

OCUFA Briefing Note

Issue: Faculty Shortages

Date: August 2011

With 26 students for every full-time faculty member, Ontario universities have the worst student-faculty ratio in Canada. The average across the rest of the country is 19 students per faculty member. And in the US, there are 19 students per full-time professor at the universities designated by the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) as peer institutions. The deterioration of student-faculty ratios in the wake of the “double cohort” is troubling enough for the quality of undergraduates’ education experience, but it also bodes ill for graduate students as they begin to make up a larger proportion of the student body.

Under the Liberal government’s plan to expand colleges and universities by 60,000 student places, including 6,000 graduate students, and to increase by 50 per cent international student enrolment by fall 2015, bringing Ontario universities’ student-faculty ratio to the average in the rest of Canada by 2015 would require recruitment of 9,600 additional faculty members over and above the number necessary to replace retiring faculty members. Even the less ambitious target of returning Ontario universities to pre-double cohort levels in 2002 would require 4,700 net new faculty positions.

Current hiring trends show little promise of further improvements in the student-faculty ratio. In the Multi-Year Accountability Agreements (MYAA) between each institution and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) and in annual progress reports, universities formerly indicated the number of faculty by which their faculty complement will increase (or decrease). Actual hiring over the three years between 2006-07 and 2008-09 was seven per cent lower than projected. Hiring plans for 2009-10 were down 40 per cent from actual hiring for the previous year as universities implemented hiring freezes and slowdowns. MYAA reports no longer include information on actual or planned faculty hiring. At that rate, the full-time faculty ranks will have increased by only 2,000 over the past five years.

OCUFA’s Position

- The Ontario Government should seek to establish Ontario as a leader in higher education by improving student-faculty ratios.
- As a first step, the government should set a policy direction and provide adequate additional funding to recruit and retain at least 4,700 net new faculty members by fall 2015.
- In the longer term, the government should seek to reduce the Ontario student-faculty ratio to the current average in the rest of Canada.

Background

The student-faculty ratio directly affects the level of student-faculty interaction, a key indicator measured in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). As a result of the present student-faculty ratio, students miss out on the opportunity to meet and speak with their professors and are denied an important benefit of higher education. For faculty, the current student-faculty ratio means increased teaching and marking loads, as well as diminished opportunity to mentor and tutor students. Given the gap in student-faculty ratios, it is no surprise that Ontario universities scored significantly lower on student-faculty interaction than US counterparts in the NSSE.

According to Bob Rae's 2005 report to Ontario's Liberal government – *Ontario: A Leader in Learning* – an estimated 11,000 faculty would be required by 2010 to replace retiring university professors and to improve interaction between students and faculty. OCUFA's *Closing the Gap* study concurred with that assessment. Now again, 11,000 more faculty would be required by 2015 to attain the student-faculty ratio enjoyed by Ontario students and professors in 1990 or 10,000 to catch up to today's US students and professors.

In its 2005 provincial budget, the Liberal government announced *Reaching Higher*, its plan for postsecondary education. This program provided for an additional \$1.2 billion in operating grants to Ontario colleges and universities over five years. It also announced that multi-year agreements would be concluded between universities and the MTCU. Interim Accountability Agreements (IAAs) Multi-Year Accountability Agreements (MYAA) and progress reports included information on faculty hiring intentions.

OCUFA supported the elimination of mandatory retirement, but even this policy change has not offset the failure to hire adequate numbers of new professors. Experience elsewhere indicates that the number of faculty members who delay retirement is sufficient to produce only a small increase in the average retirement age. A majority of faculty will still retire before the age of 65. In any case, the effect of eliminating mandatory retirement is transitional and short-term only and now well behind us. It is no solution to long-term, systemic shortcomings.

In May this year, the Liberal government introduced its latest plan for postsecondary education – *Putting Students First*. The funding to be provided is less ambitious than its previous five-year plan, and will amount to \$309 million in additional operating funding by 2013-14. It will not improve per student funding, even before inflation, and offers nothing to improve student-faculty ratios. It proposes rather to “develop new programs and incentives to help improve teaching quality and reward excellence.”

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Putting Students First: Ontario's Plan for Postsecondary Education, Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, May 2011,

www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/postsecondary/backgroundunder_may.html

OCUFA Research Papers

- *University Administrators – numbers and salaries*, OCUFA Briefing Note, March 2011
- *Trends in Faculty Hiring at Ontario Universities*, Trends Vol. 1, No. 2, September 2009
- *Ontario University Interim Accountability Agreements: Where did the money go?*, October 2006
- *Closing the Quality Gap: The Case for Hiring 11,000 Faculty by 2010*, April 2005
- *Less Isn't More: Ontario's Faculty Shortage Crisis*, January 2001

**Historical perspective:
Ontario Full-time Faculty and
Student-Faculty Ratios**

	Full-time Faculty*	Student FTE per Faculty
1990	13,717	18
2000	11,700	22
2001	11,833	23
2002	12,246	24
2003	12,820	26
2004	13,300	26
2005	13,557	27
2006	14,148	27
2007	14,359	26
2008	14,511	27
2009	14,679	27

* Does not include OCAD faculty counts. Ratios are rounded to nearest whole number.

Source: Council of Ontario Universities, and Common University Data Ontario

NB: Student-faculty data in the above table are not the same as those cited in the text or the following table due to differences in data sources.

**Comparative perspective:
Estimated additional full-time faculty
required to improve Ontario student-
faculty ratio to other competitive levels
by 2015**

	Student-faculty ratio	Additional faculty required
Ontario 2008*	26	
Rest of Canada 2008*	19	9,600
US peers 2008	18	11,000
Ontario 2000	22	6,300
Ontario 2002	24	4,700

* Institutions included in Macleans rankings only. Ratios are rounded to nearest whole number.

Source: Statistics Canada; US National Center for Education Statistics

NB: US data reflect revisions due to release of previously unavailable data on limited term appointments of less than one-year. As a consequence, US student-faculty ratios are higher than previously reported.

Ontario University Full-time Faculty Hiring (above retirement replacements)

	Tenure- stream	Limited Term	Total	% Ltd Term
Planned				
2005-06	214	205	419	49%
2006-07	425	135	557	24%
2007-08	425	43	468	9%
2008-09	308	50	358	14%
2009-10	180	-8	172	
Actual				
2006-07	388	69	457	15%
2007-08	434	103	537	19%
2008-09	256	39	294	13%

Source: Interim and Multi-Year Accountability Agreements (MYAA) and MYAA Annual Reports