

Council of Ontario Universities  
Academic Colleagues Report  
Meeting of Academic Colleagues February 26-27, 2015

Academic Colleagues met for a working dinner on Thursday, February 26 at the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) offices in Toronto. We were joined by our invited guest Jonathan Hamilton-Diablo (Director, Aboriginal Student Services, University of Toronto) who made a presentation and led us in a discussion about academic support and other services for Aboriginal students at Ontario universities. We were reminded that Aboriginal students arrive on our campuses with very different educational experiences, backgrounds, cultures and expectations, and that building trust with communities and students begins with early engagement long before students arrive on campus.

On the morning of Friday, February 27, Academic Colleagues met again at the COU offices. Peter Gooch (COU) provided an update on COU and Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) activities. We heard about MTCU's funding formula review which was announced publicly this month. The review process will be led by Sue Herbert and will involve consultations with employers and other stakeholders in addition to consultations with universities. We heard that MTCU would like to expand its survey of graduates of Ontario universities to include graduates of postgraduate programs. Currently, MTCU surveys graduates of undergraduate programs two years following graduation and posts detailed results on their website. MTCU has made an additional \$500,000 available to support the development of additional online courses and modules as part of its Ontario Online initiative bringing the total funding for online courses and modules to \$6.5 million for 2014-15.

Jennifer Grass (COU) also provided an update on communications and legislation. COU's Reference Group on Sexual Violence was working to provide information and advice to the Premier's office in advance of the Premier's Action Plan announcement on March 6.

COU is currently engaged in a search process for a new President and CEO to replace Bonnie Patterson when she retires later this year. I am serving as the Academic Colleague on the search committee. A search firm has been secured and the search process is underway.

The next meeting of COU will be held at Wilfrid Laurier University on April 8-9, 2015. Two topics of discussion will be strategies for internationalization of Ontario universities, and the decline in demand and perceived value of arts and humanities programs.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Louise Hill, COU Academic Colleague for Lakehead University