



degree-granting body has again been mentioned by the ministry and clarification of this is, in particular, being sought.

**Academic Colleagues' Papers:** Two colleagues papers concerned with research funding were presented to the council. One of these was a full Discussion Paper entitled *Changes to Federal Research Granting Agency Practices: Towards Fewer but Larger Awards* while the other was a Mini Discussion Paper entitled *Possible Implications for Ontario Universities Arising from Reductions in Research Funding: Surfacing Concerns*. These papers generated extensive discussion at the council meeting. They will be made available to members of Senate.

**Audit of Teaching Assessments:** In November 2011, COU was notified that the Auditor General of Ontario would be conducting a "value-for-money" audit of teaching assessments for faculty in Ontario universities. The Provincial Auditor will not finalize the scope of the audit until the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario (OAGO) has completed its preliminary work with at least one university. Early indications suggest, however, that the focus of the audit will be to assess universities' policies and processes to evaluate teaching effectiveness of faculty and of how universities are using these evaluations. It is likely that three or four universities will be visited by staff of the OAGO to review teaching evaluation policies and procedures and test compliance. The University of Ontario Institute for Technology is the first university selected by the OAGO to be evaluated. The Auditor General's review is expected to be concluded in 2012 and his findings published in the December 2012 Auditor General's report.

**Ontario Tuition Grants:** On January 5, 2012 the government announced the establishment of the Ontario Tuition Grants (OTG) program. Students who are four years or less out of high school with an annual family income of less than \$160,000 will receive a grant of \$800 per term (to a maximum of \$1,600 per year). Students who receive OSAP are considered automatically for OTG while non-OSAP recipient students can apply online to MTCU. 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 on universities for additional support and help with program administration. COU has established a working group to address implementation issues with MTCU.

**Credit Transfer: Student Mobility Pathways:** COU's Credit Transfer Resource Group is discussing ways to facilitate university-to-university credit transfer. The government has established a new credit transfer coordinating body, the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT). ONCAT is governed by the universities and colleges through a board that consists of representatives elected by the universities and colleges. All Ontario universities have become members of the organization. MTCU is providing \$73.7M over five years to fund various aspects of the credit transfer initiative. As part of the development of COU recommendations for implementation of the Ontario

Online Institute, a survey was distributed to registrars at Ontario universities to explore options for supporting more streamlined credit transfer for fully online courses, including a centralized database of online course equivalencies.

**Teaching and Learning:** COU is developing strategies to help universities take initiative to meet their teaching and learning objectives. A Teaching & Learning Task Force has been established under the aegis of the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV). The Task Force will address a range of teaching and learning issues, including recommending effective practices to improve instruction, student engagement, and learning outcomes. A communications strategy is being developed to showcase exemplary teaching and learning practices at Ontario universities.

**Why Research Matters Campaign:** This campaign will be launched on May 14, 2012. It is an integrated campaign incorporating a website, public events, media relations, advertising and social media. It aims to instill in its audience a sense of ownership and pride in Ontario university research, to help people think about university research in new ways by showing its impact on all aspects of their lives, and to broaden and deepen the public's understanding of why research matters.

Other ongoing areas of concern that were extensively discussed at the meetings concerned pension plan changes, university funding difficulties, and further potential impacts of the Drummond report.

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