

2011 Provincial Pre-Budget Submission

Advancing University Education for the Benefit of Ontarians

Submitted by the Council of Ontario Universities

CARLETON UNIVERSITY • UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH • LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY • LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY • MCMASTER UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF ONTARIO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY • UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA • QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY • RYERSON UNIVERSITY • UN
IVERSITY • UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO • UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO • WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY • UNIVERSITY OF WI
NTARIO COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN • ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE OF CANADA • ALGOMA UNIVERSITY • BROCK UNIVERSITY • CAR
D UNIVERSITY • LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY • MCMASTER UNIVERSITY • NIPISSING UNIVERSITY • UNIVERSITY OF ONTARIO INST
AWA • QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY • RYERSON UNIVERSITY • UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO • TRENT UNIVERSITY • UNIVERSITY OF WATE
STERN ONTARIO • WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY • UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR • YORK UNIVERSITY • ONTARIO COLLEGE OF AR
LLEGE OF CANADA • ALGOMA UNIVERSITY • BROCK UNIVERSITY • CARLETON UNIVERSITY • UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH • LAKEHEAD
• NIPISSING UNIVERSITY • UNIVERSITY OF ONTARIO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY • UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA • QUEEN'S UNIVE
RSITY • UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO • TRENT UNIVERSITY • UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO • UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
RSITY OF WINDSOR • YORK UNIVERSITY • ONTARIO COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN • ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE OF CANADA • ALG
Y • UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH • LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY • LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY • MCMASTER UNIVERSITY • NIPISSING UNIVE
ITE OF TECHNOLOGY • UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA • QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY • RYERSON UNIVERSITY • UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO •
LOO • UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO • WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY • UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR • YORK UNIVERSITY • OI

JANUARY 2011

COUNCIL OF
ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES

CONSEIL DES
UNIVERSITÉS DE L'ONTARIO

2011 Provincial Pre-Budget Submission

Advancing University Education for the Benefit of Ontarians

Prepared January 2011 by:
Council of Ontario Universities
Conseil des universités de l'Ontario
180 Dundas Street West, Suite 1100
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1Z8
www.cou.on.ca

For more information contact:
Bonnie Patterson
President & CEO
416-979-2165 ext. 256
bpatterson@cou.on.ca

COU No. 843
ISBN No. 0-88799-459-8

INTRODUCTION

Ontario needs a better educated workforce with more advanced degree holders to meet the labour market needs of the future, enhance the innovation capacity of the province and drive our economic and social well being. Ontario universities are well placed and eager to meet this goal and contribute to Ontario's future success.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE PAST FIVE YEARS

Much has been accomplished at our universities over the past five years, supported by the province's investments in Reaching Higher:

- Over 40,000 new undergraduate students enrolled – the equivalent of adding another McMaster University and University of Windsor combined. (100,000 students have been added since 2002-03).
- Over 78,000 masters and PhD graduates are enhancing the province's innovation capacity.
- More health professionals have been educated to improve the health of Ontarians.
- Under-represented groups have better access to university.
- More student financial student assistance is available than ever before.
- A new quality assurance framework ensures the high quality of university programs by focusing on learning outcomes.
- More online portals and courses increase the digital literacy of students.
- Over 500 agreements are in place to help college students transfer to university.
- Environmental initiatives on every campus improve sustainability – sector results are reported in COU's annual *Going Greener* report.
- 7% increase in research funding over four years from the Ontario government to support cutting-edge research and innovation in health, ICT, green technology and other key areas.

OUR COMMITMENTS FOR THE FUTURE

Much will be accomplished over the next five years as Ontario universities continue to focus on enhancing the education of students, meeting evolving needs of government and other stakeholders, and being accountable to government and our communities. One of the important government goals that we will seek to deliver on is the Premier's goal to have 70% of the population achieve some level of postsecondary education. Over the next decade, universities are committed to:

- **Continuing to improve student experience and outcomes** by making teaching and learning a high priority, with a new task force to share best practices and ensure a sector-wide engagement in enhancing teaching and learning.
- **Continuing to adapt university programs** in order to respond to evolving knowledge, social and economic developments, and growing enrolments. Over 300 new graduate programs and approximately 100 new undergraduate programs received approval between 2006-07 and 2009-10. More will come over the next five years.
- **Continuing to support innovation** through research, joint industry and community partnerships, and through support for lab, equipment and other infrastructure.
- **Supporting further differentiation** of our sector in directions that recognize provincial priorities and build on each university's strengths.

- **Ensuring greater cooperation with colleges** to enhance student mobility and ensure student success.
- **Enhancing accountability to government** through strategic Multi-Year Accountability Agreements that are founded on university aspirations, government priorities and regional needs.
- **Continuing to be accountable to all of our other stakeholders** including our students, faculty and staff, our communities, and our donors through our Senates and Boards of Governors, through “town hall” meetings and the publication of plans about future directions.
- **Continuing to manage cost pressures** through efforts to meet compensation constraint goals and through collaborative purchasing arrangements. Universities also continue to manage cost pressures through deferred maintenance of buildings and equipment.
- **Continuing to enhance our operations** by sharing best practices among each of the 30 affiliates of COU that meet to discuss their issues collectively, and through common standards for financial reporting and statistical collection.
- **Ongoing and increased collaboration among universities** to create efficiencies and to improve effectiveness through services such as the Ontario Universities’ Application Centre (OUAC) and the Scholars Portal, a resource that is available to all Ontario faculty and students for online publications. Universities are also committed to the development of the Ontario Online Institute, if supported by the Ontario government.

TODAY'S INNOVATION, TOMORROW'S PROSPERITY

Ontario universities recognize the significant fiscal challenges faced by the province, and its need for constraint to address the fiscal deficit. We also know that investment in higher education is an investment in the long term, an investment that cannot be put off to another day if we are to transform Ontario's productivity and competitiveness. As Roger Martin outlined in the Forward to the Ninth Annual Report of the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress: "If we are serious about competing in the creative age, we have to invest in building the skills and capacities that will give us the advantage we need." Investments in university education are investments in critical infrastructure for Ontario's prosperity. Universities educate the highly skilled individuals needed in the knowledge economy and conduct research to drive innovation, economic growth and social well-being.

ENHANCING QUALITY

Ontario universities are committed to implementing practices that will improve student engagement and learning outcomes. In accommodating over 100,000 more students in the past eight years, universities have had to find efficiencies. Adjustments have been made in operations, as well as in teaching including changing curriculum and the structure of programs, creating larger classes, and changing the mix of instructional staff. Universities are deeply concerned with efficiencies that have an adverse impact on the quality of programs. Individual institutions have taken specific actions to improve student engagement and learning outcomes.

More importantly, the sector has come together to make teaching and learning a collective priority with the establishment of a new Teaching and Learning Task Force by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice Presidents that will promote exemplary practices and innovative solutions. With support from the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO), universities are also engaged in a variety of research initiatives designed to improve teaching including skills for student focused learning, effective use of technology, orienting new faculty and graduate students to best practices, and degree program restructuring. Support from government for the quality agenda would be welcome by universities, faculty, students and their parents.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Recognize publicly the importance of sustaining quality in Ontario universities and endorse university efforts to enhance it through the initiatives of the Ontario University Teaching and Learning Task Force.

SUPPORTING EXPANDED ACCESS

Ontario universities are strongly supportive of the government's goal to ensure that at least 70% of Ontarians have a postsecondary credential. We know that parents are increasingly eager that their children have a university education and universities are educating increasing numbers of students whose parents have not attended university and more Aboriginal students and students with disabilities. Universities will do their part to help meet the province's goals for increased access: an additional 42,000 undergraduate students are expected over the next five years.

There will also be significant and growing demand for graduate programs as access to undergraduate degrees grows. Increasing the number of Ontarians with graduate degrees is critically important for the development of Ontario's economy and to improving productivity in the province.¹

Ontario universities have proposed an approach to the planning and funding of expanded access that would give the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) the capacity to shape growth through multi-year enrolment plans and effective funding incentives and disincentives.²

The critical success factor for ensuring access to university education, within the government's fiscal capacity, is a multi-year planning and funding approach that allows all universities to compete for undergraduate and graduate spaces within a clearly articulated set of provincial criteria and priorities. This includes priorities for research that supports national, provincial and regional economic development. This approach would provide more stability and predictability to meet student and institutional needs and to address provincial goals. It would also provide more accountability. Targets and plans would continue to be adapted in response to results, evolving student demand, and the government's fiscal capacity. This approach was articulated in the *Framework for Planning and Funding Enrolment* that was published by COU in June 2010.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Implement a multi-year planning and funding approach that allows all universities to compete for undergraduate and graduate spaces within a clearly articulated set of provincial criteria and priorities that respect institutional, regional and government needs. Make multi-year funding commitments for approved growth targets.

BUILDING AND RENEWING INFRASTRUCTURE

Ontario universities welcome the government commitment that academic infrastructure will be part of the government's next 10-year infrastructure plan. New facilities are needed to meet emerging space, technological and program needs of students. Old buildings need to be renovated to accommodate new approaches to student learning, new technologies and current class sizes. Approximately 65% of useable space at universities is over 30 years old and is under-utilized or unusable.

Investing in academic infrastructure has significant benefits for the 29 communities around the province in which universities are located. It is estimated that the joint federal provincial infrastructure program of the past two years has created over 11,000 jobs, increased local revenue and created spinoff benefits for supplier companies that provide material and services to construction projects. Academic infrastructure investments also advance the learning and research environments for students and faculty, enhance our ability to attract the best students, and often provide a venue for a wide range of community recreational, cultural and social activities for local families.

¹ Ontario Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity, and Economic Progress. *Navigating Through the Recovery*, Eighth Annual Report (2009).

² Framework for Planning and Funding Enrolment, Council of Ontario Universities, June 2010. <http://www.cou.on.ca/Issues-Resources/Key-Issues/PDFs/Framework-for-Planning-and-Funding-of-Enrolment---.aspx>

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Ensure universities have sufficient infrastructure, both new and renovated, to address the growing number of students that will be entering universities over the next five years and meet the changing needs of infrastructure for research and innovation partnerships.

ENCOURAGING FURTHER DIFFERENTIATION

Ontario universities share the government's objective that, through differentiation, Ontario universities offer students a wide variety of excellent programs and build on their institutional strengths and niche areas of expertise. Ontario universities welcome the ongoing development of a postsecondary sector that rewards competitive innovation.³

Ontario universities compete in a global context and they aspire to excellence. We can best support the development of Ontario's innovation economy if we can attract and keep the best faculty and the best students, from Ontario and from around the world. This requires that all universities are engaged in both teaching and research.

Ontario universities already differ in size, the composition of their student bodies, their program mix, the extent of their experiential learning approaches and the relative proportion of effort spent in teaching and research. These differences are guided by each university's mission, vision and strategic goals. We support differentiation that respects institutional needs for graduate students, and for their differing focus on research activities. Differentiation should also address other important aspects of universities' development, including size, access to programs in different parts of the province, partnerships with colleges and other universities, support for regional economic development, and other aspects that will emerge in universities' strategic planning.

Provincial funding for growth in undergraduate and graduate spaces is a key lever to support differentiation. The approach proposed by Ontario universities would give the provincial government the capacity to shape differentiation through multi-year enrolment plans and effective funding incentives and disincentives. Allocation of spaces for growth will allow the province to address, in partnership with the universities, the balance of each university's undergraduate and graduate teaching mission and the mix of programs.

The current funding system for Ontario universities already includes some special purpose grants from MTCU that explicitly support differences among university missions, address access for under-represented groups, bilingual programs and other special purposes. Ontario universities propose that these differentiation grants be redefined and expanded to become an effective incentive to allow universities to further differentiate.⁴ The starting point for this proposed approach would be to maintain each university's current funding through special purpose grants. Ontario universities recommend that the Ontario government direct new investments for enhanced quality and other provincial priorities (beyond growth in access) into differentiation grants. New investments would be combined with existing grants to create resources in each university to support development of both provincial and institutional priorities. Universities would reach strategic multi-year agreements with MTCU to support differentiation through specific utilization of this funding, which could include access initiatives, improvements in teaching and

³ These goals of differentiation are articulated in *The Benefits of Greater Differentiation in Ontario's University Sector* (Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2010), a report to the Ontario government.

⁴ Differentiation grants should not replace current provincial funding for undergraduate and graduate enrolments or funding that supports research.

learning, student supports, partnerships, credit transfer initiatives or targeted additional research initiatives. Reporting specific results from these grants would provide confidence to the government that directions for differentiation meet provincial objectives.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Redefine and expand the current special purpose grants to support further differentiation of each university. Negotiate with each university a multi-year enrolment plan and a multi-year accountability agreement for use of differentiation grants, to support further differentiation among universities to meet the needs of Ontario's students and communities and the province's priorities.

INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT THE OPEN ONTARIO PLAN

Ontario universities continue to work with the provincial government on initiatives that are part of the government's Open Ontario plan.

CREATING AN ONLINE INSTITUTE

Universities are already highly active in providing online education. In order to expand access to online learning in the most cost-effective way, Ontario universities have provided specific proposals for implementation of an Ontario Online Institute. This includes the creation of a consortium model that leverages existing resources in the initial stages and expands the role and scope of the institute over time. Ontario universities are working with MTCU to improve online access to university education for students around the province and beyond, create more flexibility for students (including improved credit transfer for online courses), and realize the promise of technology to help improve teaching and learning outcomes. This approach was articulated in *Ontario Online Institute: Achieving the Transformation*, published by COU in August, 2010.⁵

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Support the development of an online institute through a university consortium by providing start-up funding in line with the COU submission for: establishment of an e-learning consortium to create the institute, informed by a review of best practices in other jurisdictions; establishment of a technology host; planning for necessary systems integration; development of the intellectual property framework; and the development of credit equivalency agreements.

ATTRACTING THE BEST INTERNATIONAL TALENT

Demographics are creating future challenges for Ontario. The working age population is not growing as fast as in the past and the population is aging. To create the work force we need for an innovative economy, we need to continue to encourage more domestic students to go to university, especially

⁵ The submission, *Ontario Online Institute: Achieving the Transformation* (August, 2010), can be found at <http://www.cou.on.ca/Issues-Resources/Student-Resources/Government-Submissions/PDFs/COU-OnlineInstituteSubmission.aspx>

Aboriginal students, students whose parents never went to university and students with disabilities. We also need to bring the best and brightest from around the world to contribute to Ontario's economy. Ontario universities support the recently announced Ontario Trillium Scholarships for international PhD students, because these scholarships send a strong signal to the world that we are serious about attracting top talent to our universities. Ontario universities have made a number of other proposals about strategic marketing to international students including the use of signature programs or competitions designed to attract talent. This approach was articulated in *The "Open Ontario" Strategy for Internationalizing Postsecondary Education* published by COU in September 2010.⁶

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Move forward with the international recruitment agenda in order to ensure that Ontario attracts the best and the brightest students to our universities and in so doing, helps to enhance the province's innovation capacity.

SUPPORTING A SUCCESSFUL CREDIT TRANSFER SYSTEM

Ontario universities are strongly committed to supporting the success of students who seek to transfer credit among different institutions – both colleges and universities. We agree that learning in other programs should be recognized where it is relevant to meet a program's requirements. We are supportive of the government's announcement to develop a new credit transfer system, including the Credit Transfer Innovation Fund and a new web portal to improve access to credit transfer policy and pathway information.

Ontario universities have collaborated with colleges to develop over 500 specific pathways for college students to bring credit into university degree programs. Through COU's Credit Transfer Resource Group, we proposed specific ways to improve credit transfer and build upon existing pathways and agreements. The proposals include suggested funding approaches that would encourage innovation and create incentives for universities to work with college partners to develop and expand pathways. They also include recommendations to develop performance indicators that would support improved accountability and provide reliable system-wide information about the extent, demand for and outcomes of credit transfer.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Allocate funding for universities on the basis of each university's share of the total number of students transferring to universities from Ontario colleges. Through continued partnership with Colleges Ontario and MTCU, adopt and implement all recommended performance indicators to ensure appropriate accountability for funding received for pathway development and student supports.

⁶ Ontario universities' submission, *The "Open Ontario" Strategy for Internationalizing Postsecondary Education* (September 2010), can be found at <http://www.cou.on.ca/Issues-Resources/Key-Issues/PDFs/FINAL---Open-Ontario-Strategy-for-Internationaliz.aspx>

CONCLUSION

Growing demand in Ontario for undergraduate and graduate programs provides an opportunity for the government to meet its objective of creating the workforce and innovative infrastructure necessary for Ontario's prosperity. Ontario universities are fully committed to helping to achieve this goal. We welcome an ongoing dialogue with the government about how to meet our shared objectives for a postsecondary sector that continues to be efficient, accessible, and responsive to the needs of students and communities; that builds on existing differentiation; continually innovates to make the most effective use of resources; and improve outcomes for students.

We are already moving in these directions. We will continue to work with the province to improve postsecondary education in Ontario, to be accountable to government and all of the various stakeholders with whom we engage and to support the social and economic health of Ontario.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Quality:** Recognize publicly the importance of sustaining quality in Ontario universities and endorse university efforts to enhance it through the initiatives of the Ontario University Teaching and Learning Task Force.
- **Growth:** Implement a multi-year planning and funding approach that allows all universities to compete for undergraduate and graduate spaces within a clearly articulated set of provincial criteria and priorities that respect institutional, regional and government needs. Make multi-year funding commitments for approved growth targets. Ensure universities have sufficient infrastructure, both new and renovated, to address the growing number of students that will be entering universities over the next five years and meet the changing needs of infrastructure for research and innovation partnerships.
- **Capital:** Ensure universities have sufficient infrastructure, both new and renovated, to address the growing number of students that will be entering universities over the next five years and meet the changing needs of infrastructure for research and innovation partnerships.
- **Differentiation:** Redefine and expand the current special purpose grants to support further differentiation of each university. Negotiate with each university a multi-year enrolment plan and a multi-year accountability agreement for use of differentiation grants, to support further differentiation among universities to meet the needs of Ontario's students and communities and the province's priorities.
- **Online Institute:** Support the development of a university consortium model by providing start-up funding for: establishment of an e-learning consortium to create the institute, informed by a review of best practices in other jurisdictions; establishment of a technology host; planning for necessary systems integration; development of the intellectual property framework; and the development of credit equivalency agreements.
- **International:** Move forward with the international recruitment agenda in order to ensure that Ontario attracts the best and the brightest students to our universities and in so doing, helps to enhance the province's innovation capacity.
- **Credit Transfer:** Allocate funding for universities on the basis of each university's share of the total number of students transferring to universities from Ontario colleges. Through continued partnership with Colleges Ontario and MTCU, adopt and implement all recommended performance indicators to ensure appropriate accountability for funding received for pathway development and student supports.