

**University of Windsor
Senate**

5.3: **Report of the Academic Colleague**

Item for: **Information**

Forwarded by: **Dr. Philip J. Dutton, Academic Colleague.**

Academic Colleagues met in Toronto on February 11 and 12, 2020.

Dinner Meeting, February 11, 2020

Discussion led by Eva Busza, Vice-President Policy and Sector Collaboration, Council of Ontario Universities: From the United Nations to COU

Eva introduced herself and briefly explained her past in various policy executive positions culminating with her prior position in the UN Secretary General's Office and the Asia Pacific Foundation immediately prior to joining the COU. She recognized that since the establishment of the COU in 1971 that there have been repeated discussions about the relationships between academic colleagues (AC) and executive heads (EH) and the role of the Council and the COU as an entity. The current discussion comes at a time when the COU and member institutions have to evolve to deal with the current political environment.

Eva wanted to start the discussion by listening to the colleagues, particularly in exploring two questions: 1. Why did you sign up? 2. What role or function do you play and what do you think an academic colleague should be doing?

Reasons for joining ranged from encouragement of a former AC to get involved, recruitment by the Senate secretary, recruitment by the University President, or an experience as an alternate academic colleague. Some cited ideas of professional development toward longer term goals of more senior academic and administrative positions while others indicated simple interest to be involved, gain knowledge, and communicate matters to colleagues. There were discussions of the various ways in which ACs interacted with their EH, the Senate, or colleagues and what additional roles are or may be associated with the role of AC. There was general agreement that the discussions of the AC were interesting, and the current topical nature of the discussions was helpful in developing understanding of the roles of EH, the relationship of COU to government, and the multitude of relationships among the member institutions.

Eva made comparisons between the UN, a large organization of member states, and the COU, a large organization of universities. Both are served by relatively small secretariats. People who work at the UN and at Universities do it because they value the enterprise and what the institution(s) are trying to achieve. This leads to development of policy. Like the UN, the COU does a lot of work through committees (the COU has something over 50 plus additional task forces) where work may be particularly technical. Overall the COU serves *many* different functions.

People on the outside of the COU have to keep pushing the boundaries. People on the inside need to understand what different stakeholders want and speak to both sides. The political environment is driving the political role that COU has to play. Academic colleagues are important to explain how the sector is positioned in the larger society to their senates and colleagues and to bring their senates' and colleagues' views back to the COU.

From the COU perspective based upon their understanding and conversation with the executive heads they see the AC acting in the following three areas.

1. Ambassadors to the COU on behalf of their senates.
2. Bringing expertise and experience and an academic perspective to policy discussion.
3. Advancing their professional development in furthering future leadership roles.

1. Dinner debrief

Colleagues broke into small groups to discuss the previous evenings' conversations in order to organize our thoughts. Some of the points that emerged included the professionalization and development of the Universities "business" operations. From the perspective of AC this has changed dramatically over the nearly fifty years of COU existence. Discussion was also informed by two documents: a 2006 report on the COU Membership Consultation and a 2015 Report of the Working Group to Review COU Activities and Priorities, both of which spoke to the role of academic colleagues in the COU. The discussion was wide ranging. Engagement of EH is always a concern for the AC. The selection of policy topics by the AC need to be informed by knowledge of current priorities. Rather than devolving AC participation in Council business (various examples) the AC feel they should be increasingly involved through participation with affiliates and on strategic discussion retreats. Direction of the work of the AC could also be influenced by input from the EH on priorities. This would be tempered by the AC identifying their own priorities to the executive committee. It is difficult to capture the nuances of the conversation, but suffice to say there were significant related matters discussed.

2. COU update, Mike Snowdon

SMA3 process.

The first round of draft SMA documents has been submitted and the government will follow up on the second round through phone calls. Final drafts will be submitted this month with signatures on final documents in March. April 1 the SMA3 becomes active.

There have been some changes in the processes. Instead of one opportunity to revise metric weightings there will be three opportunities. The requirement for "continuous improvement" has been altered, to allow "remaining top and steady". The innovation metric has also been revised to expand contributions from areas such as businesses and not-for-profits. There is also ongoing discussion about a *slip-year* model in which any funding loss is not in-year, but in following-year. Additional metrics not directly related to funding but required to report include faculty workload and compensation. Workload discussions are ongoing and the current COU recommendation is that it be changed to *teaching activity* and be reported by institution as aggregate data.

Collaborative Nursing

It has just been announced that Ontario colleges will be allowed to issue Bachelor of Nursing degrees. Those wishing to separate from current collaborative agreements will need to undergo that process and then apply for stand-alone status. Nursing is a capped program provincially so there will be distribution of seats in the separation process. It is apparent that some collaborative agreements work well and will likely continue.

Tuition Framework

The current tuition 10% cut and tuition freeze resulted in a \$380M loss to the sector this year and a cumulative loss (including cost of living) of \$1.1B over two years. COU is beginning to work on the approach to the 2021-2022 tuition framework.

Mental Health

Continues to be a priority and good care is in demand by students. Preventative care and early support are COU policy priorities.

Expert Panel on Intellectual Property

Report has been released. A number of recommendations have been made to improve commercialization and IP.

HECQO Report on Digital Learning

Report was released on January 6, 2020.

Student Voices on Sexual Violence

A survey was administered in 2018 and preliminary results were released in March 2019. In early February 2020 three reports were released to Universities. Reports are expected to be released soon with the inclusion of institution specific framing documents. Overall the release is very quiet. Results indicate the majority of assaults occur off campus.

3. COU Affiliate Review David Lindsay

David Lindsay, the outgoing President and CEO of COU met with academic colleagues to discuss functions of COU. There are three main functions of COU.

Business Operations The COU runs a large business operation in three areas, the Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC), the University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP, for international students), and manages the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL). Between the three the COU brings in in excess of \$135M.

Meeting Convener The COU manages the meetings of about 55 committees and affiliates and a number of task forces. Many of these committees are communities of practice and share best practices between the institutions. Others operate more at the academic or financial policy level.

Policy and Advocacy The third role of COU is to advocate with the government on behalf of Ontario Universities. Recently the COU has been quite successful in its reactivity to government policy but there needs to be improvement in proactive planning. This is one particular area where academic colleagues may be helpful.

There was significant and pointed discussion about the role of academic colleagues on the council and within COU. It is expected this discussion will be ongoing and is not further reported at this time.

4. Quality Council Update Cindy Robinson

Cindy Robinson reported on the recent decision to remove the standing appointment of two academic colleagues to the quality council. This decision has been made, but current colleagues on the council will continue their terms of appointment. The decision was based upon the desire to have more quality assurance experts from universities (which may be staff members) involved in the quality council and the Ontario Council of University Vice-presidents (OCAV) was consulted. Academic colleagues were not. Academic colleagues unanimously endorsed a review of that decision and the importance of academic oversight on the Quality Council.

5. Topics for the next meeting

The April meeting of COU is the Council meeting where AC meet with EH. Topics for the discussion at that meeting were discussed. It is likely that the discussion with EH will continue in the area of the evolving role of AC. In addition, we expect to bring another topic forward for discussion and this may be the topic of Mental Health initiatives on Ontario campuses.

6. Reports of committees

Due to the lengthy discussions around the dinner debrief and the conversation with David Lindsay the meeting went overtime. Committee reports were submitted in writing.

Respectfully Submitted

P.J. Dutton, Academic Colleague.