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

The COU Academic Colleagues met in Toronto May 23- 24, 2013. There was no meeting of the full Council.

Provincial Budget: There seem to have been no real surprises in the budget released on May 2nd. The "new jobs strategy" had been signalled in advance, and it seems clear that universities will play a role of some sort in that strategy–although there is not much information available and it is not yet clear exactly how our sector will be affected.

Strategic Mandate Agreements: These documents, originally submitted under a tight deadline with no clear rules of the game, will likely be treated as bilateral agreements (between each university and the provincial government) and continue to be tied to the government's differentiation policy. So they are not going away. Minister Duguid's style is, however, markedly different from that of his predecessor. Here as elsewhere we are less likely to hear the language of "transformation" and more likely to see a few targeted changes. Duguid is also expected to rely more heavily on the expertise of Ministry staff.

2013-14 Graduate Enrolment Allocation: On May 23, the provincial government released a document that describes how new graduate spaces will be allocated. There will be no new spaces for universities that are far below their targets. Those that are near their targets will share 200 new spaces (150 Master's level, 50 PhD level). Universities that have exceeded their targets will get one more year's funding for those extra students. Western falls into the second category; we came within 5% of hitting our overall target. So it looks as if we'll pick up something on the order of 28 new MA spaces and 12 new PhD spaces.

Tuition: It seems likely that the government will at least consider deferral of full tuition payment until after OSAP is in.

Ontario Universities Online: This project is moving ahead. The plan is that BIUs would be proportionally divided by universities. So if a student were taking four courses at the home university and one elsewhere, the home university would get .8 BIU and the other would get .2 BIU. (This project must not be confused with the idea of a stand-alone online university. This is a collaborative project among existing universities.)

Teaching Activities and Community Involvement: If your unit has good news stories about community involvement or innovative teaching, don't forget to send them to Helen Connell (AVP Communication): hconnell@uwo.ca. If your stories make it on to Western's website, they may get picked up by COU.

COU Update: A new COU Update is available from Nancy Martinelli upon request. This one is dated May 15, 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.