Council of Ontario Universities
Report to Senate of the Academic Colleague
Kathleen Okruhlik, February 2013

The COU Academic Colleagues met in Toronto January 31- February 1, 2013. There was no meeting of the full Council.

Change of Leadership: The new Cabinet is likely to be announced February 11th, a little later than previously anticipated. There is a great deal of uncertainty about what will happen in the weeks and months ahead. (Recall that there were virtually *no* decisions made under the interim leadership.) Kathleen Wynne's deep roots in the education sector are undeniable, but nobody really knows what policies she will implement.

Pensions: These remain a very big issue in Ontario's university sector (although not for Western). Efforts to gain an extension of the solvency relief window continue. The province seems to prefer implementation of alternative models such as: asset pooling, amalgamation, and 50/50 sharing of costs and risks.

Tuition: Universities have received no signals on this front.

Efficiency Targets: COU had been hoping that the funding reductions associated with this program would be temporary. Instead they are built into the base of the budgetary model.

Strategic Mandate Agreements: These documents, which were submitted by all Ontario colleges and universities last September, are still being reviewed by HEQCO (the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario). A report to the government is expected soon.

International Student Recovery: MTCU announced last year that it will be reducing operating funding to universities and colleges by $750 for each international student enrolled. The government seems to expect that universities will simply raise international tuition by $750 to neutralize costs of the recovery, but many universities don't want to do this. The government is not going to back down; it needs the money. COU seems to see its role as damage mitigation.

ONCAT: The Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer is the successor to CUCC (College University Consortium Council). Its main job is to facilitate credit transfer between Ontario's colleges and universities. Relations in the past have sometimes been strained, but there are some indications that things are beginning to improve.

Productivity: Recall that four universities submitted data to stage one of the study on faculty productivity. COU is now asking *all* universities to create similar data sets. At a later stage, COU would like to see more categories and additional sorts of data (including data on part-time and sessional faculty).

COU Update: A new COU Update is available from Marci Oswald upon request. This one is dated January 29, 2013. Please bear in mind that the COU Update is not a public document and is made available for the sole purpose of assisting you in your work as Senators.

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