

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

**REPORT NUMBER 151 OF THE PLANNING AND BUDGET COMMITTEE
September 20, 2012**

To the Academic Board,
University of Toronto

Your Committee reports that it held a meeting on Thursday, September 20, 2012 at 4:10 p.m. in the Michael E. Charles Council Chamber, room 202, Galbraith Building, at which the following were present:

Professor Avrum I. Gotlieb (In the Chair)
Professor Elizabeth Cowper (Vice- Chair)
Professor Cheryl Misak, Vice-President and
Provost
Professor Scott Mabury, Vice-President,
University Operations
Professor Donald C. Ainsle
Ms Ellen Chen
Professor Christopher J. Damaren
Mr. Peng Fu
Ms Sally Garner, Executive Director, Planning
and Budget
Professor Meric Gertler
Professor Bart Harvey
Mr. Peter A. Hurley
Ms Claire M. C. Kennedy
Professor John Magee
Professor Amy Mullin
Mr. Layton Reynolds
Professor Locke Rowe
Ms Nana Zhou

Non-voting Assessors:

Mr. Paul Donoghue, Chief Administrative
Officer, University of Toronto Mississauga
(UTM)
Ms Gail Milgrom, Director, Campus and
Facilities Planning

Secretariat:

Mr. Anwar Kazimi, Secretary

Regrets:

Professor Jim Yuan Lai

In Attendance:

Mr. Ron Swail, Assistant Vice-President, Facilities and Services
Ms Archana Sridhar, Assistant Provost

ALL ITEMS ARE REPORTED FOR INFORMATION.

1. Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He then called on members to introduce themselves.

2. Orientation

The Chair provided a high-level overview of the Committee. He then invited Professor Cowper and Professor Mabury to present an overview of the Committee and its functions with the use of PowerPoint slides which are appended to this Report. The following points were highlighted:

- Structure of the Governing Council and its Boards and Committees
- Responsibilities of the Planning and Budget Committee
- Capital Projects

The Chair noted that additional information about the Committee's area of responsibility was available in its Terms of Reference, which had been included in the agenda packages. He encouraged members to become familiar with the Terms so that the Committee's deliberations could be focussed appropriately.

3. Report of the Previous Meeting (May 16, 2012)

Report Number 150 (May 16, 2012) was approved.

4. Business Arising from the Report of the Previous Meeting

There was no business arising from the report of the previous meeting.

5. Report of the Senior Assessor

Professor Misak referred to a document titled "Strengthening Ontario's Centres of Creativity, Innovation and Knowledge"¹ that had recently been published by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). She outlined three specific proposals in the MTCU document and briefed the Committee on the University's proposed response. She noted that there has been unity between the University, the Faculty Association, and students in terms of concerns about this document.

Three-Year Undergraduate Degrees

The MTCU document suggested that the Bologna Declaration (an agreement signed by twenty-nine countries across Europe to create comparability in standards and quality of post-secondary education) had addressed the matter of transferability of credits and credentials between and across systems. It featured three-year undergraduate degrees and two-year master's degrees. The MTCU had suggested that a similar approach could be taken in Ontario. Three-year undergraduate degrees had been discontinued at the University in 2004.

Professor Misak noted that Ontario students attended one year less of high school compared with many European counterparts. Three-year degrees would not allow Ontario students the basis of admission for graduate programs in North America and elsewhere. This proposal had received wide-spread criticism from student groups, faculty, and the U of T administration.

¹ Available at <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/publications/DiscussionStrengtheningOntarioPSE.pdf>

5. Report of the Senior Assessor (cont'd)

Professor Misak said that the University proposed, rather, to offer three-year accelerated degrees that would allow students enrolled in arts and science programs to complete the required twenty credits within a three-year period.

Credit Transfer and Student Mobility

The MTCU document had proposed that first and second year introductory, general and core courses would be fully recognized and transferable between and across the universities and colleges of applied arts and technology across the province. According to the document, this would improve the transfer credit system and enhance student mobility between and among universities, and between colleges and universities.

Professor Misak said that studies had shown that unregulated transfers between college and university programs had led to an increase in drop-out and failure rates. She indicated that the University would carefully consider the viability of institution-to-institution credit transfer while maintaining the integrity of the University. She noted that the University was soon to announce a seven-member University Transfer Credit Consortium.

Technology-Enabled Learning

The MTCU document had advocated for the widespread use of technology-based (online) course delivery for a substantial proportion of courses at Ontario universities and colleges.

Professor Misak cited a study² that had concluded that though there was a steady student interest in online courses, students continued to stress the importance of face to face contact with professors, irrespective of class size. The University recognized the potential of online education and as such had been the first to sign on to the Coursera initiative. Under Coursera, the University had offered five pilot interest-based online courses by some of the University's leading professors – three in computer sciences along with one each in social work and aboriginal studies. These courses had been accessed by over one hundred thousand students around the world. Professor Misak emphasized that the University of Toronto is not an online university, but added that many interesting possibilities remained to be explored in the area of online education and the University would take the lead in shaping any policy initiatives in this area.

This and other proposed innovations by the University would be reflected in the strategic mandate agreement that would be presented to the MTCU within the coming weeks.

Discussion

(i) *Members' Comments and Questions*

- Members generally commended the University's commitment to finding positive responses to a troubling set of proposals from the MTCU.
- Could the University use the proposal in the MTCU document to implement positive changes within its ambit?
- Some members expressed concern on the effects on graduate education and research that would result from the proposals outlined in the MTCU document.

² Kaznowska, E., Rogers, J., and Usher, A. (2011). *The State of E-Learning in Canadian Universities, 2011: If Students Are Digital Natives, Why Don't They Like E-Learning?* Toronto: Higher Education Strategy Associates

5. Report of the Senior Assessor (cont'd)

- Members noted that the MTCU document had placed emphasis on the time taken to complete undergraduate and graduate degrees, and expressed interest in the development of combined programs.
- Had similar proposals been adopted in other provinces?
- Was the MTCU initiating these proposals as a means of reducing government contributions towards post-secondary education?
- Could the MTCU provide evidence that graduates with three-year degrees would be adequately trained for the workforce? Some professional degree/designation program requirements would not allow for modification from a four-year to a three-year schedule.
- A member noted that many students sought employment during the summers to help finance their studies. Three-year degrees would not be a viable option for students with financial need.
- A member expressed appreciation for the University's innovative thinking and careful decision-making around online education.
- A member suggested involving business leaders in a response strategy in order to emphasize the importance of proper university training.
- Had the MTCU provided any time-lines on the implementation of the proposals?

(ii) *Administrative Response*

Professor Misak's responses included the following:

- The MTCU wanted students to finish their undergraduate programs within a more compact time-frame. The MTCU document had addressed this in terms of gains in productivity. The goal was to get graduates out in the workforce early by reducing the timeframe to acquire post-secondary qualifications. The University recognized that some students would want to complete their undergraduate and graduate studies and hence, was proposing to put in place a number of three plus two-year models.
- Other Canadian provinces had not adopted similar initiatives as outlined in the MTCU document.
- Ontario post-secondary institutions received the lowest per student contribution from their Provincial government. Reducing costs further was not possible without damage to the mission of the University.
- The University would continue to emphasize that programs completed in three years would not provide students with the adequate knowledge base needed by graduate and professional schools and employers, and that certain programs requiring professional designations could not be completed in three years.
- Efforts would be made by the University to secure additional funds from the MTCU to ensure that students with financial need would not be prevented from pursuing the accelerated three-year degree programs.
- The University would continue to pursue those proposals outlined in the MTCU document that it believed were viable, such as the Transfer Credit Consortium.
- The MTCU had not outlined a timeframe for implementation of the proposals.
- Students across the province had spoken out against the proposal outlined in the MTCU document. These concerns had been well articulated, with a high-degree of depth and sophistication. In addition, faculty from the University of Toronto and from other post-secondary institutions in Ontario had voiced their concerns.

6. Calendar of Business 2012-2013

The Chair noted that the proposed Calendar of Business for 2012-2013, had been included in the agenda package. It was an item for information. He advised members that it was a living document, and it was updated following each agenda planning meeting and again after each Committee meeting. Members were encouraged to review the Calendar carefully.

7. Report on Decisions under Summer Executive Authority

The Chair reported that no decisions that fell within the purview of the Planning and Budget Committee had been made under the Summer Executive Authority in 2012.

8. Date of the Next Meeting

The Chair reminded members that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for Wednesday, October 31, 2012 at 4:10 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Simcoe Hall.

9. Other Business

There were no items of other business

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m

Secretary

Chair

October 1, 2012