

Council of Ontario Universities
Academic Colleagues Report
Meeting of Academic Colleagues December 11-12, 2014

Academic Colleagues met for a working dinner on Thursday, December 11 at the COU offices in Toronto. Unfortunately I was unable to be in Toronto in time to attend the working dinner due to PTR hearings that day in Thunder Bay. Colleagues heard a presentation by Cecilia Brain (COU Senior Policy Analyst) on the population decline of 18-20 year olds in Ontario that is expected to continue until 2021. This demographic change will impact the north more than other regions in the province. Colleagues also discussed sexual assault policies and campus responses, with Lakehead's policy circulated for reading in advance of the meeting.

On Friday morning, December 12 Academic Colleagues held their business meeting in the COU Council Room. Peter Gooch (COU Senior Director) updated Colleagues on recent developments at MTCU. In October the Ministry released detailed program approval guidelines reflecting their long-term differentiation agenda, particularly in the section on areas for program growth. COU responded with recommendations to the deputy minister, including advice to the Ministry to understand and rely on universities' internal program approval processes. At the time of our meeting, MTCU had not responded to COU's letter. The issue of sexual violence has been high-profile in the media and Premier Wynne has announced a province-wide action plan against sexual violence. COU, Executive Heads and Academic Colleagues have all been discussing sexual assault responses and policies, and a Reference Group on Sexual Violence has been formed to look at best practices, provide advice to universities, assess opportunities for collaborative approaches, and lead the university sector's engagement on the Premier's initiative. The new Ontario Online Learning Consortium was incorporated in October and will begin a search process for a CEO soon. The first work of the Consortium will be to design and implement a web portal providing services to students.

The highlight of the Academic Colleagues meeting was a guest presentation by Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux on recruitment, support and success of Aboriginal students and faculty. Her presentation was inspiring and well received by Colleagues.

Bonnie Patterson, President of COU, has announced her retirement later this year and a COU Presidential Search Committee has been formed. I am serving as the Academic Colleague representative on this 6-member search committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Louise Hill
Academic Colleague for Lakehead University