



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

Nancy Mudrinic
Assistant Deputy Minister
Postsecondary Education Division
Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities

Via email

August 9, 2019

Dear Ms. Mudrinic,

I am following up on the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' request for input on the collaborative nursing degree model.

First, we value the MTCU's approach as outlined in its discussion guide. We believe that giving institutions the option to add a standalone nursing degree program rather than imposing it on them is the right approach to follow as it respects institutional autonomy, which is essential for all institutions to effectively carry out their academic mission. We believe that any such decision must go through the appropriate collegiate government channels at each institution.

However, OCUFA is concerned about points such as the use of "outcome indicators" and metrics to judge the success of this program, and that "no additional funding for nursing education will be provided" by the government (Collaborative Nursing Degree Model: Discussion Guide, July 2019). We view collecting data on postsecondary education, including newly added programs, as conducive to the educational purpose of universities. OCUFA, however, is against conditioning the funding of postsecondary institutions or measuring a program's performance based on arbitrary measures such as student satisfaction or labour market outcomes. Evaluating postsecondary education based on narrow measures is reductive and fails to capture the breadth and depth of the factors that are needed for teaching excellence.

OCUFA is alarmed by the Ford government's attacks on university autonomy since resuming office. The provincial government's free speech directive, attack on student rights through the "Student Choice Initiative," interference in collective bargaining and agreements, in addition to introducing a drastic performance-based funding model that conditions funding upon a set of arbitrary metrics all undermine institutional autonomy and limit institutions' ability to effectively meet their academic missions. We encourage the ministry to reverse these harmful measures and to respect institutional autonomy in the postsecondary sector moving forward.

Secondly, we believe that the success of all academic programs, including new ones, is reliant upon adequately and publicly funded postsecondary institutions. Stable, consistent, and adequate base funding for Ontario universities allows institutions to make long-term plans and focus on their core mandates of research and teaching. The current model of performance-based funding model, which conditions funding upon a set of arbitrary metrics also undermines the academic mission.

As you know, Ontario's universities receive the lowest level of per-student funding in all of Canada. In 2016-17, the most recent year for which data for all provinces are available, Ontario's per-student funding amounted to \$7,939. This means that Ontario's per-student funding was an astounding 36 per cent lower than the average for the rest of Canada, which was \$12,381 per student in 2016-17. Ontario's universities have been trailing the rest of the country when it comes to investing in the teaching and learning that is vital to the success of Ontario's students.

For the success of this program and all other programs at Ontario's universities, OCUFA recommends that the MTCU increase core funding for universities and colleges to match the average for the rest of Canada and cancel performance-based funding.

Thirdly, OCUFA views teaching and mentorship as vital to successful student learning. We encourage the ministry to commit to hiring full-time-tenure track faculty in any newly added programs, rather than relying on precariously employed contract faculty.

In the last decade, full-time student enrolment increased by 23 per cent. Over the same period, the number of full-time faculty employed at Ontario universities increased by only 3.4 per cent. This means that, since 2008-09, the rate of increase in student enrolment has been almost seven times that of faculty hiring. Ontario has the highest student-faculty ratio in Canada and since 2000 the ratio has worsened substantially – increasing by 38 per cent. As of 2016-17, there were 31 students for every full-time faculty member at an Ontario university compared to an average of 22 students for each university faculty member across the rest of Canada.

While full-time faculty hiring has stagnated at Ontario's universities, the reliance on contract faculty has increased. The use of contract faculty has become an entrenched strategy in universities across Ontario, resulting in a dramatic and troubling shift in the nature of academic work. These contract professors are generally hired on either a limited-term contract or as sessionals on a per-course basis. Over half of faculty at Ontario universities are working on contract. OCUFA estimates that the number of courses taught by contract faculty has nearly doubled since 2000.

These trends have a negative impact on teaching and learning in Ontario. Having more students and fewer professors leads to less one-on-one engagement, larger class sizes, and fewer opportunities for mentorship and academic advising. The addition of a new program requires an expansion in the overall size of the tenure-stream faculty complement and would support improvements to Ontario's student-faculty ratio.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rahul Sapra". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rahul Sapra

OCUFA President