Council of Ontario Universities
Report to Senate of the Academic Colleague
Kathleen Okruhlik, April 2012

The COU Academic Colleagues met in Toronto February 23-24, 2012. There was no meeting of the full Council.

Drummond Report: COU continues to interpret the report as underscoring the importance of higher education to the provincial economy. Because the recommended cuts to the postsecondary sector are not as deep as those recommended for most other sectors, COU has expressed its appreciation while continuing to work behind the scenes to address its concerns. One thing being discussed is the fact that the report does not address the transition costs of recommended changes. The tuition recommendations are regarded as helpful. COU is preparing for discussions with the Ministry about multi-year mandate agreements. [Bear in mind that at the time of this meeting, COU did not yet know how the provincial government would respond to the Drummond report.]

Tuition: The Executive Heads of Ontario Universities continue to discuss the tuition-funding framework. They want to have flexibility in this area and have expressed concern that using funds to increase accessibility may have a negative impact on quality.

Ontario Graduate Scholarships: The OGS program may be restructured to become a transfer payment program, where universities have a specified number of scholarships to award and can integrate the awards into their graduate student recruitment and support programs.

Three-Year Undergraduate Degrees: The Council on University Planning and Analysis (CUPA) is seeking better data on three-year degrees at Ontario universities. The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) has released an informative paper examining degree structure. It provides useful background for the emerging discussion of three-year undergraduate degrees.

Public Relations: COU's communications effort to improve public perceptions of teaching and learning is underway. There are "Back to Class" events at universities across the province. COU is developing a brochure about effective teaching practices at Ontario universities.

Online Institute: There seems to have been no movement on this file. COU continues to advocate a consortium model.

Research Funding: As part of its larger data review, COU is seeking better data on research funding. And among the discussion papers being developed by Academic Colleagues are at least two that deal with aspects of this issue.

Undergraduate Research Activities: Information is being collected about ways in which undergrads are incorporated into the research activities of Ontario universities. If you have examples from your own unit, I would be grateful to hear about them: okruhlik@uwo.ca

I shall be pleased to answer questions about these and other issues on the floor of Senate.