

Academic Colleagues Report  
Council of Ontario Universities  
298<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Council  
October 9, 2014

On October 8<sup>th</sup>, the evening before the Council meeting, Roberta Jamieson was presented the David C. Smith Award at a dinner reception in her honour at the St. Andrew's Club in Toronto. Roberta Jamieson (who holds an honorary doctorate from Lakehead University) was recognized for her steadfast support of Indigenous education and her dedication to improving access and success for Indigenous learners.

Council met for a working lunch at the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel on October 9. The meeting opened with a discussion on the effectiveness of Council meetings and engagement of Council members. This discussion focussed on two issues, the format and timing of Council meetings and the meaningful integration of the work of Executive Heads and Academic Colleagues. Currently, Council meets twice a year for a working lunch with separate meetings of Executive Heads and Academic Colleagues on the same day, before and after the Council meeting. This format has been successful in increasing the participation of Executive Heads in Council. For the past three Council meetings Academic Colleagues have come prepared to discuss substantive issues of interest and importance to COU and Executive Heads, contributing in a meaningful way to the work of Council. Future Council meeting agendas will be planned in advance to include topics where a thoughtful examination from an academic perspective would be helpful to policy deliberations.

A second discussion at Council focussed on the implications of Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs) on university autonomy. Executive Heads and Academic Colleagues expressed a wide range of opinions on this topic during a lengthy and passionate discussion. It was interesting to hear how widely the process for developing SMAs differed from campus to campus, largely reflecting inherent differences in university culture and practice. Despite these distinctions, the final SMAs negotiated with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities showed enormous overlap. This is the reality of the comprehensive nature of Ontario universities. Although levels of concern varied, there was a shared sense that program decisions made external to university governance are a troubling trend.

COU presented a document outlining strategic directions and priorities for 2014-15, developed by COU's Senior Management Committee. Key priorities for 2014-15 are alignment with government priorities, financial sustainability, communicating the value and contributions of universities, and member services and support. Areas of strategic focus include sector sustainability, communication and advocacy, and university research.

The next meeting of Council is scheduled for April 9, 2015 at Wilfrid Laurier University.

Respectfully submitted,

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