

# **COU Update**

**As of May 29, 2015**

COUNCIL OF  
ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES

CONSEIL DES  
UNIVERSITÉS DE L'ONTARIO

# COU Update – May 2015

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	2
Note to user .....	4
Common Acronyms .....	4
Updated: Advocacy Initiatives .....	5
Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs) .....	8
Updated: Sexual Violence .....	10
Updated: Engineering Review .....	11
Program Approvals .....	12
Updated: University Operating Funding .....	14
Updated: Planning and Funding of Enrolment (undergraduate and graduate) .....	16
Updated: Capital Funding and Planning .....	18
Deferred Maintenance .....	20
Facilities Condition Assessment Program (FCAP) .....	21
Condition of University Facilities .....	21
Tuition Framework for 2013-14 to 2016-17 .....	22
Updated: Student Financial Assistance .....	24
Updated: Ontario Tuition Grant .....	25
Updated: Student Access Guarantee (SAG) .....	26
Ontario Education Number (OEN) .....	27
Updated: Teacher Education Funding and Proposed Restructuring .....	28
Updated: Applications for Fall 2015 .....	30
Credit Transfer – Student Mobility and Pathways .....	31
Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT) .....	32
Teaching and Learning .....	34
Updated: Ontario Online .....	36
Updated: International .....	38
Updated: International Student Recovery (ISR) .....	40
Updated: Efficiency targets .....	42
Updated: Quality Assurance .....	43
Updated: COU Reports and Symposia .....	44

Updated: University Pension Plans .....	46
Benchmarking Administrative Performance Indicators .....	50
Collaborative Procurement .....	51
Communicating the Challenge of Financial Sustainability .....	52
Updated: Advocacy Initiatives – University Operations .....	53
Updated: Research Matters .....	55
Updated: Digital Research Infrastructure .....	57
Updated: AccessibleCampus.ca .....	59
Updated: Innovative Designs for Accessibility (IDeA) Student Competition .....	60
Proposed Amendments to the Accessible Customer Service Standard .....	61
Updated: More Feet on the Ground .....	63
Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health.....	64
Updated: Aboriginal Communications Campaign .....	65
Ontario Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Program.....	66
Internationally Educated Nurses .....	66
Tri-partite Committee on College Stand-alone Nursing degrees .....	67
Clinical Education Crisis.....	68
Updated: Medical Trainee Days Data.....	68
Updated: Medical Student Career Counselling .....	69

## Note to user

For quick access to a particular issue, you can click on a title in the Table of Contents and you will be immediately directed to the issue in question. There are four main sections within an issue: update, background, division and last updated. If “updated” is included in the title of an issue, it has been updated and there is new information. The “updated” section at the bottom will inform you of the last time the issue was updated.

Please note that the COU Update is intended for COU members and affiliates. The COU Update is not a public document and is not intended to be distributed outside the university sector.

## Common Acronyms

BIU	Basic Income Unit
BOI	Basic Operating Income
CESPA	Committee on Enrolment Statistics, Projections and Analysis
CFI	Canada Foundation for Innovation
COFM	Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine
COFO	Council of Ontario Finance Officers
COUPN	Council of Ontario University Programs in Nursing
CSAO	Council of Senior Administrative Officers
CUPA	Council on University Planning and Analysis
EDU	Ministry of Education
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HEQCO	Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MGS	Ministry of Government Services
MoHLTC	Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
MRI	Ministry of Research and Innovation
MTCU	Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
OADE	Ontario Association of Deans of Education
OCAV	Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents
ONCAT	Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer
OCUPRS	Ontario Council of University Programs in Rehabilitation Sciences
OCUR	Ontario Council on University Research
OEN	Ontario Education Number
OICAH	Ontario Interdisciplinary Council for Aging and Health
OSAP	Ontario Student Assistance Program
OUAC	Ontario Universities' Application Centre
Quality Council	Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance
SMA	Strategic Mandate Agreement

## Updated: Advocacy Initiatives

**Update:** Much of the recent advocacy has followed three tracks: (i) understanding and seeking to influence government approaches to the review of the funding formula as well as the final outcome of the credential review; (ii) managing key issues, especially the sexual violence file; and (iii) monitoring and advocating around current and anticipated issues arising from the legislative calendar.

**Funding Formula Review:** COU is actively engaged with MTCU and has met with Sue Herbert, the project lead on the review.

**Credential Review:** COU continues to engage with Ministry staff on this issue, urging them to reject the notion of three-year college degrees and stand-alone nursing programs. COU has recently learned that the external reviewer's report has been completed and is under review by the Ministry.

**Sexual Violence:** Ontario universities and COU have taken a leadership role on the issue of sexual violence following a series of media reports suggesting that students felt they had nowhere to turn and questioning the inconsistency in reporting of incidences. In November 2014, a Reference Group on Sexual Violence was established by COU to provide leadership on this issue in the sector. The Reference Group has met several times, and will play a key role in shaping sector responses to the government's proposals to eliminate sexual harassment and violence in the province. For a more comprehensive update on this item, please see [the section on sexual violence](#).

**Legislation impacting the sector:** The government's own legislative agenda has been primarily focused on securing support of **Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act**, which received royal assent on May 5, 2015. Several universities, and COU itself, have Defined Contribution or Group RRSP plans, which were not exempt from the legislation as expected. All universities are impacted by the additional costs associated with the plan and particularly the inclusion of part-time employees such as students. COU and affected universities have made their views known to government. It is not clear whether the government is willing to make changes.

We have previously highlighted a number of Private Members' Bills making their way through the legislature and it is looking increasingly unlikely that they will proceed in this session, which is set to rise for the summer in early June.

**Bill 11 Radon Awareness and Prevention Act**, introduced by a Liberal member, has passed Second Reading and been referred to the Standing Committee on General Government. This bill was previously introduced by Minister Moridi in 2012 prior to his appointment to Cabinet. Under the bill, workplace building owners would be required by 2016 to test every room in the basement of their buildings using a third-party contractor with expertise in radon measurement and make necessary remediation within two years.

This unfunded requirement would pose challenges to the sector, particularly at a time when there is insufficient government support to address the large deferred

maintenance deficit. However, with the House due to rise in three weeks, it is unlikely that this will proceed.

**Bill 64, Protecting Interns and Creating a Learning Economy Act** has received Second Reading and been referred to the Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly. No hearings have been scheduled. The bill provides greater protection for interns and vulnerable works as well as providing for the establishment of an Advisory Council to advise the Minister of TCU and make recommendations about a website for sharing information on work-integrated learning opportunities, and to report annually on Ontario's progress in this area. While the advisory council provision is considered somewhat bureaucratic, several universities have been successful in making significant amendments to this bill and now believe that it is acceptable as it stands. Given other legislative risks and opportunities for the sector, COU is not planning to take any further action at this time.

**Communications:** COU continues to implement a 12-month communications plan launched in May 2014 designed to promote the value of a university education at a time when the public and government are focused on jobs and the employment outcomes and earnings of graduates, and when government is reviewing whether its services to taxpayers are providing the best value for money and the best outcomes.

COU's new website will be launched in early June, and will greatly improve COU's ability to promote positive messages about the value of university and to showcase our member institutions.

Initiatives have so far included:

- The launch of the annual [survey of graduate outcomes](#) commissioned by MTCU. An [online graphic](#) accompanied the survey.
- A new website, [www.mygradskills.ca](http://www.mygradskills.ca), which offers graduate students a set of free online professional skills training tools that will help them prepare for a career inside or outside of academia.
- A [fun online quiz](#) that reinforces positive messages about the success of our graduates, while busting the myths, called What's Your University Brain-Power?
- An [infographic on net tuition](#) and the amount of scholarships and bursaries available to students.
- A series of three student success videos in which graduates talk about how university has transformed their lives. The first video featured a [University of Toronto student](#). The second video featured a student from [York University](#), and a third video featured a student from [Trent](#).
- An online graphic (and its individual components) that tells the story of how universities transform lives called [Ontario Universities: Transforming Ontario, Transforming Lives](#).
- The launch of [Change Agent](#), a province-wide report on how universities are transforming communities and their economies.
- A series of "theme weeks," where all universities promote the same aspect of university value, including Global Entrepreneurship Week November 17 to 23,

National co-op education week March 2 to 8, and National Volunteer Week April 13-19.

- A day-long brainstorming and strategy retreat for government relations officers from member institutions.

Upcoming communications campaigns include:

- A series of third-party “meme” endorsements by influential Ontarians about the value of a university education to be launched with the new website in the spring.
- COU’s second annual University Works report, compiling data on employment outcomes from Statistics Canada and the Graduates Survey, to be released early in June. Promotion will include “matte” stories to be made available to print, online and broadcast media.
- A report on the economic impact of universities next year, timed to coincide with the Treasury Board President’s review of all government spending with a focus on “best value for money” as the province tries to balance its budget.
- A campaign to educate and influence public perception on the cost of tuition, including an infographic.
- A campaign to demonstrate how internationalizing education helps students and Ontario succeed.
- A back-to-school media push.
- The annual Going Greener report to demonstrate how universities are being environmentally responsible and sustainable.
- Leveraging the departure of Bonnie Patterson as President and the appointment of a new COU President to promote positive sector messages through earned media.

COU will be asking universities to promote these sector-wide initiatives on their own campuses and their own communications channels as we attempt to coordinate messages.

**Ontario Budget:** The Ontario budget was delivered on April 23, 2015. The budget delivered no surprises as the government held the line on PSE spending with only very modest increases (below inflation) and kept to its earlier commitments. A series of media responses and documents were developed, including a formal press release, tweets, blogs, member debrief, and summary budget document. The principal message delivered was that Ontario universities accept the province’s decision to maintain funding per student at current levels because of fiscal constraints, but urge that future strategic reinvestment will be necessary to sustain excellence for students and to fully realize the power of universities to drive economic growth.

**Division:** Communications and Public Affairs

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs)

**Background:** COU continues to monitor the impact of the SMAs. It is expected that the SMAs will have an effect on university operations and programming as the provincial government relies on them for context to guide its decisions.

Particular attention is being given to the effects on program approval and/or college degree-granting. The recently released new Program Approval Guideline promises expedited approvals for programs that are aligned with a university's identified areas of strength and growth in its SMA (for more information, see the section on [Program Approvals](#)).

On June 27, 2012, the Minister wrote to Executive Heads of colleges and universities asking each institution to submit a proposed SMA by the fall of 2012. All submissions, from both the university and college sectors can be found online on the [HEQCO website](#) (available at the hyperlink). The [university submissions](#) can be found on the COU website (available at the hyperlink).

COU reviewed the initial SMAs from the fall of 2012 and found many common themes. The SMAs reinforce universities' commitment to innovation across many different aspects of their academic enterprises and operations. The university SMAs reinforce the university missions of teaching, research and community, but are highly differentiated in their approach to these missions. The SMAs include good examples of productivity and of responsiveness to government priorities such as technology-enabled learning, experiential learning and broadening credential options.

A HEQCO review panel provided its [report on the SMAs](#) to government in March 2013 and the report was publicly released in April 2013 (the report is available at the hyperlink). HEQCO's review was intended to select "lead institutions" who "would be the first to receive funding to pursue their mandates starting as early as 2013-14." However, HEQCO's report did not assess individual SMAs; instead, the report set out a series of recommended policy directions for the province to pursue that would enhance the quality and competitiveness of the PSE sector in Ontario.

Executive Heads of universities met with Ministry representatives for a summer roundtable discussion of differentiation and SMAs in July 2013. The Ministry appointed Paul Genest as Special Advisor on SMAs (Universities); his role was to negotiate the details of SMAs with institutions.

MTCU released [Ontario's Differentiation Policy Framework for Postsecondary Education](#) on November 29, 2013. The paper outlines the government's priorities, a differentiation framework with eight components, and possible metrics for each component. Universities were required to submit their updated Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMAs) submissions on December 20, 2013. The agreements reached in the SMAs will include multi-year graduate space allocations. The SMA process will not include new program approvals; however, MTCU will give consideration to programs identified in a university's SMA as an "area of growth."



The metrics for the SMAs include sector-wide metrics as well as the opportunity to suggest institutional specific metrics.

As part of the discussions with Special Advisor for university SMAs, Paul Genest, universities were able to revise their SMA proposals prior to a final agreement in March 2014. MTCU has indicated that final agreements are intended to be public documents.

On March 3, 2014, MTCU circulated a memo to Executive Heads that provided more details on the graduate allocations that will be part of SMAs. Spaces for the next three years (2014-15 to 2016-17) will be allocated using three envelopes:

- A “Reset Envelope” for universities whose enrolment is significantly above or below their current targets;
- A “General Allocation Envelope,” informed by research metrics; and
- A “Priorities Envelope” to support niche strengths and Ministry and institutional priorities identified through the SMA process.

MTCU circulated a memo to Executive Heads on March 11, 2014 that included an Institutional Data Report filled out with each institutions’ data for each of the system-wide metrics identified in Ontario’s Differentiation Policy Framework for Postsecondary Education, a Technical Addendum on Metrics that outlined data definitions and sources, and a Sector Workbook with all institutions’ data for each of the system-wide metrics. These documents were intended to support the SMA discussions with the Special Advisors.

On August 7, 2014, MTCU released the strategic mandate agreements. The term of the SMAs is from April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2017.

The SMAs highlight individual universities’ strengths and unique attributes in in the areas of: teaching and learning, student population, unique educational and research programs, student mobility and collaborations with other institutions, and local and global impact.

Through the SMAs, the government has agreed to undergraduate growth projections for each university, and also made a multi-year allocation of funded graduate spaces (until 2016-2017).

The government is committed to review the metrics that are employed in the first round of SMAs, and also to add additional metrics in the areas of Jobs and Economic Development for the next round of SMA. COU will be coordinating sector participation in a Working Group with MTCU.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** November 2014

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: Sexual Violence

**Update:** The Reference Group on Sexual Violence continues to provide leadership for the sector on sexual violence.

Members of the Reference Group will participate in a MTCU stakeholder engagement session on anticipated changes to the MTCU Act related to sexual violence. MTCU has indicated that the changes to the Act are related to the commitments in the Premier's action plan and will require each university to have a standalone policy that is developed with student input and reviewed every four years, to report publicly on incidents of sexual violence, and to provide training.

MTCU will convene a sector-wide table in the fall to discuss reporting requirements related to the public reporting on incidents. The Reference Group intends to develop and bring a model to this table.

Universities have been asked by MTCU to complete an interim report to MTCU on their progress towards the commitments in the plan. Reports are due to MTCU on June 30, 2015.

Updates on the work of the Reference Group were provided at the May meetings of the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV) and the Ontario Committee on Student Affairs (OCSA).

The Chair of the Reference Group on Sexual Violence will be presenting to the all party Select Committee on Sexual Violence in May 2015.

**Background:** Executive Heads committed to reviewing their institutional policies and procedures in fall 2014.

It was affirmed in the fall that all 20 Ontario universities offer the following common supports: support services, counselling, referrals, a complaints process, and prevention education and emergency response team that can be activated if necessary. All 20 universities also have created a special web page that clearly lays out their policies and supports. A conference on sexual violence was convened at York University on February 20, organized by OCSA, which was attended by representatives from universities across the province to discuss shared best practices.

On March 6, 2015 the Premier's Office released the Premier's Action Plan on Sexual Violence, *It's Never Okay*. The Action Plan indicates that under new legislation universities will be required to have stand-alone policies that have been developed with input from students. Universities will also be required to have prevention education programs and a common system of reporting incidences. It is anticipated that this legislation will be introduced in the fall of 2015. The Action Plan has also indicated that changes will be made to the Occupational Health and Safety Act that will affect universities as employers.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the table of contents.](#)

## Updated: Engineering Review

**Update:** On March 9, 2015, MTCU announced the beginning of its review of engineering programs. Through the SMA process the Ministry learned that significant expansion of degree-level engineering programs is being proposed across the system. MTCU has established a review of engineering programs, including a working table comprising university and college representatives, the engineering professional association, the accreditation body, major employers and students. The scope of the review will focus on degree programs leading to an engineering credential and will establish principles to guide the Ministry's evaluation of funding approval for new engineering degree programs. The working table will *not* develop recommendations about specific institutional program proposals but will collect information, develop analysis and recommend principles to guide the Ministry's subsequent review of specific proposals.

The first meeting of the working table took place on April 22, 2015. The April meeting included four presentations that focused on the general trends in engineering education (MTCU), trends in P.Eng. registrations (Professional Engineers of Ontario), engineering labour market outcomes (Ontario Society of Professional Engineers), and students' perspectives (Engineering Student Societies' Council of Ontario).

The second meeting, held on May 14, 2015, focused on the labour market outcomes of the engineering graduates. MTCU presented information on multi-year employment outcomes of engineering graduates and concluded that there is no oversupply of engineers in Ontario and that engineering students' outcomes are very good. Additional presentations included employers' perspectives (SNC-Lavalin and Ontario Power Generation) and an update on program approval processes at MTCU.

An additional meeting is scheduled for June and will focus on university and college perspectives on costs and methods of program delivery.

There is an expectation that an additional wrap-up meeting will take place early in the fall.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the table of contents.](#)

## Program Approvals

**Background:** Universities continue to be concerned about the onerousness of the Ministry's process and delays in the program approvals process – which significantly increases the Ministry's interventions in normal planning processes of universities.

COU is presently following two tracks of advocacy.

On a strategic level, COU is asking for a policy shift from the Ministry and, for this purpose, sent a letter to Deputy Minister Newman with three main recommendations:

- MTCU should focus on making the expedited program review process work effectively for programs aligned with SMAs.
- MTCU should engage the university sector in discussion of its proposed expansion of the scope of program approvals required – including certificates and modes of delivery.
- MTCU should recognize that current incentives are very strong for universities to develop in-demand and sustainable programs. Universities have rigorous internal review programs to address issues of unjustified duplication, student demand, societal need, and sustainability. MTCU should rely on the attestation of universities that criteria concerning demand and sustainability have been considered appropriately.

The second track of advocacy is at an operational level. COU's Working Group on Program Approvals is pursuing ongoing discussions with Ministry staff on some details, including:

- Potential expansion of the scope of programs or program changes requiring approval (for example: undergraduate certificates, or adding a co-op element to an existing program);
- OSAP eligibility for students in programs not approved for funding; and
- Other technical issues.

On October 7, 2014, MTCU released a memo and accompanying guidelines articulating updates to the university program approvals process.

The Ministry has indicated that it will commit to target timelines for the completion of expedited reviews for non-contentious programs that are aligned with the program areas of growth or strength identified in a university's SMA. MTCU will determine and communicate whether a proposal will be expedited within 30 days of the submission deadline.

The new process also raises a number of issues including:

- Tuition levels: Universities will be required to identify tuition comparators and the Ministry will expect the applicant university to be consistent with other similar programs. COU's understanding is that this is an articulation of the Ministry's

recent practice. The guideline also specifies that existing programs that are offered at new locations must have the same, or lower, funding and tuition than the original program.

- Expectations around reporting program changes: The new guideline stipulates that the Ministry is seeking to clarify its expectations with respect to the requirement to seek MTCU approval for a variety of changes including: adding a co-op component to an established program, the translation of English programs into French, and the creation of undergraduate certificate programs. The new guideline stipulates, in the interim, undergraduate certificate programs that have tuition or funding implications must be submitted for approval to the Ministry.
- The lack of timelines for non-expedited reviews.

Additionally, given the information in the Program Approvals memo, COU expects that MTCU's consultation with the sector will focus on the following areas:

- A review of the list of core programs;
- Future program growth discussions; and
- The development of improved labour market information to support the Ministry's review of labour market demand for proposed programs.

For information on the [Engineering Review](#), please see the corresponding section.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** March 2015

[Return to the table of contents.](#)

## Updated: University Operating Funding

**Update:** On April 23, the Ontario government released its 2015 budget. As with last year's budget, postsecondary issues are not prominent in the 2015 budget. The budget maintains the course set by the government for postsecondary education in its budgets in the recent past. There were very few new announcements concerning operating funding for postsecondary education.

There were very few detailed announcements concerning capital investments, and, in particular, no announcement concerning the Major Capacity Expansion initiative (see update, however, in the [Capital Funding and Planning](#) section).

Ministry staff have provided updates of MTCU's projected funding for enrolment growth, and its projected reductions including the International Student Recovery in 2015-16 and future years.

The budget document indicates that the budget of MTCU is expected to increase by \$68M between 2014-15 and 2015-16, mainly as a result of continued funding to support enrolment growth, student financial assistance (including the Ontario Tuition Grant), and other ministry programs. Increased transfers to universities account for only \$12.3M of this increase.

There are small investments directly affecting universities in the Ontario Online initiative, mental health, and French-language program(s) in central south-west Ontario, but these amounts are not allocated between colleges and universities so cannot be included in the summary table below.

The table below shows overall impacts on transfer payments to universities.

Overall funding impacts for university transfer payments (cumulative change from 2014-15)*	\$M		
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Total increases for enrolment	52.3	91.6	108.3
Total reductions in grants	(38.1)	(48.3)	(50.2)
Other base changes	(1.7)	(2.0)	(2.0)
Net increase*	12.3	41.4	56.2
Cumulative % change from 2014-15	0.4%	1.2%	1.6%

For more information on budget increases associated with enrolment, please see the [Planning and Funding of Enrolment \(undergraduate and graduate\) section](#).

**Program reductions:** The budget confirmed that program reductions that were first announced in the 2012 budget will continue to be implemented as expected. The summary of reductions is outlined in the table below.

---

\* Numbers may not add due to rounding.

Reductions -- Universities	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
	\$M		
Efficiency targets	[Now in base allocation]		
International student recovery	(19.1)	(26.9)	(26.9)
Teacher education	(19.0)	(21.4)	(23.3)
Total cost reductions	(38.1)	(48.3)	(50.2)

Please note that ongoing reductions from efficiency targets (the two per cent reduction in per-student revenue in the major enrolment-driven grants) is not separately reported this year, and has been incorporated into the ministry's multi-year budget and its forecast of operating grants.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: Planning and Funding of Enrolment (undergraduate and graduate)

### Update:

**Enrolment growth:** While not explicitly laid out in the budget documents, MTCU staff indicate that the ministry's multi-year allocations maintain the government's commitment to fund growth in postsecondary enrolment for the next three years.

MTCU staff provided an estimate of funding for enrolment growth for the next three years (it is traditional for the provincial budget to set out only three years of projected expenditure). The following table sets out the universities' share of the new funding for increased enrolment, relative to the revised base of the 2014-15 year.

Funding for growth	\$M		
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Undergraduate	24.3	49.0	65.7
Graduate	28.0	42.6	42.6
Total increase for growth	52.3	91.6	108.3

It is important to note that the growth in 2014-15, for both undergraduate and graduate spaces, was lower than forecast. Based on the ministry's recently released data on operating grants in 2014-15, growth in undergraduate grants was \$7.6M lower than projected at the outset of 2014-15, and funding for graduate expansion was \$27.3M lower than projected – a total of \$39M less than was included in the ministry's 2014-15 budget.

The projected funding increase announced today and shown in the table above start from this revised lower base, but continue to project an ongoing increase of one per cent (1%) annually to first-year entrants.

After further analysis and discussion with MTCU, CUPA will provide through COU an analysis of the enrolment projections underlying the ministry's funding projection and an explanation of the differences between the MTCU and CUPA enrolment projections.

**Graduate allocations:** The 2011 budget committed to provide funding to support the creation of 6,000 graduate spaces. Approximately 1,650 of these spaces were allocated for 2013-14 and 2014-15. About half of the remaining 4,350 spaces were allocated for 2015-16 and 2016-17 through the Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs).

The table above shows the ministry's projected funding increases associated with the approved graduate expansion. MTCU explained in their memo<sup>1</sup> that the \$24.9M will fund 1,230 additional spaces through the Graduate Expansion Grant and additional \$3.1M will be paid through stand-alone Teacher Education Grant for graduate spaces in Teacher Education.

---

<sup>1</sup> Multi-year Funding Outlook and Preliminary 2015-16 University Operating Transfer Payment Totals (PTOT), April 27, 2015.



Ministry staff explained that the increases shown up to 2016-17 would fully fund the graduate spaces allocated under the current Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMAs). The allocation in 2017-18 shows no further increase (relative to 2016-17) because no additional spaces have yet been allocated. It is anticipated that the next round of SMAs will address graduate expansion in 2017-18 and future years.

## Background:

**Funding for enrolment growth:** The Strategic Management Agreements (SMAs) included agreed-upon estimates of undergraduate enrolments and graduate allocations. It should be noted, however, that for strategic reasons the estimates in SMAs were at the higher range of possible growth. The estimates shown below also did not include growth from proposed new initiatives or programs.

**Undergraduate expansion:** The sum of universities' undergraduate projections through the SMAs is consistent with CESPAs enrolment projections for 2014-15 and 2015-16. It diverges by 2,000 spaces for 2016-17.

Enrolment	Head Counts		
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Undergraduate projections (SMAs)	340,366	344,075	350,212
CESPA projections	339,553	344,015	348,216

For programs beginning in fall 2014, eligible full-time enrolment in undergraduate programs was 334,863 (head count), a modest decline of 369 from the fall 2013-14, but a larger decline than previous system-wide estimates through the SMAs (340,366) and the CESPAs model (339,553).

**Graduate expansion:** The SMA process allocated an additional 3,185.29 graduate spaces. The following table is an overview of new and reallocated graduate spaces, by envelope.

	Master's	PhD	Total
2013-14 graduate space targets	29,044.43	12,434.34	41,478.77
Adjustment to graduate space targets (pre 2015-16)	1,116.97	(284.38)	832.59
<b>Graduate Allocation Envelopes</b>			
General Allocation Envelope	1,444.16	530.00	1,974.16
Priorities Envelope	305.00	73.54	378.54
<b>Graduate Spaces Allocated to 2016-17, over 2013-14</b>	2,866.13	319.16	3,185.29
2016-17 Graduate Space Targets	31,910.56	12,753.50	44,664.06

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: Capital Funding and Planning

**Update:** The Province announced on May 20, 2015 that one project will be funded under its Major Capacity Expansion (MCE) initiative – a proposal from York University in partnership with Seneca College for a Markham campus. This project was selected by an inter-ministerial committee comprising senior officials of MTCU, Treasury Board, ministries responsible for infrastructure, innovation and economic development, and HEQCO.

In spring 2016, Ontario will issue a second targeted call for proposals for a postsecondary facility to serve the growing demand for postsecondary options in Peel and Halton regions.

In April, MTCU issued a memo regarding its Refresh of Capital Inventory for Postsecondary Education. The Ministry is asking universities to submit information regarding their major strategic infrastructure initiatives in order to better understand the capital needs and priorities of the sector, support evidence-based planning in the future (when money becomes available for new funding), and facilitate the introduction of a two-stage capital planning process. Proposals submitted would be assessed against government priorities including campus renewal and “innovative approaches to talent, skills and training.” Further details have not yet been provided as to when the guidelines and templates will be released. Responses will be accepted by MTCU until July 31, 2015.

**Background:** The Ontario government announced the province’s new MCE policy framework on December 20, 2013. This framework will govern future expansion in the postsecondary sector either through the creation of new campuses or through major expansion at existing campuses.

The Ministry also initiated a call for proposals for projects to be funded under the MCE initiative. Universities submitted 19 full proposals, and 13 proposals were deemed potentially eligible and evaluated for funding in September 2014.

In terms of broader infrastructure planning, Bill 6, *Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act*, received second reading in the Legislature on May 13, 2015, but was ordered referred to Standing Committee on General Government pursuant to the Order of the House. The bill is designed to introduce a principled and planned approach to infrastructure investment in Ontario’s Broader Public Sector (BPS) by encouraging principled, evidence-based and strategic long-term infrastructure planning that supports jobs, training, growth, environmental protection and design excellence. Bill 6 would require universities and other BPS entities to do the following:

- take into account a set of principles when making infrastructure decisions;
- share information with the government that has implications for infrastructure planning; and
- use architects (or similar professional consultants) for projects over a certain threshold.

It establishes criteria that government will use in prioritizing infrastructure investments. Contrary to expectations, the bill does not appear to require universities to submit Long-Term Infrastructure Plans (as long as university assets are not considered “partly owned” by the government). The Act does, however, apply both to new buildings as well as maintenance funding and could therefore affect allocation under the Facilities Renewal Program. COU will monitor the progress of the bill.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis/Corporate Services

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the table of contents.](#)

## Deferred Maintenance

**Background:** COU's deferred maintenance (DM) advocacy report is intended to raise awareness about the growing challenge of maintaining buildings on university campuses and the implications of deferring maintenance. COU produced a DM advocacy report, entitled "Critical Condition," which was reviewed by Executive Heads in October 2014.

The report shows that the DM backlog has doubled over the past ten years and that current funding levels will result in continued deterioration of facilities. The report was informed by feedback from the Council of Senior Administrative Officers (CSAO) as well as the Task Force on Facilities Condition Assessment.

It has been decided that COU will not proceed with a public campaign for increased Facilities Renewal Program (FRP) funding at this time; instead, universities and COU may use the report as background in their interactions with government (MTCU, Infrastructure, MRI, Treasury Board) in preparation for the time when there are funds available for new investments.

The Canadian Association of University Business Officers (CAUBO) released their [national study on deferred maintenance](#) in August 2014.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis/Corporate Services

**Updated:** February 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Facilities Condition Assessment Program (FCAP)

**Background:** The 2014 report of the Task Force of the Council of Senior Administrative Officers (CSAO) and the Ontario Association of Physical Plant Administrators (OAPPA) highlights the sector's deferred maintenance backlog. The [2012 and 2014 FCAP reports](#) are available on the COU website.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** March 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Condition of University Facilities

**Background:** In April 2014, MTCU announced that it intends to increase funding for facilities renewal, beginning in 2015-16, to address deferred maintenance at universities. The plan includes a phasing-in of additional renewal funding growing to a total investment of \$100M to colleges and universities annually by 2019-20 (according to the current formula, universities would receive 2/3 or \$66.7M of the \$100M). Planned new investments in 2015-16 and 2016-17 would increase current funding levels to \$40M annually (universities' portion would be \$26.7M, if MTCU retains the current allocation mechanism). The 2014 Budget confirmed this commitment.

Funding for the 2014-15 Facilities Renewal Program was announced on December 17, 2014. The allocation for the university portion is maintained at \$17.3M (reduced from \$26.7M in 2009-10 and earlier years).

In contrast to this allocation, COU's 2014 report on [facilities condition](#) (see above) finds that to maintain our campuses in their current condition, universities would require annual expenditures of \$472.5M.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** February 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Tuition Framework for 2013-14 to 2016-17

**Background:** On March 28, 2013, MTCU announced a new tuition framework for four years, from 2013-14 to 2016-17.

The new framework will cap increases to tuition rates as follows:

Undergraduate Arts & Science and most other programs (Category 1):

Entering students	3%
All continuing students	3%

Professional and graduate programs (Category 2):

Entering students	5%
Students registered in 2012-13 and prior years, and continuing	4% (in 2013-14 and future years until they graduate)
Continuing students under the new framework (entering in 2013-14 and later years)	5%

Overall cap:

Cap on average increase to tuition rates	3%
--	----

On December 5, 2013, MTCU released its *Tuition Framework and Ancillary Fee Guidelines for Publicly-Assisted Universities, 2013-14 to 2016-17*. The document regulates tuition payment processes and dates, program/flat fees and ancillary fees. The following is a summary of major changes in the guidelines.

The framework includes a new tuition billing policy that regulates the timing of fee payments, for OSAP and non-OSAP students, and the amount of deposit that can be charged up to three months before the start of the first term of study. MTCU expects universities to implement the outlined changes for the 2014-15 academic year; these billing practices are mandatory as of 2015-16.

The minimum course load threshold for universities using a program/flat fee framework will be 80% of a normal course load. This change is to be phased-in over three years. Universities that use a program/flat fee structure are not allowed to charge for overload courses. Students with disabilities are exempt from program/flat fee tuition. The moratorium on new program/flat fee tuition structures has been extended to 2016-17.

Universities are not allowed to charge an ancillary fee for confirmation of credential completion and for providing a graduation certificate.

Fees for digital materials that are the property of the student have been added to the list of exemptions from the requirement for an ancillary fee protocol. This means that faculty

will be able to assign digital learning resources and use the evaluative components in these resources. Universities are required to develop their own policies about the use of digital learning resources. COU will soon publish a position paper that universities may find helpful.

COU has collected revised revenue impacts of these guidelines from universities to assess the system wide costs and communicated them to the Ministry.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** February 2014

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: Student Financial Assistance

**Update:** Spending on student financial assistance is projected to continue to increase over the next three years as set out in the following table.

Student Financial Assistance (OSAP)	\$M		
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Increases from 2014-15 base	39.2	72.3	116.7
Cumulative % increases from 2014-15	4%	7%	11%

In its 2015 budget, the Ontario government announced significant policy changes to Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) starting in 2015-16. These changes reflect the government's positive response to student advocacy and include:

- Indexation of OSAP assistance levels to the rate of inflation (announced earlier);
- Indexation of the amount of the cap on loans, above which loans are turned into non-repayable assistance (announced earlier);
- Exemption of income earned by students in-year while studying (so such income does not result in reduction of OSAP entitlement);
- Changes in the calculation of students' actual pre-study income (typically summer earnings) to an assumed flat rate contribution of student earnings (\$3,000);
- Changes in the treatment of assets (including vehicles and savings);
- Changes to how scholarship income is treated in the calculation of OSAP entitlement; and
- A significant policy change allowing students the option of accepting only grants if they are eligible for both grants and loans.

Ministry staff explained that about two-thirds of students would be unaffected by the changes in the treatment of assets and scholarship income. Of the remaining third, about half would see increases in entitlements and half (chiefly those with high scholarship income and no earned income) would see reductions in entitlements.

As a result of the aforementioned changes, the province will incur some additional costs that will be mostly offset by the savings due to the reduction of aid to students with high scholarship income. The net effect of these policy changes on overall OSAP expenditures is expected to be minimal (though it is very difficult to project the impact of these policy changes).

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)



## Updated: Ontario Tuition Grant

**Update:** In the 2015 Budget, Ministry staff confirmed that the level of the OTG will be indexed to the annual increase in college and university tuition, as was begun in 2012-13. As a result, the OTG will increase by three per cent (3%) to an estimated maximum of \$1,835 for eligible students in bachelors programs in 2015-16 (the exact amount has not yet been confirmed by ministry staff).

**Background:** In January 2012, the government announced the establishment of the OTG program. University students who are four years or less out of high school with an annual family income of less than \$160,000 can receive the grant, which initially was \$800 per term, or \$1,600 per year. (In each subsequent year of the program, the OTG increased at the same level as increases allowed by the tuition framework.) Students who receive OSAP are considered automatically for OTG, while non-OSAP recipient students can apply online to MTCU.

The first phase for the 2011-12 year delivered a 50% benefit commencing in January 2012 (\$800 per eligible university student) and was administered almost entirely by MTCU. Full implementation of the program delivering 100% of the benefit began in 2012-13 and relies upon universities for additional support and administration.

MTCU consulted with colleges and universities on the design and implementation of the OTG program. COU 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.

In January 2014, MTCU announced that students in their final year of a five-year co-op program and students attending private career colleges and other private postsecondary institutions who are eligible for financial aid through OSAP will be eligible for the OTG.

Through the Technical Working Group on Tuition consultations, MTCU has given strong signals that the government would like to implement a tuition-netting scheme in which the value of the OTG is deducted from each eligible student's tuition bill. Working Group members have made MTCU staff aware that implementation would require significant resources, including programming changes and time, to be fully operational.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## **Updated: Student Access Guarantee (SAG)**

SAG requirements and impact on the Tuition Set-Aside

**Update:** MTCU initiated consultations with COU and Colleges Ontario on the Student Access Guarantee (SAG) guidelines for 2015-16. The first meeting took place on April 17 to review SAG data. At a meeting on May 28, the impact on the SAG of the OSAP changes discussed in the [Student Financial Assistance section](#) were discussed, and there will be further discussion at a third meeting to be scheduled shortly.

**Background:** The SAG program requires universities to provide assistance to students to cover their unmet need in the OSAP assessment attributable to tuition and book costs that exceed certain thresholds. The tuition threshold annual increase is indexed to the maximum allowable tuition increase rate for undergraduate Arts and Science programs, while the book shortfall threshold is indexed to the CPI.

Since 2010-11, institutions have been required to automatically provide non-repayable assistance to undergraduate (first-entry) OSAP recipients with tuition/book shortfalls, i.e., the student does not have to make a separate application.

The 2014-15 SAG Guidelines were issued in June 2014 and contained no significant policy changes. The Guidelines included the annual escalator to the thresholds for calculating tuition/book shortfalls, specifically, an increase to \$5690 for tuition (\$6730 for co-op programs) and \$1136 for books. An escalator will be applied again in 2015-16 and it is expected that the thresholds will be \$5860 for tuition and \$1158 for books.

The SAG Guidelines also provide direction regarding levels of non-repayable assistance that should be provided to students attending second-entry programs. The 2014-15 Guidelines set a requirement for universities to meet no less than 20 per cent of the aggregate value of tuition/book shortfalls of its second-entry students through non-repayable types of aid. Most universities already exceed this requirement.

Since 2011-12, universities have been required to make formal arrangements with a lender if they intend to meet a portion of their SAG obligations to second-entry students through repayable assistance.

The Ministry is of the view that institutions generate sufficient funds through the Tuition Set-Aside to cover their SAG obligations. The impact of the SAG on the Tuition Set-Aside is examined in the Ministry's annual consultations. The potential for increased SAG expenditures due to the exemption of study period earnings in particular was examined at the meeting on May 28 and the next meeting will discuss possible mitigations.

**Division:** Office of the Secretary to Council

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Ontario Education Number (OEN)

MTCU is moving forward with the implementation of the OEN in the postsecondary sector.

**Background:** Ontario universities have made great progress implementing the OEN. Presently, universities have achieved approximately a 95% compliance rate, with about a 5% error rate within the 95%. However, there are significant challenges with achieving 100% compliance.

The OEN is a student identification number that is assigned by the Ministry of Education (EDU) to elementary and secondary students across the province. The number, which is unique to every student, is used as the key identifier on a student's school records, and follows the student through his or her elementary and secondary education (and upon implementation, postsecondary education too). The OEN is a randomly assigned number, tied to stable information about the student (name, gender, date of birth). The OEN facilitates reliable records on the movement and progress of individual students through elementary and secondary school, while also protecting their privacy through anonymity and encryption, and enables highly detailed research concerning student success.

An OEN Working Group comprising registrars, institutional planners and others has been established. The Working Group has been meeting with MTCU officials since April 2011. MTCU and EDU have been supportive and created some technological tools to improve the efficiency of implementation.

A COU working group continues to work to develop ideas for better supports for OEN implementation (including changes in the Ministry's IT systems supporting the OEN Registry) and a reasonable approach to compliance for funding purposes.

A separate COU Working Group comprised of individuals from the Council on University Planning and Analysis (CUPA), registrars, and members of the Task Force on Access and Privacy Issues has been having ongoing discussion with MTCU about privacy concerns with MTCU's interest in collecting additional personal information, and, in particular, a concern with linking the PFIS-USER database with the OEN Registry.

Bill 10, *Childcare Modernization Act*, which proposed amendments to the *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act* (and consequently the *Education Act*) has received Royal Assent. MTCU has agreed to develop a policy and process framework that will provide some clarity around how MTCU intends to use the OEN in research and analysis, and how it will operationalize its authority to collect personal information.

COU is also working with MTCU to develop a mechanism for universities and COU to gain access to de-personalized OEN data.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** February 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: Teacher Education Funding and Proposed Restructuring

**Update:** MTCU staff confirmed that MTCU's budget continues to include the funding reduction for teacher education programs. MTCU staff in the 2015 Budget lock up indicated that the ministry's budget also includes provision for additional supports for transition to the longer teacher education program in 2015-16 and future years, as announced in 2014.

Teacher education	\$M		
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Funding reduction (BIU weight)	(24.6)	(24.6)	(24.6)
Transitional funding for implementation of the longer teacher education program	5.6	3.2	1.3
Net impact	(19.0)	(21.4)	(23.3)

The phase-in of the reduction shown in the table applies to four universities: Brock, Lakehead, Nipissing, and Trent. The last year of the phase-in is 2017-18; in future years the ministry is projecting that the reductions in the BIU value for teacher education programs will be fully implemented.

This table does **not** include one-time transition funding that is also being provided for 2015-16 in support of the phase-in of the new, longer teacher education program – specifically, for this start-up year when only half the eventual cohort of consecutive education students is funded. It is notable that this one-time funding is provided in lieu of operating grants lost for the “half-cohort”; no funding has been provided in recognition of lost tuition revenue.

There will be no additional funding in 2015-16 (beyond that described above) to support transition to the new program.

**Background:** In 2011, motivated by the current oversupply of teachers, MTCU announced a reduction in funding for teacher education spaces by approximately \$7.5M. MTCU announced that funding adjustments would take place over two years with an initial \$5M reduction in 2011-12 and the remaining \$2.5M in 2012-13.

In June 2013, the provincial government announced its plan to require Bachelor of Education programs to lengthen the program and further reduce the number of entering students. Also in June, MTCU wrote to universities indicating that it would reduce per-student grants for teacher education programs starting in 2015-16 – reducing the BIU weight for the teacher education program from 2.0 to 1.5 BIUs (which, when interacting with formula fees in the operating grants means a per-student grant reduction of approximately one-third).

COU established a working group comprising Deans of Education and institutional planners that met with MTCU to address funding and implementation issues.

In October 2013, Executive Heads of those universities with teacher education programs wrote to Minister Duguid requesting that the government reconsider its decision to reduce per-student funding for teacher education programs by one-third, starting in 2015-16. The Minister was unwilling to re-open the issue and indicated that the government would proceed with the reduction of funding in 2015-16.

In January 2014, COU wrote a letter to MTCU setting out an advocacy position regarding transition issues related to the longer teacher education programs, and seeking additional transition funding, more flexibility in the use of transition funding, and clarity concerning the basis of funding for teacher education in future years. COU also requested a commitment from the Ministry to engage universities in the development and analysis of options for the creation of a “stand-alone” operating grant for teacher education that MTCU has indicated it will implement beginning in 2015-16.

Following the June 2014 election, the returning government publicly announced its planned enhanced teacher education program, presenting significant operational and fiscal challenges to the province’s 13 universities offering Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programs. The new program, to be implemented beginning in 2015-16, doubles the length of B.Ed. programs to four semesters, doubles the mandatory practicum time to 80 days, and enhances the curriculum to include enhanced training in teaching methodology, mental health, and accommodation. In addition, the government announced that it would also reduce the funding weight of each student from 2.0 to 1.5 BIUs (effectively reducing funding by one-third when formula fees are included). The lengthened program and reduced enrolment in 2015-16 (during transition to the new two-year program) means a substantial funding gap for programs in 2015-16 and will bring operational challenges to those universities offering concurrent and consecutive B.Ed. programs.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: Applications for Fall 2015

The Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC) releases monthly statistics between January 2015 and September 2015 on applications to first year undergraduate programs.

**Update:** The deadline for students currently enrolled in an Ontario secondary school, referred to as Secondary School applicants, to apply to university through OUAC was January 14, 2015. Historically, 98% of total secondary school applicants submit their applications by this date.

The second group of applicants, referred to as Non-Secondary School applicants, includes all other applicants (mature students, those taking a gap year(s), and those transferring from another institution or jurisdiction). The January 14 deadline does not apply to these students; most choose to apply later in the cycle (in particular, those transferring from college or another university).

OUAC released the following secondary school application statistics to the public as of May 13, 2015:

<b>Secondary School Applicants:</b>	
Number of first choice applicants	88,558
% change compared to May 2014	-1.7%
Number of applications	412,983
% change compared to May 2014	-0.6%

<b>Non- Secondary School Applicants:</b>	
Number of first choice applicants	51,561
% change compared to May 2014	-0.2%

More details and regular updates can be found under the "Statistics" tab at [www.ouac.on.ca](http://www.ouac.on.ca).

**Division:** OUAC

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Credit Transfer – Student Mobility and Pathways

The provincial government is seeking improvement of student mobility and credit transfer pathways in the postsecondary sector.

**Background:** All publicly assisted Ontario universities are members of the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT). There is a [separate update on ONCAT](#).

COU's Credit Transfer Technical Working Group (with members drawn from the Council on University Planning and Analysis, registrars, and Ministry staff) has provided advice on data and accountability for credit transfer funding, and ONCAT is moving ahead with development of data and an accountability framework.

COU's Credit Transfer Resource Group continues to discuss ways to facilitate university-to-university credit transfer.

The COU Credit Transfer Technical Working Group provided recommendations to MTCU concerning the allocation of the institutional portion of the credit transfer allocation.

In February 2011, MTCU released a credit transfer policy statement and further information about funding to support credit transfer initiatives. The government also announced that it would establish a new coordinating body, ONCAT.

MTCU is providing \$73.7M over five years for various aspects of the credit transfer initiative:

- \$23.5M for an Innovation Fund (for projects to develop new pathways, much like the recent calls for proposals by the College University Consortium Council);
- \$10.6M for a new website and the ongoing operations of the new coordinating body (ONCAT); and
- \$39.6M for annual allocations to institutions to support credit transfer.

MTCU held a roundtable discussion with Executive Heads of colleges and universities in August 2013 concerning credit transfer. Executive Heads from both sectors expressed a strong consensus that the progress being made with the leadership of ONCAT is significant. The policy directions that ONCAT has developed and the projects it is funding are leading the sector in the right direction, and improvements to student mobility are gathering momentum. Participants at the roundtable urged the Ministry to continue its funding support for ONCAT and to continue to work with ONCAT to reach its policy objectives.

In February 2014, Credit Transfer Resource Group members met with ONCAT to establish a short-term working group to address best practices in credit transfer policies. The group's goals were to review existing policies, develop a set of principles that could lead to best practices, and identify pathways to goals/outcomes. As part of this initiative, group members participated in a consultation process with sector stakeholders.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** March 2014

[Return to the table of contents.](#)



## Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT)

**Background:** ONCAT has been incorporated and a board elected. The university members of the board are: Tim McTiernan (UOIT) as the university sector co-chair of the board, Peter Ricketts (Carleton) and Rhonda Lenton (York). The college members are: Glen Vollebregt (St. Lawrence College) as the college sector co-chair, Mary Preece (Sheridan College), and Baldev Pooni (Georgian College). The board includes ex officio members from COU, Colleges Ontario, OUAC and the colleges' application centre. The board also includes student and external members. In October 2012, Glenn Craney was announced as the Founding Executive Director of ONCAT.

ONCAT will advance implementation of a province-wide credit transfer system by:

- Expanding and improving student transfer pathways that respond to student demand, through continuation of funding for pathways projects as under the College University Consortium Council (CUCC);
- Expanding and improving a web portal for information for students about credit transfer ([ONTransfer](#));
- Improving transparency and access to information about transfer pathways and credit transfer;
- Supporting student success for transfer students (for example, improving graduation rates of transfer students, increasing student support services); and
- Providing professional development and best practices forums.

Project funding is available through the Credit Transfer Innovation Fund to support a variety of projects that will expand student pathways, create more seamless educational experiences and increase collaboration throughout Ontario's postsecondary education system.

In January 2014, ONCAT launched a Course-to-Course Transfer Guide (C2C Guide). This database will allow students to explore options for credit transfer and credit equivalencies at participating universities and colleges across the province. The database also provides information for high school students and advisors. Almost all colleges and universities are participating in the project.

In the spring and summer of 2014, ONCAT worked with institutions to conduct an environmental scan of existing policies and practices for credit transfer. The information collected was collated into FAQ-style institutional profiles and posted on [ONTransfer.ca](#). This work provided detail into the varied operational contexts of institutions, and provided support for developing a set of general principles for credit transfer that could provide guidance in addressing the needs of students and institutions.

A working group of member representatives (from colleges, universities, and students) met throughout the summer of 2014 and collaboratively created a set of principles for best practice. A consultation paper ("Best Practices in Credit Transfer Policies and Procedures") was developed and circulated in fall 2014. The high level principles



articulated in the document provide a set of goals for supporting student success. The statements of principle provide general guidance and allow for university autonomy in developing procedures that are aligned with institutional policies, resources, and student needs. Once the document has been reviewed and finalized, key points about how institutions meet the principles will be posted on the [ONTransfer.ca](http://ONTransfer.ca) website.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** March 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Teaching and Learning

Ontario universities are collaborating to share ideas and information on teaching and learning innovations to improve student engagement and learning outcomes.

**Background:** The first Symposium on Learning Outcomes – co-sponsored by COU, HEQCO, and the Quality Council – was held in April 2012 in Toronto. The three hundred delegates included senior administrators, faculty members, educational developers from Ontario universities and colleges, provincial government staff from across Canada, and an international roster of guest speakers.

A second symposium entitled *Learning Outcomes Assessment, Practically Speaking* was held in April 2013. Nearly 400 delegates attended more than fifty workshops and other sessions at the very successful event. Co-sponsors for this event included OCQAS, the Quality Council, ONCAT, and the Canadian Publishers' Council. The symposium offered interactive and hands-on workshops to guide participants through the “how to” of assessing learning outcomes. Delegates included senior administrators, faculty members, and educational developers from Ontario universities and colleges, provincial government staff from across Canada, and an international roster of guest speakers who led workshops on the assessment of learning outcomes in a range of disciplines.

In October 2014 a third learning outcomes symposium, *Learning Outcomes: A Toolkit for Assessment*, was held in Toronto. The event was a great success, bringing together more than 330 college and university senior administrators, faculty and teaching and learning staff. The conference featured over 34 sessions on topics ranging from course and program assessment techniques, curriculum development and mapping, metrics and data collection, graduate and undergraduate assessments, faculty engagement, student success, and credit transfer. The full program and workshop materials, including presentation slides and handouts, can be found on the [conference website](#). The event was co-sponsored by the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS), the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council), the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT), COU, and the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB).

COU's report, *Beyond the Sage on the Stage: Innovative and Effective Teaching and Learning at Ontario Universities* is intended to encourage a more accurate and positive perception of teaching on Ontario campuses. The report was launched with a well-attended “Toast to Teaching Excellence” reception in April 2012 at Queen's Park. The Minister, MPPs, government officials and staff from MTCU and other ministries, as well as stakeholders from our sector, were invited to attend this celebration of how universities are finding new ways to engage students.

An earlier report titled *Ensuring the Value of University Degrees in Ontario: A Guide to Learning Outcomes, Degree Level Expectations and the Quality Assurance Process in Ontario* was released in November 2011. The report explains how Ontario

universities ensure the value and quality of their degrees. The report was circulated to government and stakeholders, and received positive media attention.

COU is developing strategies to help universities take initiative to meet their teaching and learning objectives. A Teaching and Learning Task Force has been established under the aegis of OCAV. The Task Force addresses a range of teaching and learning issues, including recommending effective practices to improve instruction, student engagement, and learning outcomes.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** November 2014

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: Ontario Online

**Update:** The Ontario Online Learning Consortium / Consortium ontarien pour l'apprentissage en ligne (OOLC/COAEL) was incorporated in October 2014; the consortium is a member-based organization, and all publicly assisted colleges and universities have agreed to join. At the first meeting of the new consortium in November 2014, board members were elected, including co-chairs from the college and university sectors. Membership on the Board of Directors is now complete, with the exception of two public members. The search for a CEO, as well as the two public members, is ongoing.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has provided funding support for the establishment of the OOLC/COAEL. In the 2015-16 budget, Ministry staff confirmed that \$15M is allocated in its budget in each of the next three years for the operation of the OOLC/COAEL and to support the development of online courses. This adds two years to the originally announced three year commitment, and strongly suggests an ongoing base level of commitment.

One of the key priorities for the new consortium is the development of a portal to provide students access to information about online courses available at Ontario's colleges and universities. The portal will also provide links to learning supports, and resources for faculty and instructors. In March 2015, the Ministry allocated \$1M to support activities related to the development and execution of an RFP for the creation of the online portal. The new portal will be launched in September 2015.

Universities continue to work towards the development of courses and modules with support from the 2014-15 Shared Online Course Fund. In this second round of funding, 102 courses and modules from 17 institutions were funded for development and redesign. Courses and modules will be ready for delivery in the 2015-16 academic year. Total funding allocated to universities for course and module development in 2014-15 was \$6.2M.

**Background:** In December 2013, MTCU announced the Ontario Online initiative to universities and colleges (a [news release](#) was issued on January 13, 2014). As a main part of this initiative, the Ministry made available \$4.65M for the university sector in 2013-14. This funding supported the development of online courses, and also funded several projects in support of a new Centre of Excellence in online learning. This funding was administered by COU led by a steering committee of OCAV members.

MTCU's announcement was consistent with the directions discussed at the Ministry's July 2013 roundtable. The new initiative supports collaborative work across colleges and universities in the development of online education in Ontario.

In early January 2014, COU issued a series of calls for proposals to be funded under the new initiative announced by the Ministry. Universities were invited to submit proposals for development or redevelopment of online courses – introductory or foundational courses, or courses to support collaborative delivery of low-enrolment programs, or French-language courses. Universities and others in the sector

(consultants or other third party vendors) were invited to respond with expressions of interest in five projects, addressing:

- development of a student portal;
- quality standards;
- effective supports for faculty;
- assessment supports for online courses; and
- cost and revenue sharing models to support university collaboration in delivery of online courses.

165 proposals for online courses were received from 19 Ontario universities. In addition, 15 expressions of interest were submitted for the five strategic projects. Following a review process developed by the steering committee, 68 courses and five projects were awarded funding. The transfer payment agreement (TPA) for this initiative was held by Wilfrid Laurier University on behalf of the university sector. Universities worked to have new and redesigned online courses ready for fall 2014 delivery.

These directions are both consistent with and potentially overlapping with the proposed mandate and functions of the consortium under development among universities (OUO). COU will continue to work with CO, and with the OUO Steering Committee, to ensure appropriate alignment of these initiatives.

In October 2014, MTCU announced a second round of funding for Ontario's publicly assisted colleges and universities to support the development and redesign of high-quality online courses and modules (parts of courses). COU, under the direction of the University Online Steering Committee (established by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents [OCAV]), developed a set of guidelines to apply the Ministry's guidelines more specifically and clearly to the university sector.

As announced by the Ministry, and with the direction of the University Online Steering Committee, COU administered the call for proposals for the 2014-15 Shared Online Course Fund (ShOCF). In keeping with the Ministry's direction, the 2014-15 call gave higher priority to proposals that involve collaborations between, among, or within institutions.

COU received almost 350 specific proposals for course and modules by the submission deadline. Panels of independent reviewers evaluated the proposals according to guidelines developed by the University Online Steering Committee and Online Reference Group. Following the review process, COU submitted a proposed list of funded courses and modules to MTCU.

In September 2014, a joint Ontario Online Steering Committee (with membership from colleges, universities, Colleges Ontario, COU, ONCAT, and Contact North) developed a statement of mandate and purpose for the future consortium. On October 3, 2014, the OOLC/COAEL was incorporated. The consortium is a member-based organization. All publicly assisted colleges and universities joined the new consortium in October 2014.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: International

**Update:** MTCU has indicated that it is exploring development of an international strategy. COU has reassembled its International Working Group that includes presidents, vice-presidents academic, vice-presidents research, assistant vice-presidents international, and international liaison officers to brainstorm what would help the sector most and to discuss the implications of some of the Ontario government's strategies. More work will be required to develop a submission to government on this. However, the highest priority, which was articulated in COU's 2015 budget submission, remains flexibility for universities to use some of their graduate spaces for international students and a cap on the International Student Recovery.

COU has also provided support to organizers of an international contingent of Dutch politicians and researchers visiting Ontario on May 28 and 29, 2015. The two-day event, to be held in Kitchener-Waterloo and Toronto regions, will include formal and informal discussions, and COU has helped to facilitate networking meetings between administrators, faculty and students.

**Background:** COU coordinated a delegation of Executive Heads to meet with their counterparts in Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey, in December 2014. The Hon. Reza Moridi, Minister of TCU, joined the delegation, which explored collaborations with Turkish universities to strengthen research ties for innovation-driven economic development.

COU is in the process of reaching out to participants to discuss next steps that would support the advancement of university relationships in Turkey and promote the partnerships developed.

From November 17 to 21, 2014, COU hosted a group of vice-presidents research from China's Jiangsu province, who came to Ontario to meet with their Ontario university counterparts, share research strengths, explore partnership opportunities, and visit university labs and research facilities. COU worked with OCUR in preparation for this meeting. COU is now reaching out to OCUR to determine if any partnerships were developed as a result of the meetings, and to get more information about feasibility of managing delegations like this, since universities and the Jiangsu Provincial government are eager to pursue a visit to China from Ontario university presidents next year.

In January 2014, the federal government launched a new International Education Strategy that seeks to double the number of international students studying in Canada (to 450,000) by the year 2022. Funding of \$5M per year (announced in the last budget) will be dedicated to the strategy, with most of the money going towards "branding and marketing Canada as a world-class education destination." The strategy will target Brazil, China, India, Mexico, North Africa, the Middle East and Vietnam to improve links to and partnerships with international PSE institutions. Over two years, \$13M will be invested in Mitacs, a national not-for-profit organization that helps Canadian university students obtain placements in academic institutions overseas.

COU continues to liaise between MTCU and member institutions regarding the process for universities to apply to become “designated institutions” under Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s International Student Program (ISP). Beginning in the spring of 2014, student visas will only be issued for students who have been offered admission to an institution which has been designated by a provincial or territorial government as eligible to enroll international students.

COU continues to facilitate international delegations as well as to act as a clearing house for information and opportunities for our members. A recent delegation was led by the Hong Kong Secretary of Education, who asked university representatives to review and consider filling out a pro forma that advertises the requirements for Hong Kong students to study abroad. The Ontario representatives agreed to bring it forward to the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV) for consideration. This information now has been sent to International Offices at institutions, who will work with academic vice-presidents and registrars as appropriate to complete the pro forma.

This delegation represents one of many that COU has hosted since former Premier Dalton McGuinty announced his desire to expand international recruitment. Since then, the Ontario government has reduced its budget for international marketing efforts and implemented a fee on non-PhD international students (as per the [International Student Recovery](#) section).

**Division:** Communications and Public Affairs, Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)



## Updated: International Student Recovery (ISR)

**Update:** In the 2015 budget, projected savings to government from operating grant reductions related to international enrolments have been updated, and projections for one year added.

2015 update:	15-16	16-17	17-18
Reductions tied to international student enrolment	\$M		
International Student Recovery	(19.1)	(26.9)	(26.9)

The table shows that MTCU intends to continue the implementation approach announced in the 2012 budget, adding cohorts of entering international students in subsequent years to the International Student Recovery (ISR). (It is notable that the government achieved a larger than projected recovery under the ISR program last year. In the 2014 budget, the ISR for 2014-15 was projected to be \$17.3M; MTCU's data shows the actual recovery to be \$21.0M – a further reduction of \$3.7M – due to a higher than projected growth in the number of international students.)

COU continues to advocate that the level of the ISR be capped, and not continue to grow as international student enrolments grow, and addressed this in both its 2014 and 2015 pre-budget submissions.

Despite COU's advocacy, the budget indicates an ongoing assumption that the ISR will continue to be levied on new and continuing international students (excluding PhD students), and continue to grow. Ministry staff in the lock up confirmed that the apparent flattening of the recovery in 2017-18 does not reflect a policy decision, but is based simply on a modelling assumption that international enrolment will not grow in 2017-18 (with the result that, if enrolments of international students subject to the recovery in fact increase, the recovery will increase).

**Background:** In the March 2012 budget, the government announced that, beginning in 2013-14, MTCU would reduce transfer payments to each college and university to recover \$750 for every international student (excluding PhD students). The recovery would be phased in on a cohort basis with new entering students in 2013-14. In future years, entering students and returning students from the 2013-14 cohort onwards would be included in the count of students used to calculate the recovery.

MTCU consulted about implementation details with a COU working group, comprising Council on University Planning and Analysis (CUPA) and international office representatives. Consultations focused on technical elements of the recovery including count dates, the student counting metric (for example, full-time equivalents or headcounts), the treatment of part-time students and withdrawals, the treatment of 10- and 12-month programs at the Masters' level, and the revenue envelope from which the recovery will be made.

In April 2013, MTCU released guidelines for implementation of the ISR. As announced in the 2012 budget, MTCU reduced transfer payments to each college and university to



recover \$750 for every international student (excluding PhD students) who entered a program in Ontario in 2013-14. The 2013 budget indicated an ongoing assumption that the ISR will continue to be levied on new and continuing international students (excluding PhD students) and continue to grow.

COU has written to MTCU requesting that the ISR be based on the government's fiscal objectives, and not strictly tied to the numbers of international students. The government should determine and announce its annual target for the recovery, and allocate it among universities proportional to each universities share of non-PhD international students.

MTCU has recently shown some openness to discuss capping the ISR, though no commitments have been made. COU is presently studying alternative models to go forward in discussions with the Ministry.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: Efficiency targets

**Update:** The 2015 budget assumes the continuation of the operating grant reduction (called “policy levers” when announced in 2012), which was a two per cent (2%) reduction, phased in over two years, in the per-student funding in various enrolment-driven operating grants. The reduction was mainly implemented as an approximately two per cent reduction to the per-student funding values in the Basic Operating Grant and the undergraduate access and graduate expansion grants.

In past years, MTCU provided a specific estimate of the impact of this reduction. This year no specific estimate was provided. Instead the reduction contributed to the underlying calculation of the base operating grants. This suggests strongly that the government considers the reduction to be ongoing, and the reduced funding amount per student is thus now part of the base funding allocation.

**Background:** The 2012 Ontario Budget announced the government’s intention to reduce the operating grants of colleges and universities beginning in 2013-14. At the time of the budget announcement, MTCU indicated that the university sector reduction would be \$28M in 2013-14 and \$55.5M in 2014-15.

On April 12, 2013, MTCU released a memo that confirmed the reduction in operating grants for 2013-14 of \$28.6M, and also set out each institution’s reduction. The memo indicated that the reduction in 2014-15 will use the same method, but with a doubling of the reduction (projected to total \$58M in 2014-15).

The reduction was allocated to enrolment-based grants, which include: The Basic Operating Grant, Graduate Expansion Grant, Undergraduate Accessibility Grant, and the Nursing Grant. To implement efficiency targets, the Basic Operating Income per Basic Income Unit (BOI per BIU) rate was again reduced in 2013-14 by 0.7%. This translated into 0.9% reduction in grants per BIU.

MTCU stated its policy intent that the reduction should not adversely affect students, and indicated that the ministry “will work with” institutions on implementation strategies, listing several examples (such as vacancy management and collaborative purchasing). It was announced in 2013 that there would be a requirement to report on how each university has implemented the reduction, but no reporting has been required.

**Division:** Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: Quality Assurance

### Operation of the new Quality Assurance Framework

**Update:** The Quality Council and Appraisal Committee are meeting monthly to review new program proposals and reports. The rate of submission of new program proposals has increased as the academic year progressed. Between July 1, 2014 and the end of May 2015, the Quality Council has approved 54 new programs (15 undergraduate; 16 master's, 7 PhD, 14 graduate diploma and 2 graduate collaborative programs). More new programs are likely to be approved at the June meeting.

The Quality Council approved the One Year Response to the Quality Assurance Audit from the University of Ottawa; the Summary of the Auditors Report on the Scope and Adequacy of the One Year Response is now available on the [Quality Council website](#). The Auditors' Report on the Quality Assurance Audit of the University of Windsor has also been approved by the Quality Council and a Summary Report is also available on the Quality Council website. Audit Reports for The Royal Military College (RMC) and Nipissing University are in preparation.

Sixty-four university key contacts in quality assurance attended the second annual meeting held on April 17 at Ryerson University. Twenty universities were represented at the meeting. Facilitators from the universities engaged with participants on topics suggested by the key contacts including:

- Engaging Stakeholders in the Creation of Self-Studies and New Program Development;
- Preparing for and Responding to the Audit: Tips for Doing it Well, Best Practices in Going Forward, and Emerging from the Experience;
- University/College Collaborations and Quality Assurance Processes;
- New Program Approvals: Tips for Optimizing the Process Through to Quality Council Approval; and
- Quality Assurance Considerations for Programs Offered On-line or through Hybrid Delivery.

**Background:** The Quality Council and its Appraisal Committee meet monthly to review new program proposals. The Quality Council website includes decisions on new program approvals along with a brief description of the programs approved.

The Quality Assurance Framework was approved by the Executive Heads of Ontario universities in April 2010. The Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance was established shortly thereafter with its first meeting in July 2010. The quality assurance processes that fell under the mandate of the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies and the Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee were completed by the end of June 2011. The transition of quality assurance responsibilities to the Quality Council is now complete.

**Division:** Quality Assurance

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: COU Reports and Symposia

**David C. Smith Dinner:** This year's award dinner was held on October 8, 2014, and honoured Roberta Jamieson, President of Indspire, for her commitment to improving learning opportunities for Indigenous youth. Her speech, [Building Momentum in Indigenous Education: Renewing the Call to Action](#), is available on the COU website. The next Dinner is scheduled for October 15, 2015.

**2014 Learning Outcomes Symposium:** The Symposium took place at the Eaton Chelsea Hotel in Toronto on October 16 and 17, 2014. Entitled, *Learning Outcomes: A Toolkit for Assessment*, the Symposium offered hands-on, interactive workshops to faculty, deans, senior administrators, staff of teaching and learning centers, and others involved in the assessment of learning outcomes. For additional information, see the [Teaching and Learning](#) section.

**2014 Conference of Ontario University Board Members:** The third annual Conference of Ontario University Board Members was held on November 7 and 8, 2014 in downtown Toronto. Members of the governing boards of Ontario universities, university presidents and university secretaries were invited to attend the conference, which focused on ongoing challenges and opportunities in the university sector and the role of boards in addressing them. The Hon. Lloyd Axworthy and Harvey Weingarten, President of HEQCO, delivered keynote addresses, and the Hon. Reza Moridi, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, gave opening remarks. Planning for the 2015 conference is underway.

**Faculty at Work:** COU released results from the first major study in Canada of faculty work on the substantial contributions of university professors. [Faculty at Work: A Preliminary Report on Faculty Work at Ontario's Universities, 2010-2012](#), was published in August 2014.

**Going Greener Report:** COU published [Growing Greener Campuses](#) in August 2014, COU's fifth annual Going Greener Report, which highlights the improvements in environmental sustainability across Ontario campuses. The next edition will feature a revamped survey with standardized energy, water and waste reporting as well as success stories. It will be released in summer 2015.

**Annual Report:** COU's [2012-13 Annual Report](#) celebrates the "greatest hits" of the year for the sector, including the success of graduates in the job market, the rise of entrepreneurship and experiential learning opportunities, and continuing commitment to create more accessible campuses and develop resources to support the mental health needs of students. This Report also captures the research efforts of universities, some of Ontario's award-winning scholars, and the ways universities are creating cleaner, greener campuses and supporting healthier communities.

**Conference Board of Canada research and report:** COU provided input to a report on innovation that updated their 2003 Innovation Skills Profile and reflected on the role that postsecondary education is playing in developing innovation skills. A [summary of](#)

[the report is available on the Conference Board's website](#), which was published in May 2014 (account required to access the full report).

**Experiential learning report:** Building on the success of the report, *Entrepreneurship at Ontario Universities: Fuelling Success*, COU prepared [Bringing Life to Learning at Ontario Universities](#), a report that showcases the applied learning opportunities that are positioning students for careers.

**Labour Outcomes Report:** COU published [University Works](#) on February 24, a report highlighting the labour market outcomes of university graduates. Using data from Statistics Canada, the report confirmed that university graduates experienced the highest employment growth of any education group over the last decade, earn more and have lower unemployment rates. The 2015 edition will be published in early June.

**Deferred Maintenance Report:** COU has developed a report, *Critical Condition: A Report on the Physical State of Ontario Universities' Campuses*, to raise awareness within government about the growing problem of maintaining buildings on university campuses and the implications of deferring it, though the report will not be publicly released or posted. For additional information, see the [deferred maintenance](#) section.

**Efficiencies Report:** COU, through CSAO, is planning to develop a report and host a forum in fall 2015 on the ways in which universities are controlling costs through collaboration, shared services, and administrative efficiencies. The goal is to demonstrate universities' leadership and innovation to government and other stakeholders, as a follow up to the successful [2011 Innovative Ideas report and forum](#).

**Economic Impact:** In 2016, COU plans to release a report on the economic impact of universities on local communities, the province and the country. This report will measure the ripple effect of purchasing and spending spurred by universities, knowledge creation and entrepreneurship.

**Division:** Communications and Public Affairs/Corporate Services/Office of the Secretary to Council/Quality Assurance/Policy and Analysis

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the table of contents.](#)

## Updated: University Pension Plans

Sustainability challenges, responding to the Government's agenda on pension reform

**Update:** The work of the University Pensions Project (UPP) continues with smaller discussions to work through outstanding issues related to specific elements of governance and benefits design. The goal is to present a final draft document (preliminary plan framework) to the Plenary Body in late June for review. [See below for Background]

On January 20, the Ministry of Finance issued draft **Regulations to Facilitate the Merger of BPS SEPPs with Existing JSPPs or Conversion to new JSPPs**. COU provided feedback to the Ministry on the regulations as they pertained to the University Pensions Project. As the Ministry has received numerous submissions from various stakeholders, the regulations will be issued for an additional consultation period over the summer of 2015.

On April 15, the Ministry released draft **Proposed Criteria for Exempting New Broader Public Sector (BPS) Multi-Employer JSPPs from Solvency Funding Requirements**. Responses are due by June 1, 2015. Currently, the criteria indicate that in order to receive a solvency exemption, a new JSPP would need at least five employers with no one employer comprising more than 50 per cent of plan beneficiaries, and that assets should total \$5 billion. Criteria would not be set out in regulation. The UPP will submit a formal response.

**Background:** A "University JSPP Plenary Body" was struck in 2014 to discuss and design a multi-employer Jointly Sponsored Pension Plan (JSPP) for Ontario universities. The Body comprises interested representatives from OCUFA, COU, university administrations, and unions. COU and OCUFA have received continued funding from MTCU for technical and project management support related to these joint discussions.

The objective of the Body over the next 12 months will be to create a Memorandum of Understanding that outlines a basic structure for a multi-employer JSPP consisting of four core areas: benefits and features, plan governance, actuarial and finance, and corporate structure. At the end of the project, it is anticipated that the MOU/draft plan would be shared with each participating member's institution for internal discussion and determination of support for the plan; this phase of the work does not entail any commitment to move to a JSPP, only to explore this as a possible option. At the conclusion of this phase of work, estimated to be June 2015, the Body would reassess whether any additional work needs to be undertaken.

The Plenary Body met on October 17, 2014 and the meeting provided an overview of the concept for a voluntary JSPP for the university sector and outlined the collaborative process established by COU and OCUFA. Presentations were made by legal and actuarial experts from Hicks Morley LLP, Koskie Minsky LLP, Eckler Ltd. and Aon Hewitt, who will continue to provide advice to the project.

On January 13, 2015, actuarial and legal experts presented a first draft of framework documents to the Plenary Body that laid out options and questions related to benefit design, actuarial assumptions and governance structures. This meeting offered an opportunity for participants to ask for clarification, and for the experts to receive direction and input. Plenary participants provided feedback on the framework documents and continued discussions were held at the February 23 Plenary meeting.

A highly successful Ontario Universities Pension Symposium, co-hosted by Wilfrid Laurier and Aon Hewitt, was held on May 6, 2014 at Wilfrid Laurier, with over-subscribed attendance. Attendees included representatives from unions, faculty associations, university administrations and other interested members of the university community. The symposium provided participants with the opportunity to hear about pension issues facing the sector, as well as possible solutions to address the long term sustainability of plans.

The table that follows outlines the status of key initiatives that are part of the Pension Plan Sustainability Project.

Overview of Pension Plan Sustainability Project Initiatives	
Initiative	Status
50/50 cost-sharing of current service costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Substantial progress has been made to increase the level of employee contributions through collective bargaining negotiations at a number of Ontario universities. Some plans have already achieved 50/50. COU (through Aon Hewitt) continues to track progress.</li> <li>The Ministry of Finance/government continues to see this is a priority goal toward pension sustainability and one of several directions signaled to achieve permanent solvency relief from government through regulation changes.</li> </ul>
Extension of Temporary Solvency Relief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Ministry of Finance announced an <b>additional extension of temporary solvency relief</b> in October 2013 for a number of universities. COU had advocated for the extension of relief for an additional three years.</li> <li>The <b>final regulation for Stage 2 temporary solvency relief</b> was filed on May 8, 2014 for a number of universities.</li> <li>Additional plans qualified for <b>Stage 2 relief</b> as of March 2015.</li> </ul>



Overview of Pension Plan Sustainability Project Initiatives	
Initiative	Status
Pooled Asset Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The BPS Pensions Branch (Ministry of Finance) established a technical Working Group on Pooled Asset Management to advise on the design, governance and transition issues associated with the implementation of a new pooled asset management entity for the BPS.</li> <li>• The work shifted to focus on WSIB and the Ontario Pension Board (OPB) as the founding members of a new entity. The entity may be established to support the government's Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP).</li> <li>• The 2015 Ontario Budget introduced the <i>Investment Management Corporation of Ontario Act, 2015</i> (the "IMCO Act"), which will establish the asset management entity. No timeframe for the establishment has been announced.</li> </ul>
MTCU Joint Working Group (JWG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Joint Working Group (JWG) is a forum initiated by MTCU for discussion and sharing of information, as part of the funding provided by MTCU to COU and OCUFA.</li> <li>• Meetings began in 2013 and were held periodically through 2014-15 to review a straw model of a JSPP and its costing, discuss governance issues. OCUFA also shared the outcome of their research project and straw model.</li> <li>• Since the signing of a new TPA in September 2015 to undertake work for the University Pensions Project, the JWG continues to meet in 2015-16 to provide updates to government on the work of the UPP in the designing of the framework for a JSPP.</li> </ul>

In 2013, the University Pensions Task Force completed its first major milestone on its feasibility study of a sector-wide JSPP. Allan Shapira, technical advisor from Aon Hewitt, and members of the COU Task Force met with the Ministry of Finance Broader Public Sector (BPS) Pensions Branch and MTCU in April 2013, to present an outline of a JSPP straw model and to articulate key issues that would need to be overcome, or to be part of a government framework, to implement such a model within the sector. The discussion also touched on the option of one or more plans joining the CAAT Plan (college sector JSPP); however, analysis of this alternative is still in the early stages. The Council of Senior Administrative Officers (CSAO) Pensions Interest Group met in July of that year to review the cost implications of the JSPP model and begin the discussion of governance issues that would need to be resolved in implementing a JSPP.

In 2012-13, CSAO's Working Group on University Pension Plans' (WGUPP) mandate on pension sustainability reflected the direction outlined in the 2012 Ontario Budget which included the following initiatives:

- consolidation of assets for investment management purposes;



- 50/50 sharing of current service costs with plan members; and
- a sector-wide JSPP.

In the 2012 budget, the government had signaled its intent to introduce framework legislation that would pool the investment management of smaller public-sector pension plans. Under this framework, management of assets could be transferred to a new entity or to an existing large public-sector fund. The former Minister of Finance's Special Advisor – BPS Pension Efficiencies, William Morneau, developed a framework for this change in consultation with stakeholders, including representatives from the university sector. In the spring of 2013, the Ministry of Finance established a Pooled Asset Management Working Group (see above chart).

The 2012 budget also indicated that the government expects single-employer plans to move to 50/50 cost-sharing of contributions between employers and plan members within five years (by 2017). Temporary solvency relief measures are offered as an incentive and further incentives may be considered. The government has indicated its willingness to support efforts to convert single-employer plans to multi-employer JSPPs.

In 2010, the government introduced a two-stage Temporary Solvency Funding Relief program. COU had advocated with government on behalf of the sector for an extension on the temporary solvency relief measures since 2012.

**Division:** Office of the  
President/Corporate Services

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Benchmarking Administrative Performance Indicators

**Background:** In fall 2012, the Council of Senior Administrative Officers (CSAO) established the Benchmark Working Group (BWG) whose objectives are to build on internal initiatives (e.g., the Financial Health Survey) and external best practices (financial and administrative benchmarking initiatives in the broader public sector) in order to develop recommended administrative benchmark indicators for CSAO to consider for implementation. The benchmark exercise is intended to help university administrators compare key performance indicators on administrative efficiency, sustainability and service quality, and to exchange information on ways to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

The chair of the BWG, Carol McAulay (Laurentian), commissioned the Education Advisory Board (EAB) to conduct the pilot over the summer and fall of 2014. EAB's report provided recommendations on data development for the indicators not yet available based on feedback provided by staff at the pilot universities. A pilot-testing phase was initiated with data collected from six universities (Laurentian, UOIT, Ottawa, Toronto, Western, and York).

In February 2015, CSAO approved the final list of indicators and definitions. The indicators cover financial administration, physical facilities administration, human resources, IT, procurement, and campus security. CSAO directed the BWG to finalize definitions, assess data sources, and explore options and feasibility around the establishment of a data repository for the indicators.

The BWG will present preliminary data and options to CSAO in the late spring/early summer.

**Division:** Corporate Services

**Updated:** March 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Collaborative Procurement

**Background:** In March 2015, Ontario universities reported to government on their improvements to collaborative procurement (CP) spending for 2013-14. The report indicated that the sector increased the amount of CP spending to 14.5 per cent, or \$297.7 million, of their total operational spending. Universities have collectively committed to raising their CP to 15 per cent of the total operational spend by 2015.

Greater gains are anticipated for the 2014-15 implementation year as existing contracts will conclude and be replaced with collaborative procurement contracts.

The Ministry of Government Services (MGS) is leading an initiative to increase CP in the broader public sector. Increased collaboration is designed to increase the proportion of purchasing contracts negotiated with partners (other universities, cities, school boards, etc.), leading to lower per-unit prices and lower procurement processing costs. To meet MGS's objectives, CSAO struck a steering committee chaired by Don O'Leary (Guelph) and composed of three CSAO members and three university procurement directors.

The initiative aims to build on the ongoing work led by the Ontario University Procurement Management Association (OUPMA), a CSAO affiliate, as well as local, regional, and national collaborative efforts.

The CP initiative has highlighted the need for enabling technologies to fully realize the potential benefits of CP. A multi-institutional proposal under MTCU's Productivity and Innovation Fund for e-procurement software was not, however, successful.

The first (2012-13) progress report for the CSAO CP project was submitted to MGS in April. The report noted a sector-wide, year-over-year increase in joint purchasing of seven percent. As the letter to the Ministry noted, the initiative was launched part-way through the 2012-13 implementation year. Greater gains are anticipated for 2013-14 with new joint procurement processes and promotional communication initiatives underway.

Some universities have recently purchased new e-procurement software to enable more collaborative purchasing. This platform, however, is far from system-wide. Other universities are seeking funding opportunities to join the e-procurement consortium.

OUPMA continues to lead on implementation of the CP initiative in support of the Steering Committee.

**Division:** Corporate Services

**Updated:** March 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Communicating the Challenge of Financial Sustainability

**Background:** The Canadian Association of University Business Officers (CAUBO) has completed a project to gather best practices for communicating the challenges of financial sustainability to internal and external stakeholder audiences. A CAUBO committee commissioned Ken Snowdon to write a report that addresses the nature and scope of the financial sustainability challenge. CAUBO will issue the report to university vice-presidents of finance and administration in March 2015 for their internal use.

A second report will address potential solutions to sustainability.

CSAO will continue to explore other ways to successfully communicate financial sustainability challenges (e.g., financial scenario-based projections and key messages supported by info-graphics) to help universities effectively communicate the magnitude and complexity of the challenge to a variety of internal and external stakeholders. Such tools and strategies would be intended to cultivate a climate in which the need for fundamental change, both within the sector and in government policy, is widely understood and accepted.

In 2013-14, CSAO established a small working group to steer this project. This group worked with the Education Advisory Board (EAB), a US-based higher education research institute, to investigate best-practice financial communications tools used by North American universities. The tools were made available to administrators to engage in conversations with stakeholders about the forces driving the sustainability challenge within their institution and across the sector as a whole. CAUBO assumed a leadership role on this file with the preparation of the financial sustainability report, as noted above.

EAB submitted their report “Communicating Financial Sustainability Challenges – Internal and External Communication Strategies” to COU in April 2014. The May 2014 CSAO meeting featured a brief presentation on highlights of the report and a group discussion.

**Division:** Corporate Services

**Updated:** March 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: Advocacy Initiatives – University Operations

**Background:** On behalf of CSAO, the following operational advocacy issues are underway:

- **Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP):** Bill 56 received Royal Assent on May 5, 2015. Contributions to the ORPP would be mandatory, except for employees and employers in plans deemed “comparable” to a defined benefit (DB) pension plan or a target benefit multi-employer pension plan. As some universities offer defined contribution (DC) plans or group RRSPPs, the university and the employee not be exempt from contributions to the ORPP. COU had submitted feedback during the consultation process arguing that all university plans should be deemed “comparable.” COU will continue to monitor for regulations that are released and continue to advocate for an exemption.
- **Bill 18 (“Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy”):** This bill classifies students on work placements as “workers” under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. After an accelerated passage through the legislature, Bill 18 received Royal Assent on November 20, 2014, and took effect January 1, 2015. The Bill was passed without the changes/clarifications sought by COU. COU has been informed that there will be an opportunity to make its case once again at the regulation stage. COU has requested a technical briefing with the Ministry of Labour to receive clarification on various implications of the bill, and will assist the sector in meeting training requirements under the legislation.
- **Ban on tobacco sales on campus and ban on smoking in/near playing fields:** Ontario Regulation 48/06 was amended on November 7, 2014, so that it now bans the sale of tobacco on campuses (including student union-owned buildings) and prohibits smoking in/near playing fields, stadiums and playgrounds, effective January 1, 2015. COU is advocating for an exemption for retail establishments leased out to private tenants by universities as these spaces are not controlled by university administrations or student unions.
- **Unpaid internships and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) coverage:** A new guideline issued by MTCU in 2013 resulted in de facto changes in the scope of MTCU-funded WSIB coverage for students on work placements. Since then, universities have encountered gaps related to placements for students in continuing studies, cost-recovery programs, and courses offered as electives. These changes led COU to write to MTCU in August 2014 asking for clarification and a resumption of the previous scope of coverage. The Ministry acknowledged that further analysis and clarification of the impact of the new guideline were in order. COU continues to follow up to request clarity and a return to the previous scope so that all students on unpaid placements would be under MTCU’s coverage.
- **Energy and emissions regulations:** The university sector is regulated by and reports to the Ministry of Energy on its energy consumption/production levels and greenhouse gas emissions. The Ministry of Energy released changes to [O. Reg.](#)

**397/11 Energy Conservation and Demand Management Plans** in February 2015. Total annual energy consumption for a multi-use building will now be reported based on the building's primary operation type (i.e. the operation that occupies the largest indoor floor area.) The Ministry of the Environment has proposed new regulations that would overlap (and conflict) with the regulatory framework established by the Ministry of Energy. These regulations would also require universities to purchase emission credits – an expense that operating budgets are ill-equipped to absorb. A federal reporting requirement was also recently announced by Statistics Canada. Discussions are ongoing regarding the regulatory overlap and reporting burden.

- **Campus policing review:** The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services is undertaking a review of policing services in the province. Many universities (and one college) use Special Constables who are granted authority to enforce certain Acts in local jurisdictions. COU is working with the Ontario Association of College and University Security Administrators (OACUSA), a CSAO affiliate, to influence the review to ensure that Special Constable Programs may continue to be used effectively by universities and colleges, given a framework for appropriate training, oversight, and delegated authorities – including at satellite campuses. A second round of consultations is expected in 2015.

The university sector is subject to regulation on a wide range of operational issues, including Broader Public Sector financial directives, health and safety regulations, environmental regulations, and building codes. These issues require that CSAO and its affiliates, and in some cases other affiliates of COU, liaise with multiple government organizations. Where possible, issues are addressed by CSAO affiliates, and they are brought to CSAO/COU for action when necessary.

**Division:** Corporate Services

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: Research Matters

**Update:** Working with a number of research-based organizations as partners, Research Matters hosted Ontario Research Week from March 30 to April 2. The week included the Queen's Park Pop-Up Research Park with Mitacs; the Ontario and Canada Research Chairs Symposium, which brought together 500 researchers, students, government representatives, and community partners; and the launch of 50 historic game-changing research discoveries made at Ontario's universities. To learn more about the discoveries please visit <http://yourontarioresearch.ca/game-changers/> where you can find further information about each discovery. Ontarians are also being asked to vote for their favourite discovery on the website or on Facebook at <http://woobox.com/2otzcn>. The top five favourite discoveries will be announced in the fall.

The Research Matters Curiosity Cruiser has also launched for a second year. Staffed by university students, the cruiser will travel across the province from May to August, stopping at festivals, events, farmers markets, and other public venues. To engage the public in university research, the cruiser staff will be “testing” the public's knowledge of research through a fun, interactive game, based on the historic game-changing research discoveries. “Winners” will receive a pack of trading cards, with each pack containing five random historic game-changing research discoveries. The schedule for the Curiosity Cruiser can be found at <http://yourontarioresearch.ca/events/month/>.

Research Matters also participated in this year's OCE Discovery conference and will be bringing the Curiosity Cruiser to this year's Federation of Social Sciences and Humanities Congress in Ottawa.

**Background:** Research Matters is an integrated communications strategy that includes a website ([www.yourontarioresearch.ca](http://www.yourontarioresearch.ca)), public events, media relations, advertising and social media (Twitter: @OntarioResearch, Facebook: [www.facebook.com/YourOntarioResearch](http://www.facebook.com/YourOntarioResearch)).

The campaign is guided by three major principles:

- *Public accountability and transparency* – Research Matters aims to instill in its audiences a sense of ownership and pride in Ontario university research.
- *Public engagement with research* – Research Matters will help people think about Ontario university research in new ways by showing its impact where they live, work and play.
- *Long-term commitment* – The campaign is a long-term venture, involving sustained efforts to broaden and deepen the public's understanding – and experience – of why research matters.

Under the new theme of “Game Changing Research,” year three activities have been designed to maintain continuity from previous years' activities while maintaining the campaign's energy and allowing it to evolve and stay fresh. Activities will include:

- a new Virtual Scavenger Hunt;

- Federal and Provincial Pop-up Research Parks;
- a refreshed [Curiosity Shop](#);
- a Curiosity Cruiser summer tour;
- a creation of on an Ontario Research Week that will engage other partners and include a media blitz, as well as the Ontario Research Chairs Symposium;
- a partnership with Virtual Researcher on Call (VROC);
- continued academic outreach through a presence at CAURA Ontario and Congress; and
- a refreshed website.

**Division:** Strategic Initiatives

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)



## Updated: Digital Research Infrastructure

**Update:** Following on the federal government's commitment to Digital Research Infrastructure (DRI) in the Science and Technology Strategy, the 2015 federal budget included \$100 million to the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) to support digital research infrastructure. The \$100 million consisted of \$25 million from the CFI's unallocated interest income as set aside in Economic Action Plan 2013 and \$75 million out of the \$1.33 billion in new resources provided to the CFI in Economic Action Plan 2015. This funding is in addition to the \$50 million previously announced for CFI to invest in DRI. The federal budget also announced, \$105 million over five years for CANARIE, starting in 2015–16, to continue to operate Canada's national world-class high-speed research and education network.

In addition, Industry Canada has taken the lead on the development of the digital research infrastructure strategy to create a world-leading research and innovation ecosystem in Canada that was announced in the Science and Technology Strategy. It is expected that consultations on the strategy with key stakeholders will begin in the summer. CANARIE, Compute Canada, Universities Canada, and the Leadership Council on Digital Infrastructure (LCDI) are all expected to be heavily involved in the creation of the strategy.

As work on a national strategy for digital research infrastructure moves into its next phase, the LCDI has moved to a more formalized structure and will be co-chaired by Feridun Hamdullahpur, President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Waterloo and Steven Liss, Vice-Principal Research, Queen's University.

CFI has also confirmed that their review of Compute Canada's proposal will be completed by the end of May. Compute Ontario submitted two locations as bids for future DRI sites, and Compute Canada accepted both sites and included them in their proposal to CFI.

**Background:** Over the past decade, research undertaken at our institutions and in commercial labs has become increasingly dependent on digital research infrastructure.

Given the way in which this infrastructure was funded and developed over time, often based on regional or local need, Canada has created a diffuse digital infrastructure platform. In order to better understand the issue, OCUR and other partners, such as the Ontario government, have turned their attention to Canada and Ontario's future digital research infrastructure needs to build a more efficient and cohesive system from the various component parts that current exist. The speed of change in this area and its many component parts make this file complex and one that requires effective partnership, evidence-based policy development, and sustained, long-term advocacy efforts.

**Federal Activity:** Interest in the digital infrastructure file has increased at the federal level and a number of important developments have occurred.

In 2012, through the leadership of the Canadian University Council of Communication and Information Officers (CUCCIO), the Leadership Council for Digital Infrastructure was created. The Council comprises members of the research community, service providers and funding agencies. It is co-chaired by Steven Liss, Vice-Principal Research at Queen's University, and Jay Black, Chief Information Officer at Simon Fraser University. Its objectives are to provide a national platform for discussions among all stakeholders toward a framework for digital research infrastructure and to identify, discuss, and address issues associated with providing Canadian researchers access to the tools and resources that they require to enable research within and across a wide range of disciplines.

Compute Canada has begun to develop a Sustainable Plan for Advanced Research Computing (SPARC) in order to forecast Canada's advanced research computing needs through 2022. Also, in response to the release of CFI's cyberinfrastructure call, Compute Canada issued their formal call for the Host Selection Process on October 20, 2014. Compute Ontario submitted their proposal in December 2014. Compute Canada is currently reviewing all proposals and submitted its final proposal to CFI in April 2015.

**Provincial Activity:** Compute Ontario, which will oversee Ontario's advanced computing, has been incorporated officially and Dan Sinai, Associate Vice-President, Western University, has been named as its inaugural Chair. The first meeting of the interim board for Compute Ontario was held in April 2014.

The provincial government has confirmed its commitment to match the CFI's newly announced cyber-infrastructure round with provincial dollars. Compute Ontario is working through Compute Canada to ensure that the renewal of the Compute Canada platform reflects Ontario's computing needs. COU is working with MRI to ensure that Ontario's proposal for one of four data centres envisioned through the most recent call from Compute Canada is successful. COU is working with Compute Ontario to ensure that Ontario's interests are well-represented and strategically positioned within Compute Canada.

**Division:** Strategic Initiatives

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: AccessibleCampus.ca

**Update:** On average, the website receives 1800 unique visitors per month and continues to grow in popularity both within Ontario and around the world.

An accessible procurement guide is currently under development and will be posted to the site upon completion.

**Background:** In October 2013, COU successfully launched a new, bilingual website, focused on providing tools to enhance accessibility and increase mental health awareness on our campuses. Accessible Campus is a rich, one-of-a-kind resource that is available at [www.accessiblecampus.ca](http://www.accessiblecampus.ca).

Since its launch, the website has received over 70,000 page views. It has proven to be a success with COU members, as well as with many others from different sectors and an international audience, and is leading the way in accessibility-related resource sharing. A more detailed review of the website statistics is underway.

AccessibleCampus.ca offers over 100 pages of accessibility-related content, including a toolkit that addresses the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) clause-by-clause. The website also includes a reference library of tip sheets and quick guides to enhance everyday accessibility; resources to support educators in creating accessible teaching environments; a series of videos featuring university faculty, staff and students, designed to improve awareness and reduce stigma about mental health on campus; and a page that will highlight key accessibility-related news and events.

Since 2008, COU has worked on several projects that were funded through the EnAbling Change Programme to assist Ontario universities in meeting compliance requirements under the AODA. These projects, amongst others, comprise the AccessibleCampus.ca website.

- Online Customer Service Training Tool – an online training tool to assist Ontario universities in meeting the training requirement under the Accessible Customer Service Standard.
- Accessibility Toolkit – an online toolkit of resources that assist Ontario universities in meeting compliance requirements with accessibility-related standards under the AODA.
- Educators' Accessibility Resource (EAR) Kit – online resources designed to assist Ontario universities meet their obligations under Section 16 of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR): Training to Educators, as well as mental health-focused resources.
- Innovative Designs for Accessibility (IDeA) Student Competition – an undergraduate student competition that encourages innovative, cost-effective and practical solutions to accessibility-related barriers. There is a [separate update on the IDeA competition](#) below.

**Division:** Strategic Initiatives

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: Innovative Designs for Accessibility (IDeA) Student Competition

**Update:** The 2015 IDeA student competition is pleased to have received 28 submissions from 12 institutions across Ontario. The submissions are currently being reviewed by the IDeA panel of experts and the winners were announced on Friday, May 29 at the People In Motion exhibition at the Queen Elizabeth Building on the Exhibition Grounds in Toronto. The Honourable David C. Onley, former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, will join the event to announce the winners.

COU continues to work toward identification of a funder to ensure the continuation of the IDeA competition for future years. As part of this exercise, COU is also considering the possibility of expanding the competition to include a graduate stream.

More information on the competition can be found on the [IDeA website](#) (available at the hyperlink or at [www.accessiblecampus.ca/idea](http://www.accessiblecampus.ca/idea)).

**Background:** On October 30, 2014, the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO) and COU signed a contract amendment to continue the IDeA Student Competition for a fourth year. The competition is funded through surplus funds from previous years. In December 2014, COU officially launched the competition with a few changes to this year's format.

The biggest change for year four is that the celebration event will take place at the People in Motion Conference from May 29 to 30, 2015. IDeA organizers needed to change the venue due to a conflict in dates with the OCE Discovery Conference, which is where the celebration event took place for the past three years.

The Reference Group on Accessibility proposed the idea of a student competition on accessible innovative designs to encourage accessibility in the early PSE education of undergraduate student. As a result, COU, in partnership with Western University, developed a proposal for consideration by the Ontario government. This competition is aimed at encouraging Ontario's undergraduate students to develop innovative, cost-effective, and practical solutions to accessibility-related issues in the community. Working in teams, the students are encouraged to collaborate with industry, government and community partners (including members of the disability community) to identify an accessibility-related issue, to develop a plan to address the issue, and to implement a solution, with input and guidance from academic and industry experts.

**Division:** Strategic Initiatives

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Proposed Amendments to the Accessible Customer Service Standard

**Background:** In fall 2014, the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council/Standard Development Committee (ASAC/SD) submitted its final recommendations to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Innovation on the proposed changes to the Accessible Customer Service Standard. Ontario universities remain concerned with the current proposed changes to the Standard that would give all regulated health professionals the ability to designate an animal as a service animal. While Ontario universities agree that there are regulated health professionals, other than a physician or nurse, who may be in a position to accurately confirm that a person requires a service animal for reasons related to a disability, they are concerned with the proposal to give this authority to all regulated health professionals. COU previously signaled this concern during the feedback process that took place in March 2014.

In December 2014, COU submitted a letter to the Minister reiterating this concern and suggested that, in order to ensure that the service animal designation is properly applied and its integrity maintained, only a few regulated professionals be permitted to provide a letter for a service animal. Specifically, Ontario universities suggested that the Ontario government limit the authorized regulated health professionals to those who would be in an appropriate position to assess and designate need. At a minimum, the government was asked to apply the same type of analysis used to determine which professionals can confirm for vehicle parking permits.

COU will continue to monitor the developments on this issue.

On March 3, 2014, the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment (now Economic Development, Employment and Innovation) began a public consultation process on proposed amendments to the Accessible Customer Service Standard. The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) mandates that each accessibility standard be reviewed five years after becoming law. As a result, in September 2013, ASAC/SD was formed and began its review of the Accessible Customer Service Standard and has made proposed amendments to the following areas:

- Class structure of organizations based on number of employees;
- Policies, practices and procedures;
- Service animals;
- Support persons;
- Training;
- Feedback processes; and
- Notice of availability and format of documents.

As with past public consultation processes, COU submitted feedback on behalf of the sector through the Reference Group on Accessibility. The ASAC/SD is currently reviewing all feedback that was received during the public consultation.

On January 1, 2008, the Customer Service Standard became the first accessibility standard to be passed into regulation under the AODA. The Standard sets out

requirements to achieve accessible customer service by understanding that customers with disabilities may have different needs and finding the best way to help them access goods and services.

The Customer Service Standard applies to all organizations (public, private and not-for-profit) that provide goods or services either directly to the public or to other organizations and that have one or more employees in Ontario. Requirements for organizations pertain to topics such as accessible customer service policies, practices and procedures; service animals; support persons; customer feedback; and staff training.

Public sector organizations were required to comply with the Customer Service Standard as of January 1, 2010.

In response to the Customer Service Standard, COU, in partnership with Queen's University and the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, created an online training tool to assist Ontario universities in meeting the compliance requirement for training. The [Online Customer Service Training tool](#) is available online at the hyperlink.

**Division:** Strategic Initiatives

**Updated:** March 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## **Updated: More Feet on the Ground**

**Update:** As of May 2015, over 700 users from across the province have registered to complete the module.

**Background:** On November 13, 2014, COU, in partnership with Brock University, the Ontario Committee of Student Affairs (OCSA) and the Ontario government, launched **More Feet on the Ground** – a bilingual educational website that focuses on helping people to recognize, respond and refer students experiencing mental health issues on campus.

More Feet on the Ground covers the following aspects of Mental Health:

- Mental health vs Mental illness;
- Mental health as a continuum;
- Stigma;
- Recovery;
- Recognize, Respond, Refer;
- Factors that can affect mental health;
- Various mental illnesses; and
- Support resources (on- and off-campus).

Each institution is able to create its own branded version of the website with its own institutionally-specific support resources as well as an institutionally-unique URL that can be shared with potential “trainees.” Users of the site can register by creating a log-in which allows them to complete the quizzes and receive a certificate of completion. Site administrators can track whether a user has completed the quizzes.

More information can be found by using the following link and then selecting an institution from the list: <https://morefeetontheground.ca/>.

**Division:** Strategic Initiatives

**Updated:** May 2015

**[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)**



## Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health

**Background:** The Ontario government has indicated an interest in continuing the work of the Centre beyond its mandate. The partners have agreed to use this opportunity to review the Centre's progress towards its goals, identify its successes, and develop a plan for the future. Under the direction of the Centre's Executive Committee, Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario has hired two external consultants with postsecondary experience to carry out the review. Since January, Dr. Michael Cooke and Dr. Phil Wood have been seeking input from a range of college and university administrators, practitioners and student leaders, as well as external practitioners, to make recommendations on the Centre's future foci and goals.

In spring 2014, the Centre launched its "Ask the Expert" Webinar series. Free webinars through which specialists share promising practices to address the needs of students with mental health concerns, as well strategies to promote a healthy campus, will be held on a regular basis.

To register for the webinars and for a full list of webinars please go to:

[www.campusmentalhealth.ca](http://www.campusmentalhealth.ca).

The Centre has also recently launched its Community of Practice. The private site (registration is vetted) was created to help Ontario's campus mental health service providers and community partners connect, learn, share, problem-solve and collaborate. To join the Community of Practice, please visit

<http://connects.campusmentalhealth.ca/>.

COU, Colleges Ontario (CO), the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) and the College Student Alliance (CSA), with support from the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Ontario, received funding for the creation of a Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health (C4ICMH) through MTCU's Mental Health Innovation Fund (MHIF). The Centre serves as an innovation hub for addressing the needs of students with mental health and addictions issues at postsecondary institutions across Ontario.

As a focal point for postsecondary mental health, the Centre has three primary functions:

- 1) support for a Community of Practice – a cross-sectorial model designed to unite providers from various disciplines (educators, health, counseling, disability services) in the postsecondary education sector to share best practices and work collaboratively to improve mental health service delivery within the postsecondary sector in Ontario;
- 2) creation of a change lab for mental health innovation on campus – a centralized space in which to identify, incubate, evaluate, and disseminate new ideas and innovations mental health on campus; and
- 3) coordination of community services and expert advisors – a point of access to mental health care experts to assist with challenging clinical issues.

**Division:** Strategic Initiatives

**Updated:** March 2015

[Return to the table of contents.](#)



## Updated: Aboriginal Communications Campaign

**Update:** COU has moved into Phase 3 of the project, which includes development of a campaign concept, and the design and creation of a sector-wide resource website for Aboriginal students.

COU has engaged National PR to develop creative concepts and outreach strategies for the communications campaign's target audiences. COU is also working with Earthlore Communications to develop the wireframe and creative design of the resource website.

The Working Group and Reference Group on Aboriginal Education have given feedback on initial design concepts produced for the website and communications campaign. In addition, they have approved the direction of the concepts produced so far.

**Background:** An Aboriginal Strategic Communications Campaign Working Group was established in March 2013 to oversee the work related to this initiative. This Working Group comprises members of the COU Reference Group on Aboriginal Education, the Ontario Universities' Public Affairs Council (OUPAC), Ontario Committee on Student Affairs (OCSA), the Aboriginal Postsecondary Information Program and a member from the broader university community.

Work on this project is divided into four phases: establishment of project governance, development of work plan, implementation of work plan, and development of the final report.

The goals of the campaign are to:

- promote awareness of the success of Aboriginal learners in Ontario to Aboriginal communities (including parents and learners), the general public, business/industry and government, and the academic community;
- improve Aboriginal learner attraction, retention, and completion at Ontario universities by demonstrating a successful transition into and from the postsecondary education system, as well as opportunities for personal and academic development; and
- promote a positive view of, and interest in, postsecondary education within Aboriginal communities.

**Division:** Strategic Initiatives

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the table of contents.](#)

## Ontario Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Program

**Background:** In May 2015, the ministry announced that Ontario is amending its Health Insurance Act which will permit nurse practitioners (NPs) to make direct referrals to medical specialists and also ensure that NPs directly receive the specialist's advice.

The Ontario Primary Health Care NP (PHCNP) Educational Program consortium educates and prepares nurses as NPs in Primary Health Care. As advanced practice nurses, NPs are educated to diagnose, order tests, and prescribe medications and treatments.

A distinct value of Ontario's program is its focus on educating NPs who will support people in health, illness and injury and ongoing treatment of existing health problems across the life span.

Today there are 2600 NPs practicing in Ontario and over 70 per cent of them graduated from Ontario's PHCNP Program.

Ontario's PHCNP 9-university site consortium PHCNP program (Lakehead, Laurentian, McMaster, Ottawa, Queen's plus Trent satellite, Ryerson, Western, Windsor and York) prepared 660 primary health care NPs over the past five years.

**Division:** PHNCP

**Updated:** March 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Internationally Educated Nurses

**Background:** Due to regulatory changes to the entry-to-practice requirements for internationally educated nurses (IENs) that came into effect in 2013, many more IENs are approaching university schools of nursing to request education that will help bridge them into practice in Ontario. COU is working with university members and other stakeholders to explore potential options around expanding spaces and developing specialized courses to meet the needs of these IENs.

**Division:** Office of Health Sciences

**Updated:** November 2014

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## **Tri-partite Committee on College Stand-alone Nursing degrees**

**Background:** MTCU established a Tri-partite Committee, with representation from COU, Colleges Ontario, MTCU and MoHLTC to explore whether colleges should be allowed to offer stand-alone nursing degree programs. MTCU hired consultants, with input from COU and Colleges Ontario, to assess the current level and nature of collaboration between university and college partners, and the potential implications of authorizing more stand-alone nursing degrees.

The consultants presented their final report to the Tri-partite Committee on March 7, 2014.

MTCU has formally released to universities, colleges and stakeholders, the consultants' reports in response to the colleges' request to offer stand-alone nursing degrees. The reports identify the potential risks and benefits of stand-alone nursing degrees for colleges and a greater number of universities (i.e., more universities than currently offer a stand-alone nursing degree), and urge caution in moving forward. MTCU has indicated that its decision on the issue also will be informed by its credential review, which has not yet been completed.

**Division:** Office of Health Sciences

**Updated:** February 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Clinical Education Crisis

**Background:** COU submitted its position paper, [\*Integrating Clinical Education into Ontario's Changing Healthcare System\*](#), to MTCU and MoHLTC in July 2013 (available at the hyperlink). The paper argues that the clinical education system for nursing, rehabilitation science and other disciplines is in a crisis due to the changing healthcare system. Measures need to be put into place to provide more consistent incentives and recognition for healthcare professionals and organizations across the continuum of care who work with schools to provide clinical education opportunities for students. The Office of Health Sciences at COU has engaged in meetings with government and stakeholders to discuss the recommendations in the paper.

COU met with government officials in December 2014 to share new data on the issue of shortages in quality clinical placements for nursing and allied health science students, and to recommend that government work with universities, colleges, and placing agencies to identify solutions to the problem. Further discussions on the issue are occurring through the Joint Provincial Nursing Committee, a committee of key nursing stakeholders that advises government on policy issues from a nursing perspective.

**Division:** Office of Health Sciences

**Updated:** February 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: Medical Trainee Days Data

**Update:** A number of process and methodology changes have been made to address data quality and auditing concerns. Schools are in the process of submitting final data to the Ontario Physician Human Resources Data Centre.

**Background:** In 2010, MoHLTC issued new standards for the collection and reporting of Medical Trainee Days (MTD) data. An implementation group was established in early 2012 to act on recommendations for improving data quality and accuracy, as well as efficiency of the data collection process.

Faculties of Medicine are responsible for placing learners in training sites, and hospitals rely on accurate MTD data in securing appropriate funding to support clinical learning environments, therefore both have a vested interest in ensuring there is rigour to the data quality.

**Division:** Office of Health Sciences

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Updated: Medical Student Career Counselling

**Update:** Faculties of Medicine are making efforts to assist medical students access postgraduate training in specialties for which there is likely to be demand and to improve their career prospects. A working group was struck in June 2014 to identify standards for undergraduate medical education career counselling services. The working group has expanded to be jointly sponsored through COU and the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada (AFMC). In addition to representatives from each of the six Ontario Faculties of Medicine, the working group includes representatives from medical schools in Quebec and Newfoundland, as well as the Professional Association of Residents of Ontario and the Ontario Medical Students Association.

The working group has drafted a “Medical Student Career Advising National Recommendations” document which outlines the essential elements that should be included in career advising programs. The document was presented to the AFMC Student Affairs Committee on April 24, 2015 for additional national input.

**Background:** The benefits of a common career counselling curriculum had been discussed by the Deans of Undergraduate Education (UE) at Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine (COFM) meetings over the past two years, culminating in a commitment to establish a task group to work on this. At the same time, AFMC engaged in a multi-pronged project to make recommendations regarding the Future of Medical Education in Canada (FMEC). The Postgraduate arm (FMEC PG) produced 10 recommendations, of which Recommendation #5 is focused on the need to ensure effective integration and transitions along the educational continuum. One of the current UE:COFM Co-Chairs is co-leading the national implementation group for Recommendation #5. Three sub-working groups were established, one of which is the FMEC PG Career Counselling and Residency Matching Process Working Group which is co-led by the other UE:COFM Co-Chair. This group developed a pilot project in response to a clear need for more specific and consistent career counselling at all medical schools, including more current information regarding career opportunities to medical students prior to the residency selection and matching process. This is the work being done by the jointly sponsored COU/AFMC working group.

**Division:** Office of Health Sciences

**Updated:** May 2015

[Return to the Table of Contents.](#)