

Questions from Senator Christie to Principal Woolf for the November 25, 2010 Senate Meeting

Background

The Queen's News Centre for 27 Oct. (<http://www.queensu.ca/news/articles/principal-welcomes-discussion-university-specialization>) has a headline: "Principal welcomes discussion on university specialization."

But the article itself is not about support for discussion of "differentiation." It is about support for differentiation itself. It reports that "Principal Daniel Woolf will be working with his provincial counterparts, Queen's Park and the College of Ontario Universities on **how universities can differentiate themselves** and focus on their strengths."

The phrase "how universities can differentiate themselves" presumes acceptance of the agenda of differentiation itself.

The QNC article reports that the Principal calls the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) report "an excellent starting point for a discussion among universities and their communities **about how we can all identify our particular place** in Ontario's post-secondary education landscape."

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Association (OCUFA) has responses to the HEQCO report are available at <http://senatefacultycaucus.wordpress.com/>. OCUFA makes a valuable distinction between the "organic" differentiation that has already developed among Ontario Universities, which has been a matter of developing academic strengths, and the governmental imposition of differentiation from above, which is financially motivated and will serve budgetary rather than academic ends. It warns about the loss of academic autonomy when the direction of universities is handed over to politicians, and warns also that the report's budgetary model will result in vertical differentiation, or "tiering," rather than horizontal differentiation.

Questions

1. Have you read Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Association's (OCUFA) responses to the HEQCO report, and if so, what did you think of them?
2. Are you open to sponsoring discussion in the Queen's community about *whether* Ontario universities should follow this agenda for differentiation, before you promote discussion about *how they should differentiate*?
3. Are you prepared to confer with your colleagues and open this matter to discussion on campus rather than presume the University's support for the HEQCO agenda?

Oral response to be provided by Principal Woolf