**University of Waterloo**
**SENATE**
**January 16, 2012**

**FOR INFORMATION**

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**Council of Ontario Universities**
**Report on Academic Colleagues' (AC) Meetings - Toronto**
December 15-16, 2011 - Paul D. Guild

The topics below were among those considered at this COU meeting of AC.

**A. Integrating Research Into Undergraduate Science Education: The iSci Program**
At the opening of the AC meeting on December 15th, the guest speaker was Carolyn Eyles of McMaster University who reported on recent experiences with the integration of research into their undergraduate science curriculum. The aim of this initiative is to help some undergraduates develop research skills early, and to expose them to a new form of learning. It includes emphasis on science literacy and scientific communication skills. Learning involves relatively small numbers of students and their program of integrated study is collaborative across the four years. Much of the teaching is undertaken in multidisciplinary teams. Student reactions reflect a high level of engagement, cohort camaraderie, and positive attitudes toward new types of learning assessment. For more information, please access the following link: http://www.secretariat.uwaterloo.ca/iSci-McMaster-Eyles.pdf.

**B. COU and Executive Update**
When the AC meeting resumed on the morning of December 16th, Peter Gooch joined the group and led update discussions.

**B.1. Ontario Tuition Grants**
This topic has been the major preoccupation for recent transactions between MTCU and COU. Progress is being made yet some significant details are yet to be worked out, such as: Who is eligible for these grants? Will up to 80% of students be eligible? Are some programs to be excluded? Are co-op students able to benefit? Are students who take 'a year off' eligible? The December COU Update includes this statement which is repeated here for background: "As part of its election platform the Liberal party has made a commitment to introduce grants to most undergraduate students whose annual family income is lower than $160,000 that will offset the cost of average tuition by about 30%. MTCU is now developing its implementation plan. The approach to implementation will be in two phases. The first phase for the current year (2011-12) will deliver a 50% benefit commencing in January 2012 ($800 per eligible university student) and will be administered almost entirely by MTCU. Full implementation of the program delivering 100% of the benefit will begin in 2012-13 and will rely upon universities for additional support and administration. COU has established a working group to address implementation issues with MTCU. The working group comprises representatives of the

functional areas in universities that will be affected, including registrars, student financial assistance offices, finance and institutional planners."

**B.2. Overall Tuition Framework**

There is expected to be 5% nominal increases in tuition across the province, but this target may be difficult to realize. The current framework expires at end of the 2011-12 academic year; as yet, it is unclear what will happen in the 2012-13 timeframe. MTCU staff have been warning of dire signals that Ontario "not in good shape" financially. Some believe that recent past estimates have been too optimistic and the post-secondary education sector should expect some tough times ahead.

**B.3. Differentiation and Strategic Mandate Agreements**

The new Minister (Murray) has not yet become fully engaged with this concern and MTCU has not declared their best approach to take on the matter. It is expected that new campus approvals will be made in response to proposals from institutions. Ontario universities are expected to articulate their visions and mandates in ways that make clear their high-level, strategic, programmatic institutional strengths. A working group is being set up, one that is likely to be chaired by deputy minister and a senior COU executive.

**B.4. Audits in Universities**

Auditor General (AG) – who is an officer of the legislature – is planning a "value for money audit" and among the topics considered are likely to be teaching effectiveness and efficiency of academic productivity. The AG will be picking three or four universities to focus upon with detailed audits and a final report is expected in late 2012.

**C. Academic Colleagues Update**

**C.1. Executive Committee**

Updates were delivered by these committees:

- Audit committee
- Working group on graduate expansion
- Update report Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC)
- Quality assurance committee
- Nominations committee
- Government and community relations committee.

It was noted that OCAV has declared 2012 "The Year of Teaching".

**C.2. AC Discussion Papers**

Timely topics are addressed in brief one- or two-page discussion papers, including:

- What is a University? (draft circulated for comments)
- Research Funding Changes (draft circulated for comments)
- Teaching Effectiveness (report issued).