



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

## **Investing in Students, Ensuring Success**

*Recommendations for a meaningful successor to Reaching Higher*

Submission to the Postsecondary Education Secretariat

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## Executive Summary

The Government of Ontario's *Reaching Higher* plan was a visionary document that provided needed funding to Ontario's postsecondary system. However, it was not sufficient to overcome the long history of university under-funding in Ontario. Its impact was also eroded by unanticipated increases in enrolment and the current economic downturn.

In its work to craft recommendations for a follow-up framework, the Postsecondary Education Secretariat must address this under-funding and its associated effects. OCUFA believes there are three areas of urgent concern in the university system:

- The student-to-faculty ratio is too high, damaging the quality of the student experience at Ontario universities;
- Educational facilities, libraries and information technology resources are in need of renewal in order to support a quality learning environment; and
- Tuition fee levels in Ontario require students to pay for more than their fair share of operating revenue, harming the accessibility of the university system.

Each of these challenges is best resolved through increased public funding. In particular, OCUFA recommends:

- The Government of Ontario invest an additional \$153 million in 2010-11 to hire additional academic staff and renew campus learning infrastructure. This amount will increase to \$765 million by 2014-15, rising by an additional \$153 million per year during that period;
- The Government of Ontario freeze tuition fees at current levels; and
- Compensatory funding be provided to institutions for lost revenue from proposed tuition increases.

These investments will greatly improve the quality and accessibility of Ontario's higher education system. In addition, OCUFA recommends that new Multi-Year Accountability Agreements be developed in consultation with faculty and students. These agreements should provide meaningful and comparable data that facilitates collaborative quality improvement.

## Introduction

In the 2005 provincial budget, the Government of Ontario unveiled its *Reaching Higher* plan for postsecondary education in Ontario. It announced an infusion of \$6.2 billion dollars in the province's universities, colleges, and student financial aid system – an investment unprecedented in recent history.

Beyond this impressive funding boost, *Reaching Higher* was bold in another crucial respect. It was a conscious effort to take a long term, strategic view of the postsecondary sector. Moreover, it clearly articulated a vision for higher education in Ontario: a high quality, accessible system that ensures the success of our students and equips our province to compete in the emerging global knowledge economy.

Unfortunately, circumstances quickly conspired to undermine the ability of *Reaching Higher* to achieve its vision. While sorely needed, the new investment did not repair the damage wreaked by a decade of deep cuts to universities and colleges. Unanticipated enrolment growth quickly erased the impact of the new funding. And, in 2008, a global recession conspired to throw the finances of the postsecondary sector into further disarray. At the close of *Reaching Higher's* ambitious five year plan, it is difficult to say if Ontario's higher education system has actually improved.

The reality is that Ontario's universities remain seriously under-funded. Without adequate public resources, it will be difficult to improve the learning experience and ensure that the system remains accessible to every able and motivated student.

Against this background, the Government of Ontario created the Postsecondary Education Secretariat to explore a follow-up framework to *Reaching Higher*. It is an unenviable task; there are significant short- and long-term challenges facing the university system, challenges that must be addressed. The recommendations made by the Secretariat have the potential to resonate for decades to come.

This paper is intended to outline the Ontario Confederation of Faculty Associations (OCUFA) assessment of critical issues in the university system – student experience, quality, multi-year accountability agreements, tuition fees, and credit transfer. It also offers solutions to improve the system's performance in these areas. Fundamentally, OCUFA believes public funding will make the difference in creating a high-quality and accessible university system.

OCUFA represents 15,000 full- and part-time faculty and academic librarians at 26 faculty associations across Ontario. We are committed to advancing the economic and professional interests of our members by building a high quality, accessible higher education system in Ontario.

## 1. Quality cannot be achieved without public investment

A world-class, high-quality postsecondary education system is a laudable goal, one that OCUFA believes is central to our success as a society and competitiveness as a province. However, such a system *costs*. We simply cannot offer a meaningful student experience without making the necessary public investments.

Unfortunately, Ontario is not funding its colleges and universities at a level sufficient for success. This is not for want of trying; the provincial government's 2005 *Reaching Higher* plan made welcome and badly needed investments in the postsecondary system. However, rising enrolment has largely diluted the impact of this funding. Moreover, *Reaching Higher's* investments were not large enough to address the true financial need in the university sector caused by decades of neglect. Since the 1970s, the provincial government's per-student funding to universities has fallen from \$6,500 to \$4,200 (in current, inflation adjusted dollars), more than a third. California, an important peer jurisdiction, invests twice as much as Ontario per student, at \$9,500. It should also be noted that California maintains this level of funding despite a serious deficit situation.

The results of this absolute and comparative under-funding are alarming. Soaring tuition, enormous classes, fewer courses, impoverished libraries, outdated labs and equipment, shabby facilities, and the exploitation of a generation of new faculty combine with a continuously eroding student-faculty ratio to reduce the quality of education offered by our institutions.

Faculty and academic librarians have long warned about the eroding quality of higher education in Ontario. On this point, faculty associations and administrators agree. OCUFA shares the Council of Ontario Universities' (COU) concern about the "degradation of quality" caused by current levels and models of university funding.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 Ontario's student-faculty ratio is too high

It is impossible to deliver a high quality student experience with insufficient full-time faculty. This point is so obvious as to be axiomatic; yet it is remarkable how this simple fact is repeatedly overlooked in Ontario. You can skirt the issue by focusing on "output" measures of quality like employment or student satisfaction. Or, you can attempt to ignore student-to-faculty ratios by pushing for "teaching-only" appointments or institutions. But the reality is inescapable: the quality of education is inextricably linked to the number of full-time, research-active professors available to students. This has been the foundation of university education since the founding of the modern university in medieval Europe. We would be foolish to turn our backs on it now.

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<sup>1</sup> Council of Ontario Universities (2009), *Reaching Even Higher: The Next Multi-Year Funding Plan for Postsecondary Education*. Toronto: Council of Ontario Universities. Pg. 2.

The final report of Bob Rae's Postsecondary Review, *Ontario: A Leader in Learning*, called for hiring of 11,000 new, full-time university faculty by 2010 to reduce Ontario's student-to-faculty ratio to the level of comparable American jurisdictions – and to the province's own historic balance of professors and learners.<sup>2</sup> This figure was confirmed by independent OCUFA analysis.<sup>3</sup>

Ontario has failed to achieve this goal. Only 450 full-time faculty have been hired per year since *Reaching Higher* began.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, enrolment has increased at an unanticipated rate. A Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MCTU) projection pegged 2010 enrolment at 333,000 students, but that level was reached by 2004, six years earlier than predicted.<sup>5</sup> The result is that Ontario's student-faculty ratio has worsened, in spite of *Reaching Higher's* infusion of funding. Ontario now has the highest student-to-faculty ratio in Canada, and lags well behind its peers in the United States. Consider the gaps between Ontario and actual and historical comparators:<sup>6</sup>

**Net new faculty required to meet target student-faculty ratios by 2010**

<b>Additional Ontario faculty required as of fall:</b>						
	<b>Target</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
<b>Rest of Canada 2005</b>	<b>20:1</b>	6,853	6,261	6,048	5,511	5,168
<b>COU US Peers</b>	<b>16:1</b>	10,805	10,213	10,000	9,463	9,120
<b>Ontario 1990</b>	<b>18:1</b>	8,778	8,186	7,973	7,436	7,093
<b>Ontario 2000</b>	<b>22:1</b>	4,500	3,908	3,695	3,158	2,815

The future, if current trends continue, is even bleaker. Enrolments will continue to swell. The COU is estimating a 27 per cent increase in the student body between 2008 and

<sup>2</sup> Rae, Bob (2005) *Ontario: A Leader in Learning*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario. Pg. 10.

<sup>3</sup> OCUFA (2005) *Closing the Quality Gap: The Case for Hiring 11,000 Faculty by 2010*. Toronto: Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations.

<sup>4</sup> OCUFA (2009) *Trends in Faculty Hiring At Ontario Universities*. Toronto: Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. Pg. 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Trends in Faculty Hiring at Ontario Universities*, pg. 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Trends in Faculty Hiring at Ontario Universities*, pg. 2.

2021.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, two-thirds of Ontario universities have announced faculty hiring freezes or slow-downs, some to last indefinitely.<sup>8</sup> Universities do not have adequate financial resources to hire new faculty at an appropriate level. Our current, inadequate student-faculty ratio of 27-to-1 is therefore set to get much, much worse. If this is allowed to occur, Ontario will fast lose its reputation for offering a high-quality student experience.

The student-to-faculty ratio directly bears on the level of interaction between students and faculty, a key quality indicator measured by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). When the student-faculty ratio is too high, students miss out on the contact with professors so crucial to receiving an actual *university* education, which only happens when professors demand independent inquiry, disciplined thought, and even occasional discomfort as they challenge preconceptions and lazy thinking. Anything less means students are not being given the critical thinking and analytical skills they need. Right now, students face an intellectually discounted education (at luxury prices, given today's tuition fees).

Student success depends on a lively relationship with faculty. Consider the American example: poorer retention and lower graduation rates of American two-year colleges is primarily a result of those institutions' higher student-faculty ratios and lower expenditures per student than the nation's better-funded "flagship" universities.<sup>9</sup>

The COU sees improved retention and graduation rates as a measure of quality. It also asserts that quality will be improved by increasing student-faculty interaction because such interaction enriches the student experience.<sup>10</sup> Both of these important goals require more faculty.

## **1.2 Bigger classes mean lower quality**

While student-to-faculty ratios capture the state of teaching across the system – more students, less instructors – it is also important to consider what is happening in individual classrooms.

To cut costs, universities are offering fewer courses. Since enrolment continues to grow, more and more students are crowding into fewer and fewer classes. This drives up class sizes at an alarming rate. Faculty may be teaching fewer courses, but, as class

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<sup>7</sup> Council of Ontario Universities (2008) *Ontario Universities: Strategic Partners in Provincial Prosperity – Managing Growth in University Enrolment and Enhancing the Quality of the Student Learning Environment*. Toronto: Council of Ontario Universities.

<sup>8</sup> *Trends in Faculty Hiring at Ontario Universities*, pg. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Epstein, Jennifer "Taking Aim at the Supply Side," *Inside Higher Education*. Dec. 8, 2009. <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/12/08/attainment>

<sup>10</sup> *Reaching Even Higher: The Next Multi-Year Funding Plan for Postsecondary Education*, pgs. 2-3.

size expands, they are teaching more students *even at the graduate level*. Students rate contact with faculty as a vital element in the quality of their university experience, but they are having little – or even no – contact with their professors. In the context of an under-funded university system, this crowding is only going to get worse. The Council of Ontario Universities (COU) warns that without increased funding its member universities will have to further reduce course offerings and increase individual class sizes.<sup>11</sup>

As a partial consequence, universities are using scarce capital funding to build ever-larger lecture theatres and class rooms. Not only are these facilities expensive, but they are also not the path to offering students what they really want and need: more time with their professors.

### **1.3 Contract faculty hiring cannot fill the quality gap**

The annual Multi-Year Accountability Agreements (MYAAs) signed between the Ontario government and each university reveal that trend towards hiring part-time faculty at Ontario universities is accelerating. In their 2007 MYAA reports, universities reported that 23 per cent of planned hiring would be contract, part-time or sessional academic staff, up from the 10-year average of 13 per cent before the double cohort.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, at some Ontario universities almost half the courses offered are taught by contract academic staff. Universities warn that without increased investment in universities, they will be forced to reduce quality by hiring more part-time instructors.<sup>13</sup>

The reduction in quality caused by this increased reliance on contract academic staff does not stem from any lack of qualifications, dedication, or talent. In fact, contract academics can be among the best qualified and most talented faculty on campus. The threat to quality posed by part-time faculty results from the contingent nature of their employment. This job insecurity negatively affects students. From one term to the next, contract academic staff do not know what and where they will be teaching. As a result students lose the continuity in teaching – and course offerings – that are associated with tenured or tenure-track faculty. Contract staff must also scramble at the last minute to prepare courses and write lectures. They have little or no time or financial support from their employer to conduct the research that enriches the classroom experience. Many don't even have private office space where they can meet with students, or access to university e-mail, equipment, or even libraries.

They deserve better and so do our students.

To address the student-to-faculty ratio, increase the diversity and reduce the class size of course offerings, and help end the exploitation of contract faculty, OCUFA

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<sup>11</sup> *Reaching Even Higher: The Next Multi-Year Funding Plan for Postsecondary Education*, pg. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Trends in Faculty Hiring at Ontario Universities*, pg. 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Reaching Even Higher: The Next Multi-Year Funding Plan for Postsecondary Education*, pg. 2.



recommends that the Government of Ontario develop a five year plan to hire an additional 5,000 full-time faculty. If we assume an average salary of \$80,000 for each new academic staff member, then the costs are as follows:

### **Cost Projection – Five-Year Hiring Plan**

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Additional Faculty</b>	<b>Additional Cost (\$millions)</b>	<b>Total New Hires</b>	<b>Total Cost (\$millions)</b>
<b>2010-11</b>	1000	80	1000	80
<b>2011-12</b>	1000	80	2000	160
<b>2012-13</b>	1000	80	3000	240
<b>2013-14</b>	1000	80	4000	320
<b>2014-15</b>	1000	80	5000	400

These additional 5,000 faculty will bring Ontario in line with the rest of Canada, and significantly close the gap between us and our American peers. While \$400 million is expensive, it is important to remember that there is no quality teaching without faculty and academic librarians. An investment in new faculty is therefore an investment in the core business of the university system.

OCUFA believes this new faculty funding should be included in the base operating grant for each university, distributed according to the size of the institution. MYAAs will be used to ensure that each university is achieving its specific target.

#### ***1.4 Ontario university facilities are crowded, out-of-date, and deteriorating***

Ontario campus infrastructure is also suffering from years of underfunding. Over 60 per cent of Ontario’s campus infrastructure is more than 30 years old.<sup>14</sup> Students crowd into facilities that provide only 75 per cent of the space they need. Equipment is outdated. Libraries struggle to meet the demands created by increased enrolments, increase their holdings, and adopt the latest information technology.

Ontario universities are facing many infrastructure challenges: constructing new facilities to accommodate increased enrolment; renewing deteriorating facilities; and ensuring their knowledge infrastructure (laboratories, libraries, equipment, and computing resources) is up to date.

While the Ontario government, with some support from the federal government, has made significant additions to the capital funding flowed to universities, there is still a capital “gap”. University facilities continue to suffer from years of deferred maintenance, and they are in urgent need of renewal. While new facilities to accommodate increased

<sup>14</sup> Council of Ontario Universities (2008) *The Right Balance: Navigating Present Needs and Future Opportunities*. Toronto: Council of Ontario Universities. Pg. 1.

enrolment is best funded through one-time capital grants, OCUFA believes that money to renew existing facilities, enhance libraries, and increase computing resources should come through basic operating funds.

To upgrade Ontario’s aging university infrastructure, OCUFA recommends an additional \$365 million be added to operating grants. This includes:

- \$175 million for the ongoing renewal of physical plant beyond one-time infrastructure funding;
- \$135 million to improve computing and communication resources; and
- \$55 million per year for university libraries.

Like money for new faculty hiring, these funds can be phased-in over five years.

**Cost Projection – Addition Funding for Infrastructure Renewal, Computing, and Libraries (\$millions)**

Academic Year	Facility Renewal	Computing and Communication Resources	Libraries	Total
2010-11	35	27	11	73
2011-12	70	54	22	146
2012-13	105	81	33	219
2013-2014	140	108	44	292
2014-2015	175	135	55	365

This new funding will allow institutions to maintain a quality learning experience for their students. It should be noted, however, that growth in enrolment will require the provincial and federal governments to continue supporting one-time capital projects to increase campus capacity.

**1.5 Savings through teaching-only faculty and institutions is an expensive idea**

As a way of lowering university costs, some argue for a teaching-only stream of faculty or the creation of teaching-only undergraduate universities. This path, however, will not offer students a better education, or even the same quality of education. It will only give students a lower-cost education, a degree on the cheap.

Literature published by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario points to a number of empirical studies demonstrating that quality university teaching and university research are related.<sup>15</sup> This is a view supported by students.<sup>16</sup> University research and

<sup>15</sup> Halliwell, Janet (2008). *The Nexus of Teaching and Research: Evidence and Insights from the Literature*. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

<sup>16</sup> *The Nexus of Teaching and Research: Evidence and Insights from the Literature*, pg. 9.

university teaching are mutually beneficial; together they enrich the students' classroom experience while enlivening faculty research.

Lacking the depth and freshness of inquiry that research-active professors can bring to the classroom, the teaching-only solution will mean a further deterioration in the student experience. While teaching-only faculty or institutions can unquestionably do *more* teaching, they will be unable to do *better* teaching.

### **1.6 Support for better teaching – how much can it really help?**

OCUFA welcomes the COU's commitment to ambitious programs to enhance the teaching skills of faculty.<sup>17</sup> Faculty are life-long learners who are dedicated to their students and who would warmly embrace professional development programs.

But improving the teaching effectiveness of faculty or creating infrastructure programs that enhance teaching or curriculum delivery will do nothing to reduce the student-faculty ratio. Better trained professors might deliver a better lecture, but if burgeoning class sizes prohibit robust interaction among students and professors, the quality of the student experience will remain unchanged. In fact, it may even get worse.

Moreover, an increasing proportion of courses are taught by contract academic staff, many of whom are on short-term contracts lasting one or two semesters. There is every reason to believe that universities will not invest in enhancing the skills of these temporary employees, denying students access to faculty who have had the opportunity to enrich their classroom skills.

Students still need to interact with faculty to have a meaningful educational experience, and that requires more professors, not just better prepared professors.

### **1.7 The need for real, useful accountability**

OCUFA agrees that universities must be accountable for the public funding they receive. The Multi-Year Accountability Agreements (MYAAs) are in principle a good idea; they, at least in theory, allow the government to assess how public funding is being used to enhance quality. In turn, the MYAAs give universities a longer-term funding commitment that facilitates more effective institutional planning.

However, the interim MYAAs signed as part of *Reaching Higher* have not properly implemented these principles. They were not created with appropriate stakeholder input, as students and faculty were not consulted. The current data provided through the MYAAs are incomplete and inconsistent, compromising their ability to provide useful, comparable information on the university system. And there appears to be little effort on

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<sup>17</sup> *Reaching Even Higher: The Next Multi-Year Funding Plan for Postsecondary Education*, pg. 8.

the part of the provincial government to analyze the limited data provided by the current MYAAs and use this analysis to inform policy decisions in the sector. At present, the MYAAs are both toothless and largely useless.

The next round of MYAAs should be developed through a process of broad consultation throughout the university sector. In particular, we encourage the Government of Ontario to work with all stakeholders to improve the scope and consistency of data collected through the MYAAs, so that policy development and decisions can be based on solid, comparable and accessible information.

In particular, OCUFA would like to see the following included in the MYAAs:

- More complete data on part-time faculty and academic staff, including:
  - The number of credit courses taught by these faculty, by level and year;
  - The number of credit courses taught by “full-time” but untenured faculty, by level and year; and
  - The number of students taught by these individuals.
- Class size data more detailed than what is currently captured in CUDO.

By improving the overall utility of information gathered through the MYAAs, the Government of Ontario can create a truly useful accountability tool. An open, collaborative accountability framework will allow in turn allow for real improvements to the student experience at Ontario’s universities.

## **2. Tuition & Access: controlling costs and restoring fairness**

In 2010, the Government of Ontario’s current tuition fee policy is set to expire. OCUFA believes this current policy – where institutions are able to raise fees by an average of five per cent per year – has not been effective in ensuring an affordable and accessible system. Any successor framework must do more to control the costs of higher education for students and protect the “public” nature of our postsecondary institutions.

Further tuition fee increases do not make sense in the Ontario context, for three reasons:

1. ***Students already pay more than their fair share.*** OCUFA research indicates that Ontario students pay more – both in terms of the proportion of university operating funds and in absolute dollars – than their peers in the rest of Canada. In 2005-06, tuition accounted for 44 per cent of university operating funds, as

compared to only 30 per cent in the rest of Canada.<sup>18</sup> As of the 2009-2010 school year, Ontario had the highest tuition fees of any province.<sup>19</sup> Ontario's tuition fees have also increased faster than the rest of Canada's – 13 per cent since 2006-07, as compared to only three per cent in the rest of Canada.

Proportionally, Ontario's net tuition fees are now greater than student contribution levels at peer institutions<sup>20</sup> in the United States. In 1990-91, tuition accounted for 22 per cent of revenue at the province's universities, and 29 per cent at US peer schools. By 2005-06, this difference had reversed: 44 per cent and 39 per cent respectively.<sup>21</sup>

From this data, it is clear that Ontario students are paying unusually high tuition fees. This may prevent many prospective students from pursuing university education, and saddles many more with high levels of graduate debt. If we are serious about maintaining an accessible higher education system, these trends cannot be allowed to continue.

2. ***Tuition fee increases amount to privatization-by-stealth.*** As the proportion of university operating revenue composed of tuition continues to rise, the very idea of a “public” higher education system is threatened. Tuition fees are private sources of income, similar to alumni donations or corporate grants. As the value of these revenue sources rise, and the real-dollar value of government operating grants decline, the system becomes less public. With tuition currently at 42 per cent of total university operating revenue, Ontario's institutions are perilously close to becoming privatized, in the sense that the majority of their income comes from non-public sources. At present, over half of the University of Western Ontario's budget comes from tuition fees. Many other institutions – including the University of Toronto, Brock University, Nipissing University, Trent University, Wilfrid Laurier University, and York University – are approaching the tipping point between private and public sources of revenue.<sup>22</sup>

Public education is a cherished Canadian value. By providing insufficient public funds and allowing tuition to rise, the Government of Ontario is effectively

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<sup>18</sup> OCUFA (2009) *Comparative Student Tuition and Fee Revenue*: Toronto: Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. Pg. vi.

<http://notes.ocufa.on.ca/HETrends.nsf/0/F1A4E8E41F37C7A3852575AE005F4FD3?OpenDocument>

<sup>19</sup> Statistics Canada (2009) *The Daily: University Tuition Fees*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. October 20, 2009.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/091020/dq091020b-eng.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Peer institutions as identified by the Council of Ontario Universities.

<sup>21</sup> *Comparative Student Tuition and Fee Revenue*, Pg. vi.

<sup>22</sup> Forthcoming OCUFA research.

violating this principle without any sort of an electoral mandate or public discussion to support their actions. This privatization-by-stealth is at best a betrayal of a principle that has governed education in Canada for over a century. At worst, it is disturbingly undemocratic.

- 3. Higher tuition is a tax on the middle class.** It is often claimed that publicly subsidized tuition fees represents a net transfer from lower-income families to higher-income families. If true, this would be a perverse outcome given the principles of the progressive tax system that underpins public support for higher education. However, OCUFA research strongly suggests that this is not the case. More than 60 per cent of families with children “benefit from the transfer inherent in subsidizing tuition from general government revenues.”<sup>23</sup> Increasing tuition would decrease this net transfer to the majority of Ontario families. Moreover, a strategy of increased tuition and higher student financial aid would move the barriers to postsecondary education well into the middle of the income distribution. Tuition is therefore a tax on the middle class, and as it increases, the progressive elements of the postsecondary finance structure are reduced.

Raising taxes, particularly during a recession, is not an advisable move from both an economic and a political perspective. If we wish to keep our higher education system accessible and high quality, then we must keep tuition low through a robust level of public funding.

With these factors in mind, OCUFA recommends that tuition in Ontario be frozen at current levels. Ontario students are already paying more than enough. To halt creeping privatization and prevent an increased tax burden on the middle class, tuition must not be allowed to increase even more.

To ensure that quality is maintained at Ontario universities, it is vital that compensatory funding be provided to universities during a tuition freeze. While tuition must not increase further, it is equally undesirable that money be removed from the system in the absence of additional public funding.

While OCUFA believes that tuition has a huge influence on the accessibility of higher education in Ontario, it is also important to design an effective student financial aid system. Overall, OCUFA is in favour of financial aid that adequately meets the real cost of education while not burdening graduates with excessive debt. This will require a larger aid package, a more positive ratio of grants to loans, and strong provisions for interest relief and debt forgiveness.

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<sup>23</sup> MacKenzie, Hugh (2005) *The Tuition Trap*. Toronto: Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Association. Pg. 4.

### **3. Credit transfer needs caution—and resources**

Credit transfer – the ability to move between college and university or between individual universities – is an excellent way to increase access to postsecondary education, promote student success and build a skilled workforce. The Government of Ontario has recently signaled its intention to expand credit transfer opportunities in the province. University faculty and academic librarians have some experience with credit transfer and, while lauding the increased accessibility it gives students, we believe the government should proceed with caution.

Ontario already has dozens of credit transfer programs. Unfortunately, the university drop-out rate among students who transfer from college, even those who bring credits with them, is higher than those entering university directly from high school. We need to prepare transferring students better than we have been before embarking on an aggressive expansion of the credit transfer system.

To ensure that college students meet university-level performance expectations, the colleges will need better libraries, academic librarians, university-level labs, and faculty who can supervise students performing original research. Colleges will have to invest in higher-level courses —bridging programs — to meet university standards of quality, if universities are to give credit for college courses. For if the government fails to invest more in colleges but insists that universities relax their credit transfer standards, then the reputation for quality our universities have earned will be threatened.

As a result, credit transfer could cost as much money — if done with students in mind — as the government envisions saving.

Moreover, the government has not adequately involved faculty in its credit transfer initiative. Research shows credit transfer works best when university and college faculty work together to map potential pathways. The government should consult faculty, with their direct experience in teaching and in classroom realities, directly before proceeding any further.

Only with adequate investment in community colleges and the full involvement of faculty will the government be able to deliver what students need in a credit transfer program: clear expectations about the standard of work required at university, support in meeting those expectations, and pathways ensuring appropriate standards are maintained in the affected disciplines.

## **4. Invest in Students, Invest in Success**

Higher education is the key to Ontario's social vitality and economic success. Unfortunately, serious under-funding makes it difficult for our universities to provide a high quality student experience. There is not enough faculty to ensure a quality student experience. University infrastructure is in need of renewal. Tuition is too high. And many of the suggested solutions to these problems – such as teaching-only institutions – do not address the severity or reality of the issues.

The data are clear. We need more full-time faculty to improve learning quality and student engagement. To ensure we have enough instructors, it will be necessary for the Government of Ontario to make the appropriate investments in the university system. These investments will also allow aging infrastructure to be renewed and tuition costs to be controlled.

The needed investments will not be cheap. But they are essential to preserve and expand the quality of our postsecondary system. If we are serious about our success as a province, then we simply cannot afford *not* to give our universities the resources they need to create a meaningful experience for our students.

## **5. Summary of Recommendations**

- The Government of Ontario must provide an additional \$400 million over five years to allow universities to hire an additional 5,000 full-time faculty.
- Additional funding for faculty hiring should be provided through base operating grants, and the Multi-Year Accountability Agreements (MYAAs) used to monitor each university's progress towards their specific hiring target.
- The Government of Ontario must provide \$365 million in additional operating funds over five years to facilitate infrastructure renewal, expansion of computing resources, and needed library enhancements.
- In the 2010-11 academic year, the OCUFA plan will require the government of Ontario to invest an additional \$153 million in basic operating grants to support increased faculty hiring and infrastructure renewal.
- The new MYAAs should be developed in consultation with all stakeholders, and should focus on providing meaningful, comparable and accessible information to facilitate collaborative quality improvements in Ontario.
- Tuition fees in Ontario must be frozen, with compensatory funding provided to universities.



- Any proposed enhanced credit transfer framework must be developed with college and university faculty, and properly resourced to ensure student success. This will require a significant investment by the Government of Ontario.