

University of Toronto Academic Colleague, Council of Ontario Universities (COU)
Report to the Academic Board, May 24, 2013
Sandy Welsh

The Council of Ontario Universities consists of twenty member universities and one associate member (Royal Military College). The COU's mandate is to facilitate discussion between members, advocate on behalf of its members, work with the provincial and federal government on public policies affecting universities, and to support and coordinate services for members, including the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC), the Inter-University Transit System (IUTS) and Scholars Portal. The COU is governed by an executive body, the Council. The Council is composed of two representatives from each university, the Executive Heads of member universities and the Academic Colleagues (formally known as the "Companions of the Presidents"). Academic Colleagues are a diverse group; depending on the selection mechanism at each university, colleagues may be "rank-and-file" faculty members of their Senate or faculty with current or recent administrative experience. The full Council meets twice a year and the Executive Heads and Academic Colleagues also meet separately three times per year. An important function of the Academic Colleagues is their membership on COU committees, task forces and working groups, such as the "Quality Council" and OUAC Advisory board.

The 2012-13 Academic Colleague and Council meetings focused on various consultation papers and reports issued by MTCU, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HECQO) and others (MTCU Discussion paper, *Innovation to make our University and College System Stronger*; Progressive Conservatives' policy paper, *Paths to Prosperity: Higher Learning for Better Jobs*) and Strategic Mandate Agreement submissions to MTCU from member universities. At the October 2012 meeting, Academic Colleagues noted that U of T President Naylor's response to the MTCU Discussion paper stood out for its emphasis on the university's long-standing involvement with innovation and for questioning why graduate education was not included in the discussion paper. The issue of differentiation in the university sector also was a recurring theme in our discussions of Strategic Mandate Agreements and the recent Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HECQO) report, *Quality: Shifting the Focus, A Report from the Expert Panel to Assess the Strategic Mandate Agreement Submissions*. Amongst the Academic Colleagues, there are debates as to which policy directions are best for Ontario universities as well as their home institution. Our discussions highlighted the importance of staying informed about Ontario post-secondary education policy as all agree the landscape is shifting.

As part of our work, Academic Colleagues aim to generate discussion, provide perspectives to complement the views of the Executive Heads and produce discussion papers to address issues facing Ontario universities.

This year, the main discussion paper focused on college to university transfers, due to the importance placed on this issue by MTCU. Evidence on college student transfers to six Ontario universities (Brock, McMaster, Nipissing, OCADU, Trent, Wilfred Laurier and York) is reviewed in the paper, *CAAT Transfer Students in Ontario Universities: A Review of Evidence* (by Torben Drewes, Trent University and Eric Nay, OCADU). In terms of marks, college student transfers are not different from high school students. College student transfers also have higher drop-out rates than high school students, with one exception. Students entering Trent through articulation agreements or programs that prepare students for the transition have lower drop-out rates than non-articulation agreement transfers. For universities considering enhanced college transfer programs, these data provide some support for the success of articulation agreements for ensuring college transfer student success. This paper will be available on the COU website later in the spring (<http://www.cou.on.ca/publications/academic-colleague-papers>).

This year, there was no shortage of topics for discussion. We discussed the results of the Fall 2012 audit on teaching effectiveness by the Office of the Auditor General. In addition to the topics raised above, we addressed the uncertainty over the tuition framework, the changing role of faculty roles in the academic workplace, the value of teaching & learning centres, the measurement of faculty productivity and labour market transition of university graduates. Planning for 2013-14 is already underway, with a discussion paper planned to examine the labour market transitions affecting university graduates.