



Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
Union des Associations des Professeurs des Universités de l'Ontario

Policy Position on College/University Programs Leading to Undergraduate Degrees

Preamble

OCUFA traditionally has been a strong advocate for academic quality in the Ontario university system. OCUFA's position is that academic quality is usually reflected by the presence of a number of fundamental factors: a high proportion of qualified tenure-stream and tenured faculty conducting teaching, research, and community service as tenure indicates a mutual commitment by the administration and faculty to both the institution and its academic health; sound physical facilities and a sufficiency of other physical components necessary to program delivery (e.g. laboratory facilities); sufficient academic and administrative support staff so that programs can be delivered effectively; and ready access to adequate research and library resources staffed by appropriately qualified academic librarians.

OCUFA also supports increased access to a broad range of degree programs for all Ontarians and innovative delivery of such programs, providing that the factors critical to academic quality are present and protected.

OCUFA's Board of Directors has recently discussed the growing phenomenon of community college/university programming leading to undergraduate degrees and has adopted a number of recommendations which it feels would strengthen the academic quality of such programming, while allowing for responsible growth in this area. The following recommendations on key issues are provided for OCUFA members' guidance.

Recommendations

Overall Approach to Collaborative Programming

The great strength of the current approach is its implicit recognition of the heterogeneity of Ontario's tertiary education system. By leaving negotiations and agreements in the hands of individual institutions and not imposing topdown quotas or expectations, the government has wisely chosen to continue to respect autonomy and protect academic freedom. While the current process may seem too leisurely for some, resulting in too few collaborations, hammering out agreements one-by-one is, perhaps, the best protection of academic excellence and student interests that exists. The process conserves appropriate oversight while allowing for new partnerships in all academic areas.

It is recommended that OCUFA should encourage the government to continue to recognize university autonomy in these matters both as one of the foundational components of academic freedom and the best protection for academic quality.

Need for articulation principles for all types of collaborative programs

It is recommended that general articulation principles, such as those that were negotiated and approved by all Ontario universities and colleges for degree-completion arrangements under the Port Hope Accord, need to be established for all types of

collaborative programs. Examples include “substantial” academic affinity, the approval of governing bodies through normal approval processes, meeting university admission and degree standards through the revision, where necessary, of college program curricula, and the establishment of a matrix showing students what they will normally be expected to complete transferring from a two- or three-year college program. Some agreements are now negotiated individually by relevant parties at each institution without guiding principles to which all institutions have agreed.

Role of Faculty/Faculty Associations

Most new collaborative programs are negotiated with input from departmental faculty and administration representatives from both universities and colleges.

It is recommended that these programs should be treated as would any new academic endeavor, with Senate approval and submission to the COU-led undergraduate program review process.

It is recommended that, at the individual institutional level, in addition to whatever input is currently sought, faculty associations should have, at a minimum, access to collaborative agreements and information on who is teaching what and the faculty appointment processes.

Faculty Association Representation on relevant provincial bodies.

The College-University Consortium Council, funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, has specific representation from senior administration, students, from both colleges and universities and the ministry.

It is recommended that the Ministry immediately appoint a university faculty association representative to the CUCC. Discussion and debate are presently unnecessarily limited by the lack of a specific faculty voice at CUCC which could bring direct experience with collaborative programming from a teaching/academic research perspective to the table.

Financial Incentives to increase collaborative programming

It is recommended that OCUFA caution government regarding financial incentives to increase certain types of programming. One example was the Access to Opportunities Program under the Harris government which flowed money to information technology/computer enrolment programs only. Such incentives have tended to distort the academic mission at universities by privileging some areas of scholarship over others. In the past, incentives were based not on academic excellence but perceptions of where universities should grow to best serve public policy aims.

Other Offsite and off-campus programming

There are a number of growing areas of activity at some universities that are not collaborative programming but do involve college administrative and other support in offering offsite degree programs. Laurentian @ Georgian is a fast-growing example. Sufficient oversight regarding academic quality, including teaching and research, for offsite programming must be ensured.

At a minimum, it is recommended that any arrangements and formal agreements regarding an Ontario university offering its degree programs at a locale other than its main campus/campuses should be made available, as a matter of course, to faculty associations for analysis and a specific administrative position should be identified as responsible for and accountable to the university community regarding such agreements.

Recommendations internal to faculty/associations and OCUFA

Assign an OCUFA staff person to monitor and, when necessary, provide briefing notes to the Executive and/or Collective Bargaining Committee regarding any issues on collaborative or other types of college-university transfer programs that should be addressed.

Encourage individual faculty associations to determine the need for and best approach to monitoring collaborative and transfer program issues in light of their particular departmental and institutional circumstances.

Encourage individual faculty associations to determine appropriate levels of involvement in off-site university programming, especially related to association agreements, and present their positions through the collective bargaining cycle.