, including the following: Academic freedom and freedom of expression; University collegial governance (the roles of

senates, boards and unions); Student mental health—trends, issues and resources; Tensions between principles of access and excellence; and Internationalization.

The meeting ended at 3:30 pm. The next council meeting is at Queens University.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Azim Mallik". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Azim Mallik  
Academic Colleague