
Council of Ontario Universities 289th Council Meeting

**Held on Thursday April 22 and Friday April 23, 2010 at The Royal
Military College, Kingston**

ACADEMIC COLLEAGUE'S REPORT TO SENATE

As usual the overall meeting involved an Executive Heads' meetings, Academic Colleagues Meetings, and the Council Meeting. The main topics that were discussed at these meetings were:

Quality Assurance: The Framework for Quality Assurance was approved at the April meeting of Executive Heads following approval by OCAV in February. OCAV is now receiving nominations for membership on the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance which will oversee quality assurance in publicly assisted universities in Ontario. Each university is developing its Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) which will be submitted for approval to the new Quality Council. Following approval of institutional IQAPs, universities will submit proposals for new undergraduate and graduate programs to the Quality Council for approval. Under the new Quality Assurance Framework, the universities will be responsible for the periodic appraisal of all undergraduate and graduate programs. The Quality Council will audit all publicly assisted universities on a periodic cycle to ensure that their program reviews are in conformity with the approved IQAP.

University Pension Plans: The Working Group on University Pension Plans presented its Final Report to Executive Heads who approved its transmittal to the Ministers of Finance and Training, Colleges and Universities with a letter from Bonnie Patterson. As well, the Executive Heads approved the transmittal of the Report to the stakeholder groups that participated in the consultation sessions including OCUFA, CUPE, USW, OSSTF and COUSA as well as the Academic Colleagues. The Ministry of Finance provided a technical briefing to the Working Group on April 19, 2010 regarding the impacts of the Budget on pension plans. A summary of the key messages in this briefing are as follows:

1. The government is only willing to consider temporary solvency funding relief at this time, not permanent relief.
2. In order to be considered for temporary relief, each university must submit a "university specific exemption plan" to the government.
3. MTCU will use the information gathered in the one-on-one meetings with universities to understand the university's problem and its plan/strategy for dealing with its problem.
4. MOF will make the final decision as to whether or not a "university specific exemption plan" is sustainable enough to warrant a temporary solvency funding relief.
5. The government intends to adopt/implement the recommendations of the Harry Arthurs report, which includes adding the value of future indexation to solvency valuations, and solvency funding relief only for jointly sponsored, targeted benefit or multi-employer pension plans.

Student Mobility and Pathways: The provincial government would like student mobility and pathways enhanced at the postsecondary level. COU is continuing its consultations with MTCU and Colleges Ontario on ways to facilitate student mobility and pathways across the province and has made progress on developing a set of core principles to guide student mobility. The Ministry has established a Steering Committee with representatives from COU, Colleges Ontario, CUCC and student associations to develop options for a credit transfer system for Ontario.

Undergraduate Accessibility Fund: Provincial Budget 2010 included an announcement of \$101 million to fully fund the projected financial shortfall related to undergraduate enrolment growth. In addition to fully funding growth for 09-10 MTCU has informed the COU that they will roll in funding for growth into base funding and that the new base year for the undergraduate accessibility grant is reset to 2009-10.

e-Learning: Increased use of e-learning was mentioned in the provincial budget. However the provincial government does not appear to have a clear plan and needs COU to assist in developing the plan. There has been mention of an “Ontario On-Line Institute” but it is believed that this will not be a new degree granting entity but will be a collaborative venture between the existing universities in Ontario.

Retention Rates: The COU colleagues are in the process of producing a Discussion Paper (they were formerly called Working Papers) on the use of student retention rates as a measure of university quality. This is causing considerable controversy among the colleagues who clearly hold widely differing view of this matter. A preliminary version of the paper will be made available to members of senate for their comments. It should be mentioned that Queen’s University continues to have retention rates that considerably exceed those of other Canadian universities.

Federal Bill Limiting Maximum Earnings of Top Executives in Charitable Institutions: Federal bill C470 limits the earnings of the top five executives of charitable institutions. There was concern about the effect this will have on universities.

Teacher Education Funding: Motivated by the current oversupply of teachers, MTCU is in the process of developing a plan to reduce funding for teacher education spaces by approximately \$7.5 million. MTCU is considering options and developing a plan for the reduction. As part of the development of this plan, MTCU will be collecting information on institutional enrolment and types of programs offered at each institution with a faculty of education in Ontario. The data collection exercise is expected to begin shortly. Funding adjustments will take place over two years with an initial \$5 million reduction in 2011-12 and the remaining \$2.5 million in 2012-13.

Inter-University Transit Services (IUTS): To date, COU has realized significant savings as a result of awarding the distribution aspect of IUTS to Purolator Courier Ltd. However, further savings amounting to \$100,000 per year are possible from the following measures:

1. Limiting use of IUTS to only first-class mail that requires next day delivery (i.e., IUTS should not be used for non-first-class mail items such as personal effects, furniture, gifts, personal mail, newspapers, etc., or where next day delivery is not essential).
2. Consolidation of the pickup and drop off points to one location where possible.

Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario): The Federal Budget 2009 announced the creation of FedDev Ontario and has committed over \$1

billion dollars over five years to fund this new agency. Its primary role is to support Southern Ontario communities and businesses in diversifying and strengthening their local economies by helping them become more competitive, innovative and productive. This agency has already indicated that it sees Ontario's post secondary sector as an important stakeholder. On April 19, 2010 FedDev Ontario announced the creation of a new Applied Research and Commercialization Initiative (ARC). It is a \$15 million dollar pilot project aimed at bridging the research and commercialization gap in Southern Ontario. This will allow universities and colleges to apply for resources to strengthen their partnerships with small and medium-sized enterprises to undertake further commercialization processes. COU will continue to monitor new developments at FedDev as it establishes its mandate and suite of programs.

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