

Council of Ontario Universities
Academic Colleagues Report
October 2015

The 300th meeting of the Council of Ontario Universities was held in Toronto on Thursday, October 15, 2015. Patrick Deane, President of McMaster University and the new Chair of Council, opened the meeting by welcoming new Executive Heads and Academic Colleagues to Council.

During the first hour of the meeting, Council engaged in a discussion about experiential learning. Academic Colleagues took time the evening and morning before the Council meeting to prepare a brief presentation with emphasis on defining the breadth and diversity of experiential learning, ensuring sufficient resources for good management and sustainability of experiential learning programs, and coordinating a communication strategy among Ontario universities about the benefits of experiential learning not just to students but also to communities. In the ensuing discussion, the need for appropriate metrics for experiential education was identified, with a suggestion that perhaps a registrarial code be used to identify experiential courses.

After this discussion, Jennifer Grass, Senior Director of Communications and Public Affairs at COU, revealed the new COU logo to Council. The new logo will be implemented immediately on electronic media and will appear on the wall of the new COU offices on the 18th floor of 180 Dundas Street West when they move in on April 25, 2016.

Council approved a recommendation from the Committee on Nominations regarding appointment of Academic Colleagues to the COU Executive Committee, and I was re-appointed to Executive Committee for a two-year term.

In the President's report, Bonnie Patterson spoke about a meeting with the Premier when they discussed student experiences and a broader understanding of the role of universities beyond preparing the future workforce, including also contributions of universities to economic, cultural and other aspects of society. The Premier will be invited to join the COU Executive Committee meeting in November. Bonnie spoke to Council about a proposal for redesigning the university funding formula that was signed by every Ontario university president and submitted to Sue Herbert (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities). Bonnie also commented on Bill 126, a private member's bill in the Ontario legislature asking for more data about universities; it turns out that all of this data is currently available with the only exception being employer satisfaction with our graduates.

Paul Davidson reported on behalf of Universities Canada (formerly AUCC). He applauded the success of Canadian researchers, including the Noble Prize awarded to a Queens University physicist and the enormous contribution of a Canadian Ebola vaccine to saving lives.

COU presented a document on Strategic Directions and Priorities that was developed by COU's Senior Management Committee and reflected the direction of Executive Heads over the past year. The key priorities for 2015-16 are improving co-operation with government, financial sustainability and flexibility, communicating the value and contribution of universities, and member services and supports. The areas of strategic focus for the coming year will align with these priorities.

On Thursday evening the David C. Smith award was presented to Alastair Summerlee, former President of Guelph University and former Chair of COU, for his many contributions to higher education.

The next Council meeting will be held on Thursday, April 7, 2016 at Ryerson University.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Louise Hill
Academic Colleague for Lakehead University