



**COLLEGE
FACULTY**

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Report on Education in Ontario Colleges





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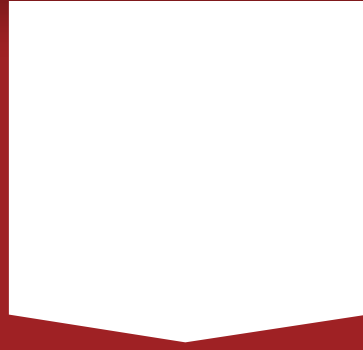
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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	7
Background.....	10
Threats to Quality Education: Faculty Experiences	31
Online Course Delivery.....	44
The Need for Academic Freedom	58
Threats to Quality in Focus	62
Public Perception of College Faculty and College Education	65
Education as a Public Good: Toward an Equal Partnership	68
Appendices	78
References	82





Executive Summary

“Faculty need to be equal partners in order to meet the challenges facing college education today, and to ensure that the CAATs continue to fulfill their original mandate of access, quality, and service to diverse communities. Being equal partners with college administration and the provincial government means faculty having a strong voice within the classroom, within the governance of each institution, and when setting priorities for the system as a whole.”

Executive Summary

Overview

The Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs) were founded in 1965 as a vehicle to increase access to post-secondary education, to address the needs of learners not served by the university system, and to meet local economic and community development needs. The CAATs have been highly successful at fulfilling their mandate, with 24 institutions currently serving 220,000 full-time and 300,000 part time students. This level of enrolment represents a 100% increase over the past 28 years.¹

This report examines community colleges from the perspective of the faculty who deliver their public service – high quality post-secondary education and job training. The report is based on conversations with over 600 faculty at all 24 CAATs, along with historical research and present-day inquiry into the sector's financing, management, and operations. The report is focused primarily on perceptions by college faculty that there is a crisis of quality within the college system today.

To faculty, the crisis stems from a climate of fiscal austerity and an autocratic management culture in which faculty are systematically marginalized from academic decision-making. As a result, decisions about quality, academic standards and student success are being made with more weight given to budgetary imperatives, rather than educational outcomes. This report advocates system reforms that would properly resource Ontario's colleges, and that would establish an equal partnership between faculty – the professionals responsible for maintaining educational standards – government, and administration.

Challenges Facing Quality Education

College faculty perceive the following issues to be serious challenges to their ability to provide high quality education.

Funding

Government funding as a percentage of operating revenues to the CAATs was once over 75%. Presently it is approximately 50%.² Insufficient funding is leading to an increase in cost-cutting pressure within the colleges, a decrease in academic standards, and a decrease in the quality of student experience.

Academic Freedom

Ontario college faculty have no guaranteed academic freedom, and no ability to defend academic standards in the face of budget cuts and austerity. Faculty lack the ability to criticize management decisions that compromise quality of education or student safety. With no intellectual property protection, faculty work is used by managers to eliminate full-time positions and to contract out work to private colleges that lack sufficient public oversight.

Workload

The current formula for assigning faculty work does not account for the extra time associated with a high technology workplace with larger classes and fewer full-time faculty. The perception of faculty is that workloads are maximized at best, and overloaded in many cases.

Online Courses

Faculty are deeply concerned about a push toward online course delivery that is clearly driven by

cost-cutting and profit-making, and largely dismissive of the contentious research literature concerning online's effectiveness and appropriateness in different educational contexts.

Non-Full-Time Faculty

In the colleges today the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty is approximately 1 to 3. The lack of full-time faculty means less time for dealing with students, less time for course and program development, and a greater challenge to maintain academic standards. In addition, partial load faculty (teaching between 7 and 12 hours per week) have no job security or seniority when it comes to applying for full-time jobs.

Student Debt

In 1978/79, student tuitions accounted for between 10 and 15% of college operating revenues.³ In 2011, they accounted for approximately 33.3% of revenues, a 300% increase.⁴ Over the past 20 years, tuition at Ontario colleges has outpaced inflation by 435%.⁵ Higher tuitions have been leading to unsustainable student debt-loads upon graduation, and the cost of post-secondary is limiting access for low-income students.

“Over the past 20 years, tuition at Ontario colleges has outpaced inflation by 435%.”⁵

Administration

While overall government funding for the colleges is far below sustainable levels, what resources have been coming into the system have increasingly gone toward expanding full-time administration and increasing administration salaries. Between 1996/97 and 2011/12, the number of full-time college administrative staff has increased

by 55%.⁶ In the colleges today there is now one full-time administrator for every three full-time faculty.⁷

Recommendations to Establish an Equal Partnership

Faculty need to be equal partners in order to meet the challenges facing college education today, and to ensure that the CAATs continue to fulfill their original mandate of access, quality, and service to diverse communities. Being equal partners with college administration and the provincial government means faculty having a strong voice within the classroom, within the governance of each institution, and when setting priorities for the system as a whole. To this end, the report makes the following recommendations.

1. All-party Select Committee on Ontario Post-secondary Education

The first recommendation is for the provincial government to convene an all-party select committee to examine the present and future sustainability of the post-secondary system in Ontario, and to work closely with college faculty, university faculty, and students to address issues of funding, tuition, and student debt. The committee needs to consider the following proposed changes:

Commitment to Adequate Funding

At the federal level, implement a Post-Secondary Education Act, as endorsed by the *Canadian Federation of Students (CFS)*.⁸ This Act would be modeled after the Canada Health Transfer, and would bring federal funding for post-secondary education back to 1992 levels, or 0.4% of GDP.

At the provincial level, bring government funding per full-time post-secondary student up to the national average.

Commitment to Affordable Education

As endorsed by the CFS and CFS-O, reduce college tuition fees to 1992 levels.⁹

As endorsed by the CFS and CFS-O, cap college administrator salaries.¹⁰

As endorsed by the CFS and CFS-O, enact a program of federal student loan debt reduction intended to cut the amount of Canadian student debt in half.¹¹

Reintroduce a comprehensive, need-based tuition grant program.¹²

Commitment to Community-Centered Public Education

End public-private campuses, and ensure that all new CAAT campuses in Ontario are fully publicly funded and staffed with CAAT-A faculty covered under the collective agreement.

Give equal standing to faculty, along with colleges and the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU), in decisions affecting the development of the community college system. Immediately establish the Joint Task Force required by the faculty collective agreement whenever a major change in college mandate is proposed.

Ensure that program and course offering diversity is maintained at the local level, and that individual colleges are able to determine how best to meet the educational needs of their community.

Ensure continued funding and support for the unique needs of Northern and Francophone colleges. Evaluate the specific impact on these colleges from any mandate change proposed by the MTCU.

Affirm federal and provincial funding sufficient to maintain appropriate statistics on the college system, including financing, operations, staffing, enrolment, student tuitions and debt, and educational outcomes.

2. Academic Freedom, Staffing, and Workload in Faculty Collective Agreement

The second recommendation is that articles on academic freedom and intellectual property pro-

tection be included in the college faculty collective agreement. In addition, provisions to ensure adequate numbers of full-time faculty, and sustainable workloads must also be included.

Commitment to Faculty Academic Freedom

Include academic freedom in the college faculty collective agreement, specifying faculty control over academic decisions related to course design, content, delivery, and evaluation.

Include intellectual property protection in the faculty collective agreement.

Affirm faculty control over how, where, and when online course delivery is utilized.

Commitment to Full-Time Staffing

Plan to increase numbers of full-time faculty and maintain a minimum ratio within each college of full-time to part-time.

Introduce into the collective agreement improved seniority for partial load faculty in terms of work assignments and hiring preference for full-time jobs.

Introduce conversion language into the faculty collective agreement for part-time faculty.

Ensure that all non-full-time faculty are allowed to organize into a union without interference and opposition from management or the provincial government.

Commitment to Sustainable Workload

Modify the faculty collective agreement to account for the additional workload implications of email communications, learning management system maintenance, developing, preparing and delivering online or “blended” courses, and mentoring part-time faculty.

3. Task Force on College Co-Governance

The third recommendation is that the province appoint a Task Force on College Co-Governance, including representatives from the college faculty union, the College Employer's Council, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, and

university administration. This task force would examine a process to establish institutional co-governance in the colleges.

Examine the possibility of a bicameral governance structure in the CAATs province-wide. Each institution will have an Academic Senate as well as a Board of Governors, with the Senate responsible for academic decision-making.



Introduction

Introduction

Context

The Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs) have been in existence for close to 50 years.¹³ In this time the landscape of post-secondary education in Ontario has shifted drastically, bringing new challenges to the quality and integrity of college education. Changes in government funding models, management strategies, instructional technologies and student enrolment are all having a transformative impact. In addition, old tensions present at the founding of the CAATs continue to manifest in operational contradictions, strained labour relations, and decreased system effectiveness. As the front-line professionals who provide instruction within the CAATs, college professors have a unique perspective on these challenges. More than ever, this perspective needs to be accounted for in academic and operational decision-making within individual colleges, and in decisions that affect the direction of the college system as a whole.

Sponsor

This Report has been commissioned by the executive of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology – Academic (CAAT-A) division of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU).¹⁴ The CAAT-A division represents over 11,000 professors, counselors and librarians in the Ontario community college system. The division executive is democratically elected from the CAAT-A membership across Ontario, and is the legal decision-making body for the division.

Objective

This Report seeks to understand challenges facing Ontario college education, as seen through the eyes of faculty at all 24 community colleges. In

particular, the Report explores growing concerns among college faculty that years of neoliberal government policy and increasingly corporate management have eroded quality of education and compromised the collegiality and functionality of the learning environment. The Report offers several recommendations to address these concerns, and to ensure that college faculty are equal partners in maintaining academic standards and setting the future course of college education in Ontario.

Method

Research for the Report was undertaken by a full-time professor who has taught for over 10 years in the community college system. Starting in September, 2013, this professor was seconded by OPSEU to conduct research and write the Report as preparation for college faculty contract negotiations in 2014.

The lead researcher traveled to all 24 community colleges in Ontario to meet with faculty and with local union stewards and officers. These visits took place over the four month period between September 24, 2013 and January 18, 2014. At every college the researcher met with the Local Executive Committee (LEC) of the faculty union. In addition, the researcher attended general membership meetings (GMMs) at George Brown, Fleming, Niagara, St. Clair, Georgian, Lambton, Conestoga, Confederation, Mohawk, Canadore, and Fanshawe colleges. At La Cite Collegiale, Cambrian College, Canadore, Mohawk, and Sault College, the researcher also did a campus tour and spoke with several faculty in their offices, classrooms and labs. Member attendance at GMMs varied considerably, but an average of 40 at each meeting is conservative. The size of LEC meetings also varied based on the size of the faculty local, with a con-

servative average of 10 members at each meeting. Finally, approximately 10 additional faculty were consulted on each of five walking tours. As such, via the consultation process the researcher interacted with over 600 faculty members.

The goal of college visits was to listen to local faculty concerns and also to engage in dialogue about outstanding issues that had been identified by faculty in previous contract negotiations. Chief among these issues were the lack of full-time faculty, increasing workloads due to online learning, academic freedom, decreasing quality education, and the erosion of workplace collegiality.

Secondary research was also conducted into the operational history of the college system, focusing on funding, resource allocation, staffing, and student tuition. This information was obtained through the Colleges Council, Colleges Ontario, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and the Canadian Federation of Students.

Tertiary research was also conducted on academic freedom in Canadian post-secondary institutions, online learning, changes to provincial and federal tax regimes, legislation governing community colleges, and models of post-secondary funding.

Finally, to access public views on such issues as quality of education, academic freedom, and the reduction of full-time faculty, two online opinion polls were conducted with Ontario citizens, one with a sample of 1,180, and the other with a sample of 1,000.

There are several limitations to the primary research conducted for this report. As the method of contacting faculty was via the local unions at all 24 colleges, the results cannot be taken as representing the views of all college faculty. A particular difficulty was accessing the perspective of partial load faculty and probationary full-time faculty, both groups being union members, but having a much lower rate of active participation in the union. This

low participation rate is largely due to the precarious nature of employment in these groups, and the potential negative consequences of openly supporting the union. It is revealing of the current state of labour relations in the CAATs that at every college I visited, full-time professors actively discouraged partial load and probationary members from openly supporting the union, for fear of retaliation from management. Other groups not represented in the consultation include the large number of part-time and sessional faculty. These two groups are not members of the faculty union, and as such were not easily accessible using this survey's methodology.

Another limitation of this primary research is that it was explicitly focused on the 2014 round of contract negotiations, and on faculty concerns about their work environment and quality of education. At local meetings the researcher gave a presentation on outstanding issues from previous rounds of bargaining. As such, the consultation was not an open-ended discussion about what faculty both like and dislike about the college system. College professors are passionate about their work and care deeply about student success and their professional integrity. In many ways their work allows them to express these aspirations, and this is what makes being a faculty member in an Ontario college a fulfilling career. While there are undoubtedly positive aspects of teaching, counseling and providing information services in the college system today, these aspects of faculty experience were not the focus of this study.

Despite these limitations, the consultation process did involve over 600 full-time faculty members, including a much smaller number (approximately 20) partial load. As such, the results can be viewed as representative of a broad range of faculty opinion, and particularly of persons who are active in the union, and who are engaged most directly in hearing faculty complaints and resolving workplace conflicts with management.



Background

Background

History of the Ontario College System

The Ontario community college system was founded by an act of provincial parliament in 1965. Then minister of education Bill Davis introduced Bill 153, an amendment to the *Department of Education Act*, to create Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs).¹⁵ Colleges were originally mandated in 18 defined areas, and several were converted from existing Institutes of Technology and Ontario Vocational Centres. Oversight of the colleges was assigned to a Council of Regents appointed by the provincial government, while each institution was directed by a Board of Governors (BOG) appointed from the community.¹⁶

Centennial College in Toronto was the first CAAT to begin operations in 1966.¹⁷ By 1967 there were 20 community colleges spread through the 18 areas. In 1972, the campus of Cambrian College in North Bay became a separate institution, Canadore College, and the Sault St. Marie campus of Cambrian became Sault College.¹⁸ Two francophone colleges were also established: La Cité Collegiale founded in Ottawa in 1990, and College Boreal founded in Sudbury in 1995.¹⁹

Bill 153 based the mandate of community colleges on four principles:

1. they must embrace total education, vocational and avocational, regardless of formal entrance qualifications, with provision for complete vertical and horizontal mobility;
2. they must develop curricula that meet the combined cultural aspirations and occupational needs of the student;
3. they must operate in the closest possible cooperation with business and

industry, and with social and other public agencies, including education, to ensure that curricula are at all times abreast, if not in advance of the changing requirements of a technological society;

4. they must be dedicated to progress, through constant research, not only in curricula but in pedagogical technique and in administration.²⁰

When the community college system was founded in 1965, Ontario, and Canada more generally, were in the midst of a boom in industrial production and a period of growing prosperity and equality. From the beginning of the Second World War to 1977, the income share of the richest 1% fell from 14% to 7.7%, as the gains from economic growth led to more people working and better paid jobs.²¹ This redistribution of wealth was largely attributable to the Labour Movement, as workers formed and joined unions and went on strike for higher pay, benefits, and improved working conditions.²² From the 1940s to the 1950s, economist Simon Kuznets identified a trend of increasing equality in both North America and Europe.²³ The trend continued into the 1970s, and this broader socioeconomic climate influenced the CAATs' commitment to accessible education, and ensured that the colleges had strong government support at their inception.

From the outset the CAATs were seen as a separate, but complementary system to Ontario's universities. The colleges would focus on providing education and training to students who for many reasons could or would not attend university, while also meeting the educational, economic, and social needs of the diverse communities in which they were located. Funding for the CAATs treated

each college equally, and the bulk of operating revenues came first from provincial grants, and second from federal funding of apprenticeship programs. Tuitions initially provided only a small percentage of operating funds – between 10 and 15%.²⁴ Since their founding, levels of government funding to the CAATs have fluctuated greatly, leading to a perpetual climate of financial insecurity. Apart from a brief infusion of funds in 1986 in response to the 1984 faculty strike and 1985 Skolnik Report on workload, the trend from 1970 to present has been a steady decline in provincial and federal support for the colleges.²⁵ An infusion of new government funding by the McGuinty Liberals in 2005 briefly reversed the trend, but beyond 2009 funding resumed its decrease.²⁶ This recurring lack of resources for the CAATs has had profound effects on the issues highlighted by faculty in this report, and an equally significant impact on increasing student tuition and student debt.

As part of the differentiation between colleges and universities, the CAATs were administered according to an “industrial” model, in which management decisions were made without consulting faculty, and in which the professional autonomy of faculty was de-emphasized. The Board of Governors (BOG) of each college was the institution’s primary decision-making body, and the administration carried out the BOGs directives. This governance structure was in contrast to the bicameral structure of Canadian universities, which had both a BOG and an academic senate. In universities the senate was tasked with making decisions on academic matters, and faculty had academic freedom enshrined within their full-time appointments. As the CAAT faculty taught at institutions focused on teaching, not research, and on instruction in vocational skills, it was thought that they did not need academic freedom.²⁷

With Bill 153, the primary goal of the community colleges was seen as expanding access to post-secondary education in Canada, a goal which the CAATs have undeniably achieved. Before the college system was founded, approx-

imately 8% of Canadian youth went to university. As of 2004, approximately 40% of youth attended either college or university.²⁸ The vision of expanding educational access and serving community economic development guided the college system throughout the 1970s and 80s. During this time period, the structure of the colleges remained stable, while the main areas of conflict within the system concerned the difficulty of transferring credits between colleges and between colleges and universities, increasing the general education component of college education, ensuring adequate levels of government funding, and addressing chronic workplace tensions between faculty and management.²⁹

The Skolnik Report

In 1984 college faculty went on strike over recurring workload issues. As a result of the strike, the provincial government created an Instructional Assignment Review Committee tasked with exploring issues around workload and management-faculty relations within the CAATs. The Committee was chaired by professor Michael Skolnik, and in 1985 it released *Survival or Excellence? A Study of Instructional Assignment in Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology*, hereafter known as *The Skolnik Report*. This report highlighted a number of issues that were affecting the quality of education and functionality of the academic work environment. In particular, Skolnik noted that reduced funding, an inequitable approach to workload, and poor management – faculty relations were keeping the CAATs from fulfilling their mandates and achieving excellence as centres of post-secondary education.³⁰

Skolnik highlighted the fact that since the CAATs were founded, government funding had been steadily reduced. He noted that “enrolment in provincially funded programs increased by nearly 50 percent between 1978/79 and 1983/84, and that real provincial operating grants per student funding unit decreased by 33 percent over this period.”³¹ This lack of government funding meant

that colleges “experienced a 20 percent reduction in total real expenditures per student funding unit between 1978/79 and 1982/83”.³² In his recommendations, Skolnik pointed out the critical importance of increasing provincial funding for the colleges, arguing that “the financial pressure under which the colleges have been operating is a major source of instructional assignment problems; and without alleviation of this pressure it is doubtful that any of the other recommendations... can be implemented, as the colleges will continue to be preoccupied with mere survival”.³³

On the issue of workload, Skolnik’s research concluded that “a substantial proportion of faculty workloads are unreasonable and excessive”, and recommended considerable changes to the college faculty collective agreement to alleviate this problem. Skolnik advocated for a workload formula that limited weekly and annual instructional hours; that set limits to classroom size, student to faculty ratios, and number of different courses assigned in one semester; that allotted sufficient time for course preparation, curriculum development and faculty professional development; and that acknowledged additional time required for clinical and field supervision and for special needs student groups.³⁴

Finally, Skolnik’s report emphasized the complete unworkability of an “industrial” or “military” model of management within the colleges. Skolnik argued that even if sufficient funding were secured, and equitable workload formulas established, a continued lack of faculty participation in academic decision-making would be catastrophic. He stated:

What is perhaps most at issue here is the extent to which faculty are viewed and treated as responsible professionals whose judgment in academic matters is valued and whose opinions are sought. Faculty should not be seen as educational technicians who must be told in detail what to do. Effective management

of the colleges does not require clocking faculty time as much as it does motivating, supporting, and involving faculty, and assessing educational outcomes, rather than inputs of time.³⁵

To address the lack of collegial management-faculty relations, Skolnik recommended that colleges establish academic councils, populated by administration, faculty, and students, to oversee academic matters. These councils would enable academic priorities to be advanced and educational standards to be maintained. Skolnik intended academic councils to increase collegiality, and to avoid situations such as college administration decid-

Faculty should not be seen as educational technicians who must be told in detail what to do.

ing unilaterally to reduce the number of contact hours students received in each college course. Concerning this change, Skolnik remarked:

We find it inconceivable that colleges would introduce such significant changes affecting faculty and academic programs without substantial consultation with faculty. This type of blatant disregard for the legitimate professional concerns of faculty could hardly fail to evoke cynicism among faculty regarding the colleges’ genuine commitment to quality education and equitable treatment of faculty. The attitude toward faculty that is reflected in such an action needs to be replaced by one of commitment to collegial decision-making.³⁶

The Instructional Assignment Review Committee’s recommendations led to substantial changes in the college system. A brief influx of government funding in 1986 enabled the hiring of hundreds of new full-time faculty, and negotiation of Article

11 in the faculty collective agreement addressed many, but not all, recurring issues around workload. However, the achievement of collegial faculty – management relations saw little advance in the years since the 1985 report was released. Lack of change in this key structural flaw has prompted faculty to take up the issue of academic freedom in subsequent rounds of collective bargaining.

The Neoliberal Turn

With the election of Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative government in 1984, federal funding to the provinces for health, education and social services began to decline. This increased budget pressure on the provinces to maintain levels of public service delivery. Tensions caused by underfunding were exacerbated with the election in Ontario of a Conservative government under Mike Harris in 1995.³⁷ This change of government led to a radical reorganization of public services, post-secondary education, and the college system in particular.

The 1995 Ontario Conservative government enacted a series of sweeping reforms under the banner of "The Common Sense Revolution". These changes were informed by a neoliberal ideology, described by David Harvey as:

... a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.³⁸

Proponents of neoliberalism argue for the supremacy of markets in all aspects of social and economic activity, and seek to minimize the role of the state in providing public goods and services, in redistributing wealth, and in regulating economic activity. In relation to public services like education, healthcare and social services, neoliberal advocates favour privatization, deregulation, and reduced funding support. Funding cuts are in turn directly tied to tax cuts on the wealthy and on corporations. As neoliberal governments radically reduce their revenue streams, they simultaneously

manufacture a crisis in public service funding. The economic rationale given for tax cuts is to stimulate investment in the real economy via job creation, expanded production, and innovation.³⁹

In practice, neoliberal policies have led to sharp declines in taxes and government revenues, and sharp increases in income inequality. In Canada neoliberal policies were first enacted by the federal Progressive Conservative government from 1984 to 1993, were perpetuated under successive Liberal governments, and have intensified under the Conservative Harper government, from 2006 to the present.⁴⁰

A significant policy change at the federal level has involved personal income taxes, which in the neoliberal era have been changed from a progressive system (in which the wealthy pay a higher proportional share of income in tax) to a regressive system (in which the wealthy pay an equal or lesser proportion of tax in relation to lower income groups).⁴¹ In 1948, the highest marginal income tax rate in Canada (on incomes of \$250,000 and higher) was 80%. Today the highest marginal income tax rate, for incomes over 126,000, is 42.9%.⁴² As a result of these changes, today middle income Canadians have the highest tax burden as proportion of income.⁴³ Under neoliberal governments similar cuts have been made to corporate taxes. In 1960 the federal corporate tax rate was 41%, and by 2012 it had been slashed to 15%.⁴⁴ Today Canada's corporate tax rate is the lowest in the G8 and 11th lowest among the 30 country Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).⁴⁵

In contrast to the idea that lower corporate taxes would lead to more investment, research shows that it has instead led corporations to hoard cash. As of 2012, cash reserves for Canadian corporations were valued at \$567 billion.⁴⁶ Contrary to neoliberal orthodoxy, during the period when corporate taxes were being steadily cut, investment in the real economy (as a percentage of GDP) has fluctuated, but experienced an overall decline.⁴⁷ This decline has also occurred in Ontario, where lowered corporate taxes have been accompanied by declines in economic investment.⁴⁹

Changes to Highest Marginal Income Tax Rates (%) – Canada and Ontario

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Federal	80	80	43	31.32	30.5	29
Ontario	-	2.4	18.92	16.91	17.4	17.41
Combined	80	82.4	61.92	48.23	47.9	46.41

(Brown & Mintz 2012:26)

Changes to Corporate Income Tax Rates (%) – Canada and Ontario

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2013
Federal	41	41.41	37.8	28.84	29.12	18	15
Provincial	9	12	14	15.5	14	12	10
Combined	52	53.41	51.8	44.34	43.10	30	25

(Brown & Mintz 2012:28)

Changes to Total Tax Revenue as a Percentage of GDP – Canada and OECD Comparators

	1980	1990	2000	2005	2007	2008
Canada	31	35.9	35.6	33.4	33.3	32.2
Germany	36.1	34.8	37.2	34.8	36.2	36.4
France	40.1	42	44.4	43.9	43.5	43.1
U.K.	34.8	35.5	36.3	35.8	36.1	35.7
Denmark	43	46.5	49.4	50.8	48.7	48.3
Sweden	46.4	52.2	51.8	49.5	48.3	47.1
Norway	42.4	41	42.6	43.5	43.6	42.1
Italy	29.7	37.8	42.3	40.8	43.5	43.2
U.S.	24	26.3	27.5	26.3	26.5	26.5

(Brown & Mintz 2012:5)

Changes to Total Government Revenue as Percentage of GDP – Canada and OECD Comparators

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008	2009
Canada	43	43.2	44.1	40.8	39.8	38.5
Germany	43.4	45.1	46.4	43.5	43.6	44.3
France	47	48.9	50.1	50.5	49.5	48.1
U.K.	39.3	38	40.4	40.8	42.5	40.4
Denmark	54.1	56.4	55.8	57.8	55.3	55.9
Sweden	-	57.6	59.1	56.5	54.7	53.8
Norway	-	54.2	57.7	57.2	59.3	55.5
Italy	41.5	45.1	45.3	43.8	46.2	46.6
U.S.	32.9	33.7	35.2	32.9	32.4	30.5

(Brown & Mintz 2012:6)

As the above tables show, levels of corporate tax in Canada and Ontario are now half what they used to be in 1960. In addition, the highest marginal income tax rate has experienced a similar decline of 42%.⁴⁹ Canada now has among the lowest percentage of tax revenues as percentage of GDP in the OECD, and lags far behind countries like Norway, Sweden, Germany, and Denmark in terms of the United Nations Inequality Adjusted Human Development Index.⁵⁰

As a result of tax cuts, over the past 15 years, federal tax revenue as a percentage of GDP has declined 4%, which amounts to approximately \$80 billion per year in lost revenue.⁵¹ This has meant less money for funding public services and public infrastructure. Another result of tax cuts is that income inequality has been steadily rising. After declining from 1946 to 1977, the income share of the top 1% is once more 14%, and in 2009, 3.8% of Canadian households owned 67% of all wealth.⁵²

The neoliberal turn in national and Ontario politics has had important impacts on post-secondary education. One of the changes that occurred under the Harris government concerned the manner in which colleges recruited students. Originally the CAATs recruited students from their regional catchment areas, and thus each institution had a defined territory from which to draw students. With the new government, the catchment areas were abolished, and colleges and universities were encouraged to compete for students in a de-regulated “educational marketplace.” In keeping with the Harris government’s neoliberal ideology, other changes were made that increased the competitive nature of the post-secondary environment. The CAATs were allowed the right to grant degrees, and were encouraged to partner with universities on collaborative degree programs. Finally, funding to the colleges was drastically reduced, and CAATs were forced to develop corporate sponsorships and raise tuition fees to make up for funding shortfalls.⁵³ The effects of neoliberal restructuring were not just caused by changes in

provincial legislation, but by changes at the federal level as well. In 1995, the federal government cut \$7 billion dollars from its transfers to the provinces for social programs.⁵⁴

The Rae Report

The neoliberal turn in post-secondary education sent the system in the exact opposite direction from that advocated by Skolnik in his 1985 report. Instead of improved system funding, government support for the CAATs was cut more deeply than ever. Instead of a more collaborative and collegial relationship between faculty and administration, this relationship became more autocratic, punitive, and driven by cost-control. As a result of neoliberal restructuring a significant percentage of full-time faculty were laid off in the mid to late 1990s, and class sizes in the colleges spiked. At the same time, increases in student tuitions and student loan debt began to far outpace inflation.⁵⁵

In 2003 a provincial Liberal government was elected, with a mandate to re-visit the neoliberal policies of Mike Harris’ so-called “Common Sense Revolution”. In 2004 the new McGuinty government commissioned a study of the Ontario post-secondary education system, with a mandate to look at its design and funding. This study was chaired by Bob Rae, and in 2005 *Ontario: A Leader in Learning*, hereafter referred to as the *Rae Report*, was released. The Report analyzed five key areas of post-secondary education: accessibility, quality, system design, funding, and accountability. In the Report, Rae noted that countries world-wide were investing heavily in post-secondary education, and that Ontario needed to do the same in order to remain globally competitive.⁵⁶ As a vision for Ontario’s post-secondary system, he stated:

We need governments and institutions that are irrevocably committed to access for every Ontarian who is qualified to attend. Because the new economy demands it, the number of people attending will need to rise substantially in the

years ahead. We also need governments and institutions that are unwaveringly committed to excellence in teaching and research. Opportunity and excellence are both diminished when governments and students spend less than they should, or when institutions are reluctant to focus and insist on better outcomes. Ontario has the chance now to muster the political will to create a sustainable framework for a system that allows each student, and each university and college, to be at their best. Our higher education institutions should both inspire and produce leading research. Our best will allow us to compete with the best in the world. We should not settle for anything less.⁵⁷

Rae argued that a lack of government funding for post-secondary stood in the way of achieving accessibility and excellence, noting that “Ontario’s postsecondary system is decidedly under-resourced when compared to its U.S. and Canadian peers”.⁵⁸ The impacts of underfunding were also clear, as “revenue to the institutions may have grown, but it has not kept up with enrolment, higher costs and new technologies.” Under-staffing had become an issue, with Rae noting: “Contact hours between students and faculty have been reduced, because we have far more students and not enough new teachers.” Ultimately, Rae linked underfunding and understaffing to quality in the college system:

The viability of some colleges, in particular, is in doubt. Underfunded institutions put the quality of student experience at risk. Underfunding also affects the ability of some institutions to provide enough spaces for a wider group of applicants.⁵⁹

In addition to challenges caused by overall underfunding, Rae acknowledged that more needed to be done to increase post-secondary access for marginal groups, arguing that “Outreach programs for low-income groups, persons with disabilities,

Aboriginal peoples, some racial minorities and francophones should be better encouraged and supported”.⁶⁰ In particular, Northern and aboriginal communities require extra attention in terms of access. In describing education in these communities, Rae stated:

Strong efforts are being made in a number of existing colleges and universities, particularly in Northern Ontario, where the demographics of the student population are changing – to provide more opportunities for students from First Nations communities, as well as those living off-reserve and Ontario’s Metis community. But these efforts will require more resources, particularly from the federal government. In addition, I was impressed with the work being done by the Aboriginal Institutes, which work on reserves. They receive very little support from the province. They should not be seen as competitors to the existing system but as legitimate agencies of collaboration and partnership.⁶¹

In terms of system design, Rae stressed the need for greater collaboration between colleges and universities in providing students with clear pathways to employment or to further study. This would necessitate a structure of province-wide credit transfer, in which courses taken at one institution can be used for credit in similar programs at other institutions. Rae advocated government oversight of evolving college-university collaboration to maintain standards, while also affirming the important role of faculty, noting “enthusiasm for ‘greater accountability’ should not become a synonym for more government control. Academic freedom is also an important value. So are self-government and institutional flexibility”.⁶² Rae also directly linked the number of faculty, and their amount of contact with students, to quality of education:

The most common complaint from students, in addition to concerns about money and the affordability of their education, has to do with the quality of contact time with professors and teachers. This must be addressed. If students feel that they come and go and no one cares, something is out of balance. A commitment to excellence includes a commitment to an outstanding student experience.⁶³

The Rae Report led to a significant increase in investment in post-secondary education from both the provincial and federal governments. In their 2005 budget, the provincial Liberals committed \$6.2 billion in funding for post-secondary education over four years, and this partially ameliorated fiscal short-falls in the CAATs.⁶⁴ The funding infusion allowed for more college faculty to be hired, and for upgrades to the physical infrastructure of colleges. In addition, there was money allocated to reducing student debt. These investments moved the CAATs back from the brink of crisis, but several aspects of the neoliberal turn were left untouched. These included the proliferation of private career colleges, a focus on attracting international students and on marketing education globally, and a failure to re-examine the dysfunctional relationship between college faculty and administration. These conditions continue to define the Ontario college system today, with other key trends including steadily increasing enrolment, the push to expand online learning, a return to chronic underfunding, and the vision of a competitive, “differentiated” system of institutions.

Current Trends

Private Career Colleges

Part of the neoliberal shift in Ontario politics was to open up private competition in areas that were previously the terrain of government-funded public service providers. As such, the late 90’s and 2000’s saw the explosive growth of private career

colleges (PCCs) that offer courses and programs in competition with the community colleges. As of 2013, over 60,000 students are enrolled in over 500 private colleges in Ontario.⁶⁵ For many years PCCs were unregulated by the MTCU, and were allowed to charge substantially higher tuitions for accelerated versions of community college programs. Because of a lack of regulation, several PCCs with dubious educational credentials were established, and a host of issues soon followed that questioned the quality of education provided by private colleges. Prominent in the media throughout the 2000s were articles concerning scandals, unregistered institutions, student complaints, and even warnings from foreign governments about attending Canadian private colleges.⁶⁶

In 2008 the Canadian Federation of Students – Ontario (CFS-O) noted that the OSAP repayment default rates for students at PCCs were 6.5% higher than for students at public colleges, and 13.2% higher than the rate for public universities. According to then CFS-O chair Shelley Melanson, “For-profit businesses offering credentials prey on immigrants, undocumented students and first generation Canadians.” She also noted “Students expect that, by studying in Canada, they will be protected from the type of dishonesty and fraud that tends to be associated with private, for-profit companies selling education. We have an excellent public system of colleges and universities and these fly-by-night outfits undermine the quality of education in Ontario.”⁶⁷

In 2005, mounting criticism of PCCs led the government to pass new legislation, the Private Career Colleges Act, to regulate PCCs and attempt to set educational standards. The new Act required PCCs to register with the provincial government, to subject themselves to basic standards of operation and to allow periodic inspection from the MTCU.⁶⁸ Despite these provisions, concerns about the quality of private college education have continued, and in 2009 the provincial ombudsman, Andre Marin, published a damning report

of PCC regulation in Ontario.⁶⁹ In his report Marin argued for sweeping changes to the regulation of PCCs, including hiring more inspectors and increasing rates of inspection. Since the ombudsman's report, there were 47 formal complaints made to the MTCU by students of PCCs in 2011 and 2012 alone, indicating that the quality of education offered at these private, for-profit institutions continues to be a concern.⁷⁰

Despite continuing complaints about private colleges, provincial government support for PCCs extends to the present Liberal government. Brad Duguid, the minister for Colleges, Training and Universities, recently announced that a 30% tuition rebate to Ontario public colleges and universities would also be extended to students of private colleges. The announcement once more prompted criticism from the CFS-O, prompting a representative to respond "The priority of the provincial government should be to make public post-secondary education more affordable, not find new ways to fund and promote private institutions."⁷¹

Globalization

Globalization has also impacted the functioning of Ontario community colleges, and has manifested in a scramble by colleges to attract international students to Canadian campuses, in increased partnerships between CAATs and foreign educational institutions, and in increased public-private partnerships with domestic private colleges. A final aspect of globalization concerns the drive to have CAATs become competitors and profit-generators in a "global knowledge economy", in which educational curriculum is transformed into intellectual capital that can be sold internationally.

The 2005 Rae Report, although advocating for increased funding for Ontario post-secondary education, also couched its analysis and recommendations in the language of global competitiveness. Rae noted that colleges and universities are attracting higher numbers of international students, and maintained that the institutions "need to do a better job of marketing the opportunities pro-

vided in our colleges and universities to students from other countries".⁷² From 2004 to 2012, the number of foreign students studying in Canada grew by 60%.⁷³ International students are charged much higher tuition fees than domestic students, making them attractive to cash-strapped colleges. However, attracting students with specialized educational needs, particularly concerning ESL instruction, is simultaneously contradicted by the fact that many colleges are cutting language services, increasing class sizes, and cutting support for foreign students. This contradiction has led faculty at several colleges to question the ethics of international student recruitment, as students are being "ripped off" by receiving a sub-standard educational experience. This fear has also been echoed by professors outside of the Ontario colleges.⁷⁴

The desire to profit from international student tuitions is also leading community colleges to partner with private, for-profit corporations in opening satellite campuses in Ontario. Examples of this phenomenon include the Mohawk College Pures campus in Scarborough, the Cambrian College Hanson campuses in Brampton and Toronto, and the St. Lawrence College Alpha International Academy campus in Toronto. All of these campuses are run by private colleges that have curriculum licensing agreements with their respective publicly funded community college. All of these private campuses are targeted toward international students, and are important sources of profit for the CAAT that sponsors them. Questions of quality education at these private, for-profit colleges have been raised by faculty, and are dealt with in the "Threats to Quality Education" section of this report.

Another aspect of globalization sees Ontario community colleges increasingly seeking partnerships to establish foreign campuses, a strategy being pursued by post-secondary institutions across North America. An example of this trend among the CAATs is Algonquin College, which in February, 2014 announced opening two new campuses

in Qatif, Saudi Arabia. This will bring the total campuses Algonquin runs in Saudi to three, and college administrators expect to receive \$20 million in net revenue from the new campuses over a five year contract.⁷⁵ In 2013, Mohawk, Fanshawe and Seneca Colleges were all considering investing in a campus in Medina, Saudi Arabia. In discussing the proposal, Fanshawe administration noted that the college was seeking to augment the money they receive from the provincial government.⁷⁶

Forging international links in education and inviting foreign students to study in Canada both have positive aspects. However, concerns exist that the focus on globalizing the community college is driven by decreased government funding and a desire for colleges to profit from higher international student tuitions and lucrative foreign campus contracts. These motives, like the neoliberal motive of competitiveness, risk moving colleges further from their mandate of serving local communities and of providing access to education for marginal student groups.

Increasing Enrolment

Student enrolments have been increasing steadily since the CAATs were founded. In 1986 there were 110, 281 full-time students enrolled in Ontario Colleges.⁷⁷ Today, there are 220,000 full-time and 300,000 part-time students in the colleges, a 100% increase in 28 years.⁷⁸ When combined with decreased funding per full-time student, increasing enrolment means that college faculty are teaching more students with fewer resources.

Online Learning

Over the past 10 years, use of online learning has expanded throughout the post-secondary system in Ontario. The CAATs have increasingly started to develop online courses with incentives and direction from the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). In pronouncements from the MTCU, and in the research literature assessing online learning, use of online is clearly cited as a rationalization and cost-control strategy.⁷⁹

One of the first forays of the CAATs into the field of online learning was Ontario Learn, established by Contact North, a consortium of colleges that provide a common interface for students to take online courses provided by CAATs. The consortium was started in the 1995-96 school year with seven member colleges, predominantly from the North. As of the 2012-13 school year, all 24 CAATs were participating in Ontario Learn. Since its inception, Ontario Learn has been expanding in size. In 2000-01, there were 285 online courses with 11,314 registrants, whereas by the 2012-13 school year this had climbed to 1,115 course offerings to 69,838 students. This represents close to a 400% increase in courses offered, and over 600% increase in registration.⁸⁰

It is difficult to determine how many faculty members are teaching through Ontario Learn. The colleges are not required to divulge the information of who teaches these courses, or what institutions they are offered from. It is known that most of the teachers are part-time, and that the majority of this work involves delivering courses that would otherwise be taught in regular day academic programs. Using the standard workload formula currently contained in the college faculty collective agreement, the number of courses being taught on Ontario Learn is roughly the equivalent of 500 full-time faculty jobs.⁸¹

An additional impetus for online course delivery is coming from the creation of Ontario Online, an initiative announced by the provincial government as part of its strategy of post-secondary “differentiation”. Under this initiative, community colleges are being offered hundreds of thousands of dollars to develop “flagship” online courses that can be enrolled in by students at any institution, and that earn students credits that are transferrable to all institutions. Unlike Ontario Learn, Ontario Online is being designed as an independent, degree and diploma granting institution.⁸² Ontario Online is envisioned by the province as a non-profit corporation in which all Ontario public universities and colleges are able to participate. According to a 2013 con-

fidential MTCU memo, the corporation will be run by a board of directors composed of “senior administrators from the college and university sectors, experts in online learning, and students”. There is no mention made of faculty input into the conceptualization, operation, or governance of Ontario Online.⁸³

At present, the community colleges are greatly expanding their quota of fully online and blended courses, with Mohawk College in Hamilton being the most aggressive. In 2013 Mohawk mandated that all courses taught at the college, save a few exempted labs, would become 33% blended by January of 2014, in which students would lose an hour of face to face class time and have it replaced with an hour of online work. In addition to the across-the-board blending mandate, dozens of fully online courses are also being developed. Under the Challenges to Quality Education section, the significant pedagogical, workload, staffing and academic freedom impacts of online learning are more fully discussed.

Differentiation

As an extension of neoliberal reforms to post-secondary begun in 1995, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) has recently mandated a policy of “differentiation” for the sector. In 2012 the MTCU published Strengthening Ontario’s Centres of Creativity, Innovation, and Knowledge, a “discussion paper” on differentiation. This report suggests sweeping changes to Ontario’s post-secondary system, designed to account for continued financial austerity, a high-technology learning environment, and a need for global competitiveness. As part of the push for differentiation, Minister Duguid mandated all colleges and universities to submit Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs) that highlight their institution’s areas of specialization. The overarching goal of the SMAs is to facilitate a process of “differentiation”, in which individual colleges and universities would

eliminate “duplication” of programs and/or courses, and operate as areas of specialty within an open and competitive educational environment.⁸⁴

In the Ministry’s discussion paper, the overarching mandate of post-secondary moves from providing access to high quality education and job training, to a focus on “innovation and productivity.” This new mandate is explicitly related to continued government under-funding of post-secondary. The discussion paper states:

In light of the current financial climate, and as we continue to recover from the recession, **it is necessary to lead the province’s publicly funded higher education system toward lower rates of spending growth.** Costs in the postsecondary sector have grown at a rate above inflation during a time when growth and grants from government have become constrained.⁸⁵ (emphasis mine)

The discussion paper then acknowledges that decreased funding and the resulting cost-cutting imperative lead directly to reductions in quality:

Efficiency-focused strategies to contain costs can reduce the capacity of critical services and may not always deliver sustainable operational savings. This often leaves citizens feeling as if they are paying more and getting less. In the short term, cost reductions and the elimination of redundancies are essential parts of our government’s fiscal plan. However, they alone will not be sufficient to meet the fiscal challenges facing the postsecondary sector.⁸⁶

The discussion paper claims that declining government support and reduced quality of education will be offset by “adopting innovation in the sector to drive productivity.” Stated plainly, the MTCU is arguing that the post-secondary sector must be made to innovate and do more with less in the face of austerity and service decline. Not surpris-

ingly, the paper admits “this will be an enormous challenge”, but then provides an example of how innovation can accomplish this task:

This innovation-focused approach is in direct contrast to an efficiency-based approach – looking through an efficiency lens, one might state “class sizes should be increased to create savings”, whereas looking through an innovation and productivity lens, one would ask “can we create savings while maintaining class sizes and improving learning outcomes by moving some learning modules online?”⁸⁷

By this logic, cost-cutting is transformed into “innovation” by means of online learning. The unstated assumptions behind the Ministry’s statement are:

- that online learning is less expensive to deliver than traditional, face to face instruction,
- that it won’t lead to increased class sizes,
- and that it can lead to improved educational outcomes.

From faculty experience with online courses to date, and considering the body of research into online learning, all three of these assumptions are at best controversial, and at worst plainly disproven. However, despite the highly contested nature of online learning in post secondary institutions, the MTCU document strongly advocates online delivery as a specific goal of post-secondary differentiation.

Linked to the idea of institutional specialization is a change in funding that would see the province attach financial support to the fulfillment of an institution’s specialization and differentiation goals. Funding will be used to encourage institutions to streamline their programming, and Duguid has noted: “There are times when we may not need two institutions, in particular in the same region,

offering the same course when one could accommodate the need”.⁸⁸ An example of the new, targeted approach to post-secondary funding can already be seen in the province’s announcement of \$42 million to establish Ontario Online, the new corporation designed to promote online courses. Participation in Ontario Online will be voluntary, but millions in course development money presents a considerable reward for colleges and universities that join in.⁸⁹

The MTCU discussion paper invited “the stakeholder community” to respond to its proposals with their own suggestions for dealing with the challenges facing post-secondary.⁹⁰ Stakeholders were identified as “students, faculty, instructors, and administrators”; however when Minister Duguid began consultation meetings about differentiation in 2013, college faculty were not notified and were not invited to any meetings. In response to the consultation process, the CAAT-A divisional executive contacted the Minister directly and asked for a meeting. A short meeting with the Minister was eventually secured, but attempts by the divisional executive to meet with colleges and the province to discuss the impact of differentiation were rebuffed.

In the college faculty collective agreement, a letter signed between the CEO of the College Council and the president of OPSEU, Smokey Thomas, affirmed that any change in the colleges’ mandate or objects would trigger a Joint Task Force “made up equally of representatives of the Local Union and the College”.⁹¹ This Joint Task Force would make recommendations to:

1. achieve the objectives of the changed mandate or objects
2. facilitate any necessary reassignment of employees
3. facilitate any retraining that may seem appropriate
4. reduce any negative impact on employees

Although the MTCU's directives on differentiation explicitly ask all post-secondary institutions, including the CAATs, to submit new mandates, the College Council has refused to establish the Task Force. In response, faculty locals at all 24 community colleges have filed grievances with their respective employers, in an attempt to uphold the right of consultation included in the collective agreement. To date, all colleges have rejected the grievances. In addition to these actions, OPSEU submitted a formal response to the MTCU discussion paper. The response indicated that a plan to reorganize the post-secondary sector based on continued under-funding has not worked historically, and will not work in the present day. The submission instead noted that faculty academic freedom is a crucial component of any creative, innovative post-secondary institution, since faculty have the content and pedagogical expertise to guide academic decision-making.⁹² The submission also cautioned that "online delivery of courses and programs is not a panacea"⁹³, and that the quality of college education could best be supported by reducing class sizes and hiring more faculty.

Responses to the MTCU discussion paper from students and university faculty have also been critical. The Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) questioned the entire mandate of differentiation, stating:

Traditionally, post-secondary institutions have been the places to generate new knowledge, facilitate the pursuit of knowledge, develop critical members of society, promote scholarly work and conduct basic and curiosity-driven research. The government is steering in a direction away from our post-secondary institutions being the central places of higher learning, but instead toward colleges and universities being industry training grounds and commercialization hubs.⁹⁴

Echoing the recommendations offered by college faculty, the CFS noted that improvements to post-secondary quality can best be achieved by increasing government funding per full-time student, decreasing class sizes, and hiring more faculty. They were similarly critical of online learning as a cost-cutting tool, noting:

The push for online expansion is motivated by the desire to save money in the sector without appreciating the impact on the quality of education for students. The creation of a degree-granting online institution or heavy expansion of online education will not address the fundamental issues around teaching quality and student engagement. ...

Students learn in a variety of ways and cannot necessarily be expected to engage with an online learning experience in the same way they can in a classroom.⁹⁵

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) also submitted formal responses to the MTCU discussion paper, with OCUFA criticizing its lack of coherence, its basis in cost-containment, and its undermining of academic freedom and innovation. In particular, OCUFA pointed out that an MTCU goal of making all first and second year university courses fully transferrable between institutions would require a dangerous level of standardization. In their response they argue:

This standardization would undermine the ability of institutions, academic departments, and faculty members to set curriculum and to develop courses based on specific strengths, areas of expertise and campus-specific student demand. Not only does this constitute an erosion of academic freedom and institutional autonomy; ultimately, it reduces student

choice and works against the government's stated aim of creating greater differentiation across Ontario's universities.⁹⁶

Other unions that represent educational workers have also spoken out against the post-secondary differentiation plan. CUPE, which represents thousands of academic instructors, markers, research assistants, graduate assistants, post-doctoral fellows and ESL instructors, argued strongly against the discussion paper's proposal to move to 3 year undergraduate degrees as opposed to 4 year. They also cautioned against proposals to schedule classes year-round, and to expand online learning. CUPE argued that 3 year degrees reduce the amount of courses students take, and that this in turn reduces the value of undergraduate education. Year-round scheduling impairs the ability of students to work during the summer to pay for tuition, and also compromises the ability of institutions to perform much-needed deferred maintenance when students are away from campus. Finally, CUPE's submission also reinforced concerns about the effectiveness of online learning, noting "Questions need to be answered on e-learning and student achievement. Currently, Athabasca University in Alberta, a predominantly e-learning institute, has the lowest completion rate in the country."⁹⁷ CUPE furthermore pointed to the potential employment impacts of online expansion:

E-learning, which is already being invested in by a number of multi-national corporations, threatens to bring about the largest privatization of academic services ever seen in Ontario. This compromises the basic tenets of academic freedom and intellectual property rights; staples of any strong, democratic, civil society. It would also result in a dramatic decrease of the number of sessional instructors, professors, and teaching assistants – the very people who ensure and enrich our strong tradition of academic freedom and intellectual property.⁹⁸

Ultimately, the current pressure for differentiation facing the CAATs can best be understood within the context of the college system's development. When this history is taken into account, it first becomes clear that the latest MTCU proposal to reorganize post-secondary is driven by the same chronic government under-funding that has plagued the system since the late 1970s. The MTCU discussion paper fails to mention the long, steady retreat of federal and provincial governments from funding post-secondary education, and instead presents its call for austerity restructuring as a response to the Great Recession of 2008-2009.⁹⁹ This is a clear inaccuracy. In fact, the neoliberal turn in federal and provincial policy discussed earlier in this report shows how a crisis in public service funding was deliberately created by both Conservative and Liberal governments. Systematic cuts to income taxes on wealthy individuals and corporations have led to billions of dollars in lost tax revenue. Pervasive, structural underfunding is placing pressure on community colleges today, and only a commitment to restore adequate levels of funding will alleviate it.

A second aspect of the MTCU's differentiation strategy that becomes clear with historical context is that cost-cutting is not its only impetus. Equally powerful motive forces for differentiation are the neoliberal drives, now decades old, toward:

- privatizing public goods; commodifying knowledge and generating new sources of private profit;
- removing the autonomy and security of public service professionals;
- reducing social spaces of critical thought and debate;
- and expanding management bureaucracies.

In the face of these drives, faculty and students are hard-pressed to defend their shared interest in adequately funded colleges that provide high quality, community-responsive education. Despite this challenge, over the years college faculty have

attempted to defend their interest in quality education through collective bargaining. This process has been successful on some fronts, but has so far proven unable to shift the broader, government-driven context of privatization, commodification, and austerity.

History of College Faculty Collective Bargaining

College faculty have engaged in 19 rounds of collective bargaining with their employer - first, the Council of Regents, then the College Employer Council. In 19 rounds there have been 13 strike votes, but only three work stoppages. A summary of bargaining follows:

Bargaining Rounds and Outcomes

NEGOTIATIONS CONCLUDED	CONTRACT START DATE	CONTRACT END DATE	STRIKE VOTE	STRIKE
Sept. 6, 72 ¹	Sept. 6, 72	Aug. 31, 73	No	No
Sept. 11, 75	Sept. 1, 73	Aug 31, 75	-	-
Sept. 11, 75 ²	Sept. 1, 75	Aug. 31, 76	Yes	No
Feb. 15, 77	Sept. 1, 76	Aug. 31, 77	Yes	No
Oct. 13, 78	Sept. 1, 77	Aug. 31, 79	Yes	No
May 1, 80	Sept. 1, 79	Aug. 31, 81	Yes	No
Oct. 8, 81 ³	Sept. 1, 81	Aug. 31, 82	No	No
Feb. 25, 83	Sept. 1, 82	Aug. 31, 84	Yes	No
Arbitration Award ⁴	Sept. 1, 84	Aug. 31, 85	Yes	Yes
May 22, 86	Sept. 1, 85	Aug. 31, 87	Yes	No
May 30, 88	Sept. 1, 87	Aug. 31, 89	Yes	No
Feb 27, 90	Sept. 1, 89	Aug. 31, 91	Yes	Yes
Nov. 9, 92	Sept. 1, 91	Aug. 31, 94 ⁵	No	No
Nov. 12, 98	Sept. 1, 96	Aug. 31, 01	Yes	No
Oct. 24, 01	Sept. 1, 01	Aug. 31, 03	No	No
April 21, 04	Sept. 1, 03	Aug. 31, 05	Yes	No
July 7, 06	Sept. 1, 05	Aug. 31, 09	Yes	Yes
Feb 24, 10 ⁶	Sept. 1, 09	Aug. 31, 2012	Yes	No
Sept. 7, 12	Sept. 12, 12	Aug 31, 2014	No	No

1 – First Collective Agreement

2- Settlement was for 73-75 contract as well as 75-76

3 – One-time settlements

4 – Arbitrator Paul Weiler awarded a contract on June 10, 1985 for the 84-85 period following the October 17th strike and back-to-work legislation

5 – The Social Contract Act extended the contract from August 31, 1994 to August 31, 1996

6 – On November 18, 2009, the employer imposed terms and conditions of employment on faculty. On February 10th, faculty voted to accept the terms and conditions as management’s final offer.

College faculty are represented by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU). The Colleges Collective Bargaining Act (CCBA) is structured so that OPSEU and the Colleges Council, representing administration at each institution, bargain as a sector. The resulting collective agreements are binding on all 24 colleges and all faculty locals. College faculty negotiated their first employment contract under the Public Services Act (PSA) of 1968. The bargaining agent for faculty was the Civil Service Association of Ontario (CSAO), which later became OPSEU. Contract negotiations conducted under the PSA were of limited scope, and could not deal with issues of the operation of academic departments, job classifications, or methods of job evaluation. Workers bargaining under the PSA were also forbidden from going on strike, and when both parties failed to come to agreement on a contract, it was submitted to binding arbitration.¹⁰⁰

The first round of faculty contract negotiations under the PSA was complicated by combining teachers from Institutes of Trades and Technology with adult education workers. Finding a common framework to unite these different faculty groups proved daunting, as did establishing rules around workload. Despite vague contract language concerning workload, a ten month teaching year was defined, with a maximum of 22 teaching hours per week for full-time academic teachers, and 27 hours per week for trades teachers.¹⁰¹ Another important feature of the bargaining relationship established during the first round of negotiations was membership in the union for full-time and partial load professors, but not for part-time or sessional. Partial load professors teach between 7 and 12 contact hours per week, while part-time professors teach under 7 hours per week. Sessional professors can teach the equivalent of a full-time course-load, but if hired for more than one year, automatically become full-time positions. At the time the CSAO argued that all employees should

be included under the collective agreement, and this has remained a point of contention between OPSEU and the Council to the present day.¹⁰²

The first contract negotiated under the PSA went to interest arbitration, as did the next two contracts that were negotiated under the 1972 Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act (CECBA). This new act formalized the language that came from negotiations into Collective Agreements (CA), and also created a central body and a formalized process to hear grievances.¹⁰³

The contracts negotiated under the CECBA were hard fought due to a number of issues that have remained contentious to the present day. The first point of conflict concerned the exclusion of part-time and sessional workers from the collective agreement. The second point concerned workload and teaching schedules, with faculty arguing that methods of negotiating these key aspects of academic work were wholly inadequate, and the College Council arguing against any workload formula that would impinge upon their flexibility and management rights. Another important issue was the expanding use of part-time faculty. An additional source of contention was wages and benefits, with college faculty on average earning less than high school teachers.¹⁰⁴ A final concern was establishing parity among different faculty concerning vacation time and salary.

In 1975, the faculty negotiation process was placed under the newly created Colleges Collective Bargaining Act (CCBA). This act introduced substantial changes to the bargaining process, enabling strikes by workers and lock-outs by employers, and opening up the range of issues that could be dealt with in negotiations. More formal timelines for bargaining were also introduced with the CCBA, and processes were specified for faculty strike votes and a provision wherein the Council could force a membership vote on a final offer. A process of third-party fact-finding was also included in the Act, in which a provincial designate could evaluate the process of negotiations, determine

the outstanding issues, and make non-binding recommendations for settlement. In the event of a faculty strike, the CCBA allowed management to either close the college, or lock out workers.¹⁰⁵

The issues that plagued the first few rounds of academic bargaining continued to define negotiations throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, with successive rounds of bargaining doing little to resolve them. In the 1984 negotiations, faculty decided to focus their demands on workload, and asked specifically for work outside of teaching to be quantified, for there to be a classification scheme delineating faculty roles and responsibilities, and for workload issues to be grievable and arbitrable.¹⁰⁶ As negotiations broke down in late September of 1984, faculty voted 76.7% in favour of a strike. Further mediation was unable to resolve the impasse, and faculty walked off the job on October 17th. By November 9th, the province passed Bill 130, legislating faculty back to work, and appointing an arbiter to examine the workload issues that led to the job action.¹⁰⁷ The arbitration award by Paul Weiler led to the creation of the Instructional Assignment Review Committee, chaired by professor Michael Skolnik, and tasked with looking into the recurring conflict over workload.

In the 1986 round of contract negotiations, college faculty finally achieved their goal of quantifying workload and creating a single, standard system of work assignment for all faculty. This created Article 11 of the faculty collective agreement (CA), and introduced the Standard Workload Form (SWF). Time was finally quantified for course preparation, marking, consulting with students, and performing administrative tasks. The 1984 faculty strike also led to the production of three reports. In 1985, Skolnik revealed his taskforce's findings in relation to workload, entitled *Survival or Excellence? A Study of Instructional Assignment in the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology*. This report looked at the broad range of issues relating to labour relations in the CAATs, and at recurring

faculty complaints concerning the structure of their work, professional integrity and autonomy, and quality of education.¹⁰⁸

In 1986, Walter Pitman produced *The Report of the Advisor to the Minister of Colleges and Universities on the Governance of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology*. This document suggested that the Council of Regents give way to The College Employer Council - a group of college presidents - as the bargaining agent for the CAATs. Pitman's report, like that of Skolnik, also noted the tense and acrimonious relationship between academic faculty and management, and called for a more collegial model of labour relations.¹⁰⁹ In 1988, Dr. Jeffrey Gandz, a professor at the University of Western Ontario, produced a report on collective bargaining in the college system.

Recurring themes in collective bargaining have focused on workload and academic freedom. Another common theme concerns the framework of labour-management relations in the colleges, which have been conflicted and acrimonious. This tension has been attributed by several sources to the college's "industrial", or "military" approach to management, and the incompatibility of such a model to an educational environment with a highly skilled and educated professional workforce. These concerns have been highlighted in several reports over the years, and have led to significant change in some aspects of faculty work, and a stubborn resistance to change in other areas.

In 1989, conflict over salaries and sick leave led to another faculty strike. In negotiations management wanted to get rid of the accumulative sick leave plan, and was fighting wage increases. At the time college professors were earning less, on average, than highschool teachers. After a 3 week strike, faculty and management put their unresolved issues before arbitrator Martin Teplitsky. Teplitsky ruled that the faculty sick leave plan would remain in place, with the ability to accumulate unused sick days each year. However, it was ruled that employees hired after April, 1991 could no lon-

ger cash out unused sick days on retirement. On wages, a study was commissioned by the arbitrator to look into college faculty salaries. The study, chaired by Dr. William Marcote, concluded that salaries for CAAT faculty should fall between those of Ontario secondary school teachers, and full-time university faculty. As a result of the study on compensation, college faculty finally moved beyond high-school teachers in salary.¹¹⁰

In 2006, there was another work stoppage by college faculty, this time precipitated by concerns over workload, job security, academic freedom, benefits, and salary. After contract negotiations broke down, faculty initiated job action on March 7, 2006. After 17 days off the job, faculty and management agreed to arbitration, and signed a memorandum of agreement to end the strike. The resulting decision by arbitrator William Kaplan included a slight increase in time for out of class assistance, a commitment to establish a joint Task Force on Workload, and modest salary increases. The Task Force was empowered to investigate the workload formula in relation to the following issues:

- time spent in preparation, evaluation and feedback, and complementary functions
- impact of e-learning and other instructional modes
- impact of class size
- impact of total student numbers
- curriculum development
- professional development
- scheduling of teaching contact hours
- equitable assignment of workload to full-time faculty
- impact on full-time faculty workload resulting from the use of non-full-time faculty
- impact of applied degrees

- workload agreements
- the Standard Workload Form
- Pilot Projects¹¹¹

The Task Force on Workload reported back in March of 2009, and the document indicated that faculty continued to question the ability of current workload provisions to account for actual work performed. The 2009 Workload Report made a number of recommendations to address specific concerns about faculty workload. The first advocated for workload flexibility in the special case where the standard workload formula does not suit specific program delivery needs. In such cases, if management, the individual employees affected, and the union all agreed, alternate workload arrangements could be made. A second recommendation was that whenever modification of a course involved more than 20% of its content, that this modification be considered curriculum development, and be awarded separate time on a SWF, apart from that allowed for regular weekly preparation. Although not making specific time recommendations on online courses, the Report did note that most faculty believed online course delivery to be more time consuming than face-to-face delivery. The perceived extra time needed ranged from 1 to 10 hours for each teaching contact hour delivered online.¹¹²

Regarding evaluation, the *Workload Report* noted faculty concerns that managers were manipulating evaluation factors to fit budgetary constraints. The authors stressed that such a perception “could be damaging to faculty morale”, and indicated that the practical aspects of evaluation time “masks more fundamental questions of academic freedom, professional expertise, and collegiality”.¹¹³ As a result, the Report recommended that appropriate evaluation factors should be decided “in a consultative process” by management and the affected faculty group.

In 2008 the faculty union agreed to open the *Colleges Collective Bargaining Act*, with the intention of allowing part-time and sessional faculty to apply

for union membership. Other important changes to the act included shortening and standardizing bargaining time-lines, and allowing college management to force a faculty vote on the college's final contract offer.¹¹⁴ This last change would play an important role in the 2009 round of negotiations, a process that was heavily influenced by a global recession and by economic austerity policies both federally and provincially.

During bargaining in 2009, faculty sought to realize the recommendations of The Workload Report, whereas management wanted several concessions surrounding workload flexibility and changes to grievance and arbitration processes. After negotiations broke down, college management imposed terms and conditions of employment on faculty on November 18, 2009. These conditions included new language on Modified Workload Arrangements (MWAs), allowing management a measure of workload flexibility, and also included management concessions on grievances and arbitration processes. In response, the union called a strike vote, and on January 13th, a slim majority of college professors authorized a strike, with 18 of 24 colleges voting in favour. The faculty bargaining team set a February strike deadline, and the colleges forced a vote on their final offer on February 10, 2010. Although the bargaining team strongly advocated against the college's final offer, a slight 51% majority of faculty agreed to accept it. This essentially ratified the imposed terms and conditions of employment until they expired in August of 2012. The faculty union cited a pervasive climate of economic uncertainty and fear as the main reason for their members' acceptance of the final offer.

The most recent round of faculty negotiations began in 2012, and once more it was marked by substantial outside influence. As the provincial government was still embracing an austerity policy with regards to public services, college faculty were again confronted by an environment of economic uncertainty. The situation was further exacerbated by the provincial government's imposition

of contracts on public teachers just before college faculty negotiations began. Bill 115 was passed by the Liberal government on September 11th, 2012. The Bill took away elementary and high-school teachers' legal right to strike and enforced a two year wage freeze. The province indicated that it was seeking a wage freeze for all public sector workers, and this put pressure on the college faculty bargaining team to accept similar terms.¹¹⁵

Perhaps emboldened by their win of the MWA concession, management came into the 2012 negotiations demanding a new staffing category of "nursing facilitator". This category would not be covered under the workload formula, and would not receive vacation or benefits. The proposed hourly pay rate for facilitators would be approximately 1/3 of the rate paid to partial load clinical professors, and the new facilitator could be assigned 24 teaching hours, or double what a partial load professor could be allotted.¹¹⁶ This was not the first time that management had sought to create a two-tier job classification structure for faculty, and this strategy was widely perceived by faculty as a dangerous attempt to break down the bargaining unit. Apart from this demand, management refused to negotiate any of the outstanding faculty concerns around staffing, workload, and academic freedom.

College faculty saw the nursing facilitator as a serious erosion of the collective agreement, and this had a direct impact on the breakdown of negotiations. The faculty union arranged for a strike vote on September 10, 2012, but at the last minute management tabled a new offer that removed the facilitator demand, and also included some language concerning seniority in partial load professors' work assignments, and in clarification of the program coordinator role. On September 7 the bargaining team recommended that faculty accept management's offer, and on October 9th it was ratified by the membership. The agreement was only for two years, as the bargaining team was un-

satisfied with the lack of movement on hiring more full-time professors, on academic freedom, and on improving the workload formula.

Bargaining in Focus

From the history of college faculty collective bargaining to date, it is clear that the issues of workload, sufficient full-time staffing, academic freedom, and sufficient remuneration are recurring. It is also clear that from the perspective of faculty, the most important issues dealt with in bargaining have also been the issues most directly related to quality of education and to the quality and collegiality of the academic work environment. These primary concerns relate to the three structural flaws present at the college system's founding, and mentioned in the section on history:

- Insufficient government funding
- Misallocation of college resources
- Industrial management model

The history of faculty collective bargaining also shows that the college's structural flaws have been only partially accessible through the process of contract negotiations. A common perception among faculty members is that their union never bargains with just the employer, but instead contends each round with the combined interests of employer and provincial government. There is much evidence that supports this perception, as larger questions of system funding and the struc-

ture of governance in the colleges are directly related to government legislation and fiscal policy. In addition, at several times the provincial government has directly intervened in governance of the colleges, and directly influenced collective bargaining. As such, addressing core challenges facing the colleges will necessitate changes outside of the collective agreement, and a commitment to shift government priorities.

A final conclusion that can be drawn from the history of collective bargaining is that faculty have rarely engaged in strike action, despite the serious and contentious issues that have divided workers and management since the colleges began. In over 40 years and 19 rounds of bargaining, work stoppages have occurred only three times. In addition, while strikes can be disruptive to students, none of the work stoppages lasted longer than three weeks, and none of them resulted in students losing an academic year, or even a semester. Each time, strikes resulted either from long-unresolved issues (such as workload or greatly insufficient pay), or in response to an attempt by management to exact serious concessions and to degrade the collective agreement. In every arbitrated decision following job action, faculty have made significant gains that have improved their ability to ensure quality education. Overwhelmingly, the faculty union has committed to the process of collective bargaining, and to negotiating its members' interests in good faith.



Threats to Quality Education: Faculty Experiences

“Faculty argue that increasing class sizes, cutting back on counseling staff, forcing courses online and overloading faculty schedules all have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable learners. In the face of these cut-backs, some faculty perceive retention strategies as a cynical attempt by colleges to retain precious “funding units”, as opposed to an honest attempt to improve academic outcomes.”

Threats to Quality Education: Faculty Experiences

From an analysis of system indicators and discussions with faculty from 24 Ontario community colleges, several threats to quality education can be identified. Each of these threats is related to the recurring structural flaws in the Ontario college system, and each is placing mounting pressure on faculty and students.

Funding

At the time of their founding, approximately 75% of operating funding for the CAATs came from provincial government grants via the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU), and the Ministry of Skills Development (MSD). The next greatest sources of revenue came from federal government purchases of apprenticeship program seats, and from tuition. Tuitions originally accounted for between 10 and 15% of operating revenues. This original level of funding was soon reduced, and from 1978/79, to 1981/82, government grants fell 28%. An infusion of new funding came in 1986/87, addressing some of the shortfall, but still leaving the real (inflation-adjusted) level of government funding at 84% of its 1978/79 levels.¹¹⁷

In the 1980s the Progressive Conservative federal government capped increases to transfer payments to provinces for post-secondary education. This began a steady decline in federal funding for higher education. In 1992/93 federal cash transfers for post-secondary education were 0.41% of GDP. As of 2012/13, they are only 0.20% of GDP, a 50% decrease in the level of funding.¹¹⁸

After the brief funding increase in 1986/87, from 1988/89 to 2005, provincial government operating grants to the colleges decreased substantially. The 1995 Conservative government was instrumental in these changes, cutting \$7 billion in funding for

health, education, and social services. In 2005 Ontario college students were getting 40% less funding than they did in 1988/89, and tuition fees had tripled over the same 15 year period. Today funding per full-time post-secondary student in Ontario is the lowest among all the provinces, and government grants make up less than 50% of college operating revenues.¹¹⁹ Tuitions currently make up 33% of the operating revenue of Ontario Colleges, a 300% increase from 1967.¹²⁰

The reduction in funding has had a direct impact on students, who are paying more and receiving less. From 1988/89 to 2005, the amount that colleges spent on each student they educate declined by 20%.¹²¹ There are signs that the current low levels of post-secondary funding could be having an impact on the quality of post-secondary education in Canada. The World Economic Forum 2013 *Report on Competitiveness* ranked Canada's post-secondary education system 15th in the world, down from a ranking of 8th in 2010.¹²² In many ways, the crisis in funding for post-secondary, and for the colleges in particular, is the motive force behind the challenges that follow. Essentially, the college system has been operating under a state of perpetual austerity, in which understaffed educators seek to serve a growing student body with severely constrained resources. Such a condition is not conducive to a collegial and productive work environment, or to student success.

Faculty at Northern and Francophone colleges express particular concern about constrained provincial funding, and its impact on the CAATs' mandate to serve the educational needs of diverse communities, and of students facing barriers to post-secondary. The 2005 Rae Report's explicit call for increased funding to both Northern and

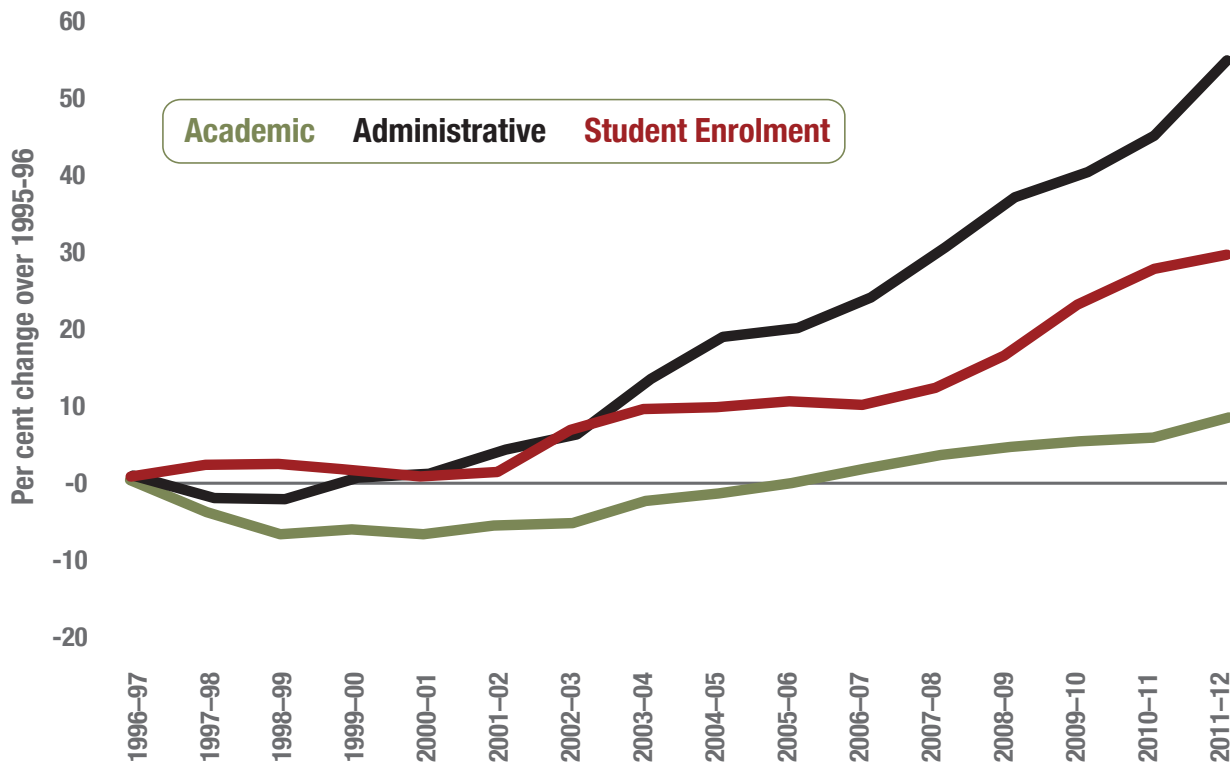
Francophone colleges reflects these faculty concerns, and suggests that a competitive environment of specialized institutions is not conducive to meeting the needs of diverse student groups and of the colleges that serve them.

Increasing Administration and Administrator Salaries

While overall funding for the colleges has been steadily declining since the late 1980s, money allocated to the CAATs has increasingly gone to hire administrators, not full-time faculty. According to the Colleges Ontario 2013 environmental scan, from 1995/96 until 2011/12, the number of full-time college administrative staff has increased by 55%. During the same time period full-time academic staff increased by less than 10%.¹²³ Today, there is approximately one full-time college administrator for every three full-time college professors.¹²⁴ There has also been a steady increase in full-time administrator salaries.

Between 1988/89 and 2004/05, full-time student enrolment increased by 53%, while full-time faculty decreased by 22%.¹¹⁹

Changes in full-time college staff and full-time student enrolment
(indexed to 1996-97)



College President Salaries

COLLEGE	# OF PRESIDENTS	AV. YRLY % SALARY INCREASE	2012 SALARY
Algonquin	1	10.13%	\$333,497
Boreal	3	8.23%	\$242,925
Cambrian	3	6.30%	\$257,031
Canadore	3	8.32%	\$213,310
Centennial	4	11.57%	\$319,045
Confederation	3	16.07%	\$226,922
Connestoga	1	14.42%	\$409,900
Durham	3	20.17%	\$277,324
Fanshawe	1	9.51%	\$275,515
George Brown	2	10.69%	\$358,700
Georgian	3	10.67%	\$159,821
Humber	3	13.73%	\$427,916
La Cite	3	14.02%	\$256,229
Lambton	4	14.03%	\$249,786
Loyalist	2	8.53%	\$274,387
Mohawk	5	16.81%	\$275,515
Niagara	1	7.94%	\$329,224
Northern	4	11.18%	\$256,640
St. Clair	2	6.58%	\$300,124
St. Lawrence	4	8.07%	\$228,873
Sault	4	14.12%	\$284,181
Seneca	3	32.09%	\$396,173
Sheridan	4	19.91%	\$353,908
Sir Sanford Fleming	2	5.44%	\$279,313
Average		12.44%	\$291,094

(Based on 1996 through 2012 Sunshine Lists)

Increase in Non-Full-Time Faculty

Across the colleges today, 2/3 of all faculty are non-full-time. After a system-wide high of 8,500

full-time faculty in 1989, there are now 7,448 full-time. All but 3 colleges have not come close to recovering their highest complement of full-time faculty, and most are substantially below this number. Funding cuts made by the Conservative Harris government in 1995 and 1996 led to mass layoffs across the colleges. Since this time the use of partial load, part-time and sessional faculty has steadily increased. Non-full-time staffing has a legitimate use in covering for full-time faculty on leave, in starting out new programs, or in providing specialized knowledge from industry. However, in the college system today it has clearly become an administrative cost-cutting strategy.

The presidents of several faculty locals have indicated that their management make it clear that they will try to get rid of full-time faculty whenever they can, and will replace them with part-time. At many colleges, the only way that full-time faculty are hired is for union locals to file staffing grievances under Article 2 of the collective agreement. 2.02 and 2.03 specify that the college will “give preference to the designation of full-time teaching positions” rather than to partial load or sessional.¹²⁵ Despite this language, managers have been increasingly manipulative in terms of justifying non full-time work, and have avoided hiring full-time faculty.

Several quality of education issues arise with the reliance on non-full-time professors. Non-full-time don't receive adequate time for course preparation or evaluation, nor do they receive adequate time for student email communication, faculty meetings, or student meetings. Part-time faculty may also be working other jobs – either in industry or teaching at different educational institutions. All of these factors can impede their ability to be available for students and to offer the same quality of education as full-time faculty.

Staffing levels at Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology – as of January 2014

COLLEGE	FULL-TIME	PARTIAL LOAD	PART-TIME	SESS.	HISTORIC FT HIGH	DATE OF FT HIGH	% FT TO NON FT	% CHANGE IN FT
Algonguin	563	328	743	220	666	1989	0.30	-15.47%
Boreal	109	33	195	22	116	2006	0.30	-6.03%
Cambrian	184	87	119	49	252	1990	0.42	-26.98%
Canadore	119	11	37	11	235	1992	0.67	-49.36%
Centennial	405	190	210	90	UA	UA	0.45	UA
Conestoga	429	216	476	58	429	2013	0.36	0.00%
Confederation	159	0	253	84	250	UA	0.32	-36.40%
Durham	324	78	412	70	325	UA	0.37	-0.31%
Fanshawe	516	222	503	85	576	1992	0.39	-10.42%
George Brown	525	225	450	115	723	UA	0.40	-27.39%
Georgian	265	370	416	44	315	1989	0.24	-15.87%
Humber ¹	595	625	410	110	625	1980s	0.34	-4.80%
La Cite	228	22	353	60	UA	UA	0.34	UA
Lambton	131	76	89	16	150	1995	0.42	-12.67%
Loyalist	132	61	96	12	175	1995	0.44	-24.57%
Mohawk	400	210	37	68	UA	UA	0.56	UA
Niagara	306	106	174	34	306	2013	0.49	0.00%
Northern	78	40	55	13	UA	UA	0.42	UA
St. Clair	258	117	234	106	278	2008	0.36	-7.19%
St. Lawrence	215	284	256	37	UA	UA	0.27	UA
Sault	169	40	84	50	229	1980s	0.49	-26.20%
Seneca	613	729	484	58	UA	UA	0.32	UA
Sheridan	523	461	513	55	523	2013	0.34	0.00%
Sir Sanford Fleming	202	254	446	26	254	1990s	0.22	-20.47%
SYSTEM TOTALS	7448	4785	7045	1493	5904 ²		0.36	-15.79% ³

1 – sessional number includes 85 clinical nursing instructors on special contracts

2 – this number does not accurately reflect the system-wide high due to incomplete data; the highest recorded number of full-time faculty was 8,500 in 1989

3 – average percentage difference excludes those colleges for which historical data were unavailable (N=18)

UA = information unavailable

As can be seen from the above staffing table, the ratio of full-time to part-time college professors is approximately 1 to 3. Although this ratio is shocking, if anything, it underestimates the real number of part-time faculty in the system today. Due to gaps in reporting requirements within the faculty collective agreement, it is currently impossible for OPSEU to find out how many part-timers are teaching courses through Ontario Learn. It is also extremely difficult to track the growing practice of colleges hiring professors as discrete corporate entities, or of having support staff do teaching work.

Workload

Faculty workload has been a source of contention in the colleges since their inception. Overwhelming workloads precipitated the 1984 faculty strike, and led to the arbitrated implementation of the workload formula and the standard workload form (SWF). These provisions created a more equitable distribution of workloads throughout the colleges, and enabled a more accurate reflection of the actual work that faculty do. Despite improvements brought by the new workload formula, the general faculty perception after its implementation was that it still did not account for the actual time being spent by professors both in and out of the classroom. As system funding has continued to decline, and as the technological complexity of the educational environment has increased, the discrepancy between actual hours worked and those captured by the workload formula has grown. For this reason, workload was also a precipitating factor behind the 2006 faculty strike, and led to a separate report in 2009 by the Workload Taskforce. The 2009 *Workload Report* noted that faculty had several concerns about the SWF and its ability to accurately reflect the actual amount of faculty work. The authors noted:

The more frequently recurring themes raised by the teachers related to the accuracy of the formula in reflecting time spent for evaluation, the process by which a course's evaluation factor is determined and the related issue of academic freedom; the impact of e-mails and student numbers on complementary functions; the need to maintain academic standards and the role of the formula in that regard; the difference between preparation time and curriculum development and the blurring of that line when existing programs are modified to include a substantial percentage of online learning and , the "hybrid" course. They noted the extra effort and time needed because

of technological advancements since 1985 such as the use of e-mail by students to replace face-to-face meetings for feedback or learning assistance and the concomitant student expectation of prompt attention.¹²⁶

The issues pointed out in the Workload Report continue to place stress on faculty workloads today, and have clearly intensified since the report's release. In discussions with faculty at 24 colleges, the following workload concerns were expressed with near unanimity.

Fully Loaded and Illegally Loaded SWFs

Faculty at many colleges are continually having their SWFs maximized at or as near as possible to 44 hours per week, which is the upper limit provided for in the Collective Agreement(CA). Between 44 and 47 hours is considered overtime.¹²⁷ These additional hours must be consented to by faculty, but must not be "unreasonably withheld".¹²⁸ This provision makes the negotiation of overtime less than collegial, and places the onus on faculty to prove why they cannot work overtime. An arbitration decision in 2012 upheld a faculty member's right to refuse overtime due to family responsibilities; however, many professors feel they are unable to refuse overtime for fear of retaliation from management.

In addition to overtime, the majority of locals visited indicated that the incidence of illegal SWFs is increasing. Illegal SWFs have been calculated incorrectly by managers, almost always leading to an underestimation of workload. Most of these illegal SWFs have to be caught by union officers, as the faculty assigned them often do not spot the subtle ways in which their workload might be miscalculated. When re-calculated, SWFs are in overtime, or even completely illegal under the workload formula – exceeding the 47 hour limit. Another regularly seen violation is for probationary faculty to be in overtime, which is prohibited in the CA. In

every faculty local there is the belief that management pressure to maximize workloads is leading to maxed-out and illegal SWFs. At several institutions it appears that administrators have enacted an unofficial policy of encouraging illegal SWFs. One local president had a dean bluntly admit to deliberately subverting the workload formula, saying to her: “My job is to try to get around the collective agreement, and your job is to try and catch me.”

Course Evaluation and Preparation

Evaluation factors are assigned to every course taught by faculty, and they vary based on the time-intensiveness of evaluation methods, ranging from written and project assignments, multiple choice tests, and in-class evaluations. Based on the type of evaluation used in a class, additional time is allocated for marking. Weekly marking allowances are 1.8 minutes per student for essay or project evaluations, 54 seconds per student for multiple choice evaluations, and 33 seconds per student for in-class evaluation.¹²⁹ An example of how time allocated for marking changes based on the evaluation type can be seen in a typical 50 student class. If this class had essay evaluations, there would be 1.5 hours per week given to faculty for marking. If the class had multiple choice evaluations, marking time would be 45 minutes per week, and if evaluation was in-class, 27.5 minutes would be allocated.

Given the current workload formula, courses with essay and project based evaluations are more labour intensive and more costly. As a result, managers seeking to cut the cost of course delivery have an incentive to encourage less time-consuming evaluation methods, or to simply allocate lower factors to more intensive evaluations. From my conversations with faculty, both of these scenarios are happening with regularity at all 24 colleges. This has led to particular concerns about the loss of written assignments in many courses, even though written communication is one of the key employment skills that cuts across all college programs.

On their SWF faculty are also given time for preparation for each course they teach. This course preparation factor is based on whether the course is being taught by a faculty member for the first time, and whether multiple sections of the same course are taught in a single semester. If a course is being taught by a faculty member for the first time, it is awarded the highest preparation factor of “New”. If a course has been taught before, but not within the past 3 years, it is awarded a factor of “Established A”. If it has been taught within the past 3 years, it is classified as “Established B”. The classification of “Repeat A” is designated by a repeat section of a course that is being delivered to a different student group, while “Repeat B” refers to repeat sections of a course taught to the same program or year of study. A final “Special” category is for atypical courses, and can receive values for either Established A, or Established B. For each designation in the CA there is time allotted for preparing course materials, specified as a ratio of each teaching contact hour (TCH).¹³⁰

TYPE OF COURSE	RATIO OF ASSIGNED TEACHING HOURS TO ATTRIBUTED HOURS FOR PREPARATION
New	1:1.10
Established A	1:0.85
Established B	1:0.60
Repeat A	1:0.45
Repeat B	1:0.35

An example of preparation values in practice is that for the first section of a course with 3 TCHs that has never been taught before, faculty receive 3.3 hours of preparation time per week. For the next section taught during the same semester, but to a different program, the faculty member would receive 1.35 hours of preparation time. For another section of the same course taught to students in the same program, 1.05 hours of preparation would be allotted.

A source of considerable tension around course preparation time concerns the use of learning

technologies in course design and delivery. A majority of colleges are now using Learning Management Systems (LMS) in which each course offered has an online home page hosted on a centralized network. These course pages must be designed, populated, and maintained by faculty. The degree of technical support available to faculty to assist in the extra demands of LMS management varies greatly across the colleges, and faculty at several institutions perceived an acute lack of support in this area, and a considerable increase in workload. An online course presence adds hours per week for preparation and maintenance, and this additional time was not factored in to the original workload formula enacted in 1986, when use of online learning in the CAATs was the barest fraction of what it is today.

Additional workload issues arise from marking online assignments and conducting interactive activities like virtual discussion forums. Issues of internet bandwidth, network outages and incompatible file formats can combine to make marking a simple assignment online much longer than it would take to mark in hard copy. Additional workload and quality of education issues are addressed in more detail under the Online Course Delivery section.

Complementary Functions

Another pressing issue with workload concerns time allotted to meeting with students out of class, responding to student communications, participating in faculty meetings and other committees, and developing new courses or updating course materials. SWFs allocate a minimum of 6 hours per week for what are called “complementary functions”, of which 4 hours are for student assistance, and 2 hours are for administrative functions.¹³¹ Full-time faculty I spoke with are near unanimous in declaring this level of complementary function time to be inadequate to cover all of the responsibilities that occur outside of teaching and evaluation.

In particular, the proliferation of email communication, and the increased expectation of rapid email turnaround, have put pressure on time allocated for student contact. The move to more online communication is presented to students and faculty as facilitating greater interaction, and in ways it can do this. However, faculty note that it also leads to much less efficient communication than that provided by the traditional, face-to-face classroom environment. In-person instruction enables professors to communicate important information to multiple students at once, and enables immediate questions and feedback from which all students can benefit. The management focus on “mobile learning” at several colleges sees a scenario in which students can learn wherever they want, whenever they want, using a host of different devices (computer, smart phone, tablet). This model sounds promising, but in practice it leads to a massive increase in faculty workload as students miss collective opportunities to encounter information and ask questions, and as faculty are flooded with personal communications at all hours, on weekends, etc. The *Workload Report* noted increased time spent in electronic communications:

Out-of-class assistance to students may take place face to face, by telephone, or by email or other forms of electronic communication. The data regarding maximum class size combines with the anecdotal evidence received at the regional meetings to suggest that the student demands on particular faculty members may be insufficiently recognized. Indeed, several other indicators confirmed for us that student numbers may be placing significant pressures on the capacity of some teachers to render out-of-class assistance.¹³²

Expectations of Volunteer Work

Increasingly, faculty are being asked to volunteer their time to attend faculty meetings (which should be included on their SWF), departmental commit-

tee meetings, college outreach and open house events, and joint union-management committees. These extra duties can involve substantial additional time over the normally assigned workload, and are particularly onerous for many program coordinators.

Coordinators are faculty who assume some administrative functions related to the oversight of academic programs. Coordinator positions are supposed to be voluntarily assumed by faculty, and generally involve a reduction in teaching contact hours and one or two additional steps in salary. For years coordinator positions have been a source of contention in college labour-management relations. From the perspective of faculty, some coordinators ended up acting as de facto managers, while others were assuming amounts of administrative work that far outweighed their course-load reductions. The phenomenon of coordinator burnout is common across the CAATs, and in several programs managers are having a hard time finding any faculty willing to assume coordinator duties.

Faculty who are not coordinators are also seeing their non-teaching time squeezed by management. Non-teaching weeks during fall and winter breaks and spring/summer are important times for faculty to do course development, lecture preparation, marking, administrative duties, and professional development. Increasingly managers are assigning mandatory meetings and training sessions during these weeks, which violates Article 11.08 of the faculty collective agreement. Under this article, faculty non-teaching time is supposed to be structured and scheduled by faculty, and mutually agreed on by management. As this discretionary time becomes “micro-managed” by administrators, faculty are losing important spaces of productivity.

Faculty are also increasingly being asked to create and manage “retention” strategies that are designed to identify early on students who are struggling academically. Workload issues associ-

ated with retention programs were mentioned by faculty at several colleges. Professors were clear that helping struggling students was important work that they supported, but also noted that the extra communications, interviews, and out of class meetings involved in retention strategies were unaccounted for on SWFs.

Another concern raised by a number of faculty was the apparent contradiction of colleges emphasizing retention, while simultaneously degrading the quality of education and reducing the supports that actually help struggling students. Faculty argue that increasing class sizes, cutting back on counseling staff, forcing courses online and overloading faculty schedules all have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable learners. In the face of these cut-backs, some faculty perceive retention strategies as a cynical attempt by colleges to retain precious “funding units”, as opposed to an honest attempt to improve academic outcomes.

Mentoring Non Full-time Faculty

Growing numbers of partial load and part-time faculty have meant that full-time college faculty have been increasingly placed in the role of mentors, advisors, and facilitators of non-full-time hires. Full-time faculty are expected by management to give part-time faculty everything they need to deliver courses, and to be available via email and in person for meetings, discussion, and feedback throughout the term. This is work that many full-time faculty willingly do out of a sense of collegiality, but it is not included on SWFs, and is not factored into workload.

Dealing with part-time faculty can contribute significantly to workload. In many programs across the colleges there is only one or a handful of full-time faculty, and three to four times that number of part-time. In these situations the full-time faculty often spends several extra hours per week helping part-timers with course preparation, evaluation, and LMS management. As the system-wide ratio

of full-time to part-time moves beyond 1:3, the time demands associated with mentorship will only increase.

Librarians and Counselors

Librarians and counselors each represent a much smaller proportion of faculty than do professors; however, their respective roles within the college system are no less critical.

Librarians and information technology specialists consulted in the course of this research testified to the same workload pressures faced by professors. In the first place, librarians feel that they are overworked. Many do a considerable amount of teaching, providing “bibliographic instruction” to students in various college programs. One librarian from a large college in the greater metro Toronto area indicated that he taught 795 students in 51 classes between September and October of 2013 alone. Another librarian indicated that they were responsible for providing instruction for 32 different programs, and needed to tailor workshops and labs to each. This librarian noted that if all the work full-time librarians were doing was included on a SWF, it would amount to an over 60 hour work-week. It was also noted that there are fewer and fewer full-time librarians in the system, that the number of part-time librarians and library technicians keeps increasing, and that the job expectations on the remaining full-time staff keep growing. Another workload issue mentioned by librarians is the increased time involved in dealing with growing numbers of part-time professors. Part-timers are more likely to need extra support, to request workshops with little notice, and to need help finding appropriate materials for online courses. Chronic understaffing makes it challenging to offer high quality library services, and the librarian at the large metro college noted that he was one of only 6 full-time librarians. By comparison, he noted that the similarly sized Langara College in British Columbia has 12 full-time librarians.

Librarians and information technology specialists are also critical of the colleges’ rush to dismantle

physical library collections of books and journals, and to switch to online collections and to high-tech course delivery. They describe direct experiences of the under-resourcing of online learning, and of facing overwhelming workloads in supporting professors to put courses online. In addition, they see how maintaining quality in online and blended courses is actually expensive, but that colleges will not spend the money required. One example given was that streaming rights for a single video can be between \$200 to \$500 a year, but that few departmental budgets allow for such expenditures. Finally, librarians have seen first-hand that many students do not have home access to computers and the internet that is sufficient to succeed in online studies – the public access computers in libraries and in other spaces on campus are always full.

For counselors, major challenges include an overwhelming workload related to the steady decrease of counselors relative to full-time student enrolment in the colleges. In 2012, a study conducted by Jim Lees, past chair of the Ontario College Counselors (OCC), and Peter Dietsche, professor at OISE/UT, surveyed counselors and counseling managers at all 24 colleges. The report noted that between 2007 and 2012 full-time student enrollment in the colleges increased 26 %, while during the same time the number of counselors increased by 4.6%. In mid-sized colleges the number of counselors actually decreased by 7% during this time-frame, and the counselor-student ratio increased by 39%. Lees and Dietsche noted that fewer counselors and more students led to less time for counselors to do outreach work. Instead counselors were more frequently involved in academic appeals, student behaviour consultations with professors or managers, and risk assessments.¹³³

One counselor noted that among six of her full-time colleagues, four were on long term disability for stress-related illness, and the remaining full-time and part-time staff were all struggling with overwhelming caseloads. She asked how

counselors were supposed to support the mental health of students when they could not even maintain their own due to stress, overwork, and exhaustion? Counselors are also increasingly engaged in teaching, and without SWFs, this extra work, in addition to a regular case-load, can easily lead to burnout.

Increased Class Sizes, Decreased Student/Faculty Contact

Growing student enrollment and constrained college budgets have led to growth in average class sizes. Although the actual change in size was not empirically explored in this study, increases at every college were mentioned by faculty anecdotally. In particular, labs in health sciences and the skilled trades were particularly seen to have increased. Many federally funded apprenticeship labs have increased from between 12 and 14 students, to 20, and even 24. As these classes often involve complex interaction with potentially dangerous machinery, doubling of class size is a serious concern mentioned by several professors in the trades. At numerous colleges skilled trades professors talked about concerns over student safety, and over the quality of instruction that is available in crowded shops, labs, and classrooms. One professor expressed exasperation that he was forced to have two students work together on a training machine intended for one student only.

Nursing faculty at four different colleges also expressed alarm at growing class sizes, and questioned their ability to provide an adequate level of instructional oversight. They mentioned that the critical nature of nursing care necessitated close faculty / student contact, especially with regards to evaluation. Most college nursing programs have also tried to cut costs of delivery by separating full-time faculty from clinical supervision and evaluation. In the 2012 round of bargaining, one of college management's demands was for the introduction of a new "nursing facilitator" staffing category to further the rupture between instruction and evaluation.

More students means more work involved in email communication and meetings outside of class. In the collective agreement there is a provision for 15 seconds of extra communication time for every student that a professor has over 260.¹³⁴ This is a woefully inadequate number that does not come close to addressing the issue of maintaining student-faculty contact in the face of growing class sizes. The 2009 *Workload Report* noted:

While the CBIS data discussed earlier show that the average class size has remained more or less constant for the past decade, the data also show that total student contact hours may vary widely from one faculty member to the next. The fact that average class sizes have remained constant is of little solace to a teacher whose total student contact hours are well in excess of the average and which translates into an excessive actual workload.¹³⁵

A final issue of increased class sizes deals with the ability of professors to connect with students and to meaningfully evaluate their progress. At one college in the North a faculty member said that due to increased class sizes and overwhelming workload, she "doesn't know her students anymore". She described marking stacks of written assignments and not being able to associate faces with names. Other professors have expressed the impact that swelling classes have on a faculty member's ability to reach the marginal students who may be struggling academically or with personal issues. At their founding the community colleges were supposed to specifically engage these vulnerable students, and a majority of faculty consulted feel that this is no longer the case.

A compelling example of the impact of growing class sizes on student engagement came from professors and librarians who worked with ESL students, and with remedial or learning-disabled

students. Whereas classes for these groups used to be capped at 20 to 30 students, in many colleges they are expanding into the 40 to 50 range.

Autocratic and Punitive Management

At several colleges, faculty locals were dealing with very serious and troubling instances in which individual professors, counselors or librarians were targeted by managers for personal reasons. At four colleges this involved managers manipulating workloads so that full-time faculty with considerable seniority would suddenly hear that “there was no work for them anymore”. In all cases this was in departments where part-time, partial load and sessional faculty were employed, and where courses that had been taught by the targeted faculty were still being offered. In grievance procedures initiated by targeted faculty, managers have been citing their right to allocate workloads as they see fit, even if this means that a full-time faculty member with seniority is eliminated. From the union perspective, this use of management rights enables punitive administrators to manipulate workloads in order to bully faculty who do not accede quietly to their dictates, and to reward faculty who do. These situations create a chill within the workplace and quash any pretense of collegiality.

A particularly troubling faculty anecdote of management retaliation involved a professor in an aviation program at one of the CAATs. This professor was full-time, and had been instrumental in building the program, and bringing it to a nationally recognized level of excellence. However, in the previous years this professor had seen quality deteriorate within the program, as part-time faculty started greatly outnumbering full-time, and as the program’s management began lowering academic standards in order to improve “retention” and to keep students in the program when they would otherwise have failed out. After repeated attempts to address his concerns with management informally, the professor sent an internal letter to management via email. This letter expressed his concerns about the program’s integrity, and crit-

icized management decisions that he felt were compromising quality education. As a result of this internal communication, the professor’s employment was terminated. Even though the faculty member grieved the termination and was awarded a settlement, he did not return to teaching. This experience was cited by several other faculty at the same college as an example of management intimidation, and its effect has been to silence faculty complaints about academic standards.

Faculty perceptions that college management have become increasingly punitive and autocratic is also supported by the number of bullying and harassment grievances that are being filed by faculty across the colleges. In 2009, Article 4, entitled “No Discrimination/Bullying/Psychological Harassment” was added to the faculty collective agreement.¹³⁶ The article was precipitated by Bill 168, an amendment to the Ontario Health and Safety Act dealing with workplace violence and harassment. Since the article’s introduction, grievances under Article 4 have become among the most common of all grievances filed system-wide. Article 4 grievances can involve faculty and students, but the overwhelming majority filed by faculty deal with harassment or bullying from management.

Contracting Work to Private Colleges

A growing number of the CAATs are making partnerships with private colleges to open subsidiary campuses. Many of these campuses specifically target international students. The private colleges teach curriculum developed by CAAT faculty, but no CAAT faculty teach at these institutions. Examples include the Pures college in Scarborough (partnered with Mohawk College)¹³⁷, the Hanson college campuses in Brampton and Toronto (partnered with Cambrian College),¹³⁸ and Alpha International Academy in Toronto (partnered with St. Lawrence College.)¹³⁹ These colleges offer courses and programs in direct competition with campuses of publicly funded colleges. Questions about

the quality of education offered at these institutions are difficult to answer, but several concerns have been raised.

At one CAAT, professors in business described being constantly contacted by teachers at a private college that their institution had a curriculum licensing agreement with. All of the curriculum taught at the private, for-profit school had been developed by professors in the publicly funded college, but the relationship did not end there. The private college teachers also needed help throughout the semester with all aspects of course design and delivery, and CAAT faculty became concerned about the credentials of the private college teachers. In addition, professors at the CAAT had to bring serious issues of quality to the attention of administrators, and even had to re-write final exams that were deemed to be academically inadequate.

Increasing Student Debt Burden

The reduction in government funding for post-secondary and the concomitant rise in student tuitions has placed a suffocating financial burden on many Ontario college students. Faculty at all colleges noted seeing the effects of financial strain on their students' health and academic performance. Out

of financial necessity, many students are working full-time while also being enrolled in full-time studies. As well, many students are accumulating unsustainable debt-loads that resign them to years of financial difficulty after they graduate from college.

Poor Faculty Morale

The climate of austerity and autocratic management prevalent in the CAATS today has had a negative impact on the morale of many faculty. During several visits, faculty noted a climate of pervasive fear at their college, and a desire by faculty to “not rock the boat”, “keep their head down”, and “get in, get out” from the workplace. The sense is that they are being deliberately marginalized and devalued by management, and disrespected as professionals and as experts in their field. This sense, coupled with a fear of losing one's job, have led many faculty to feel disillusioned and cynical regarding administration's concern for quality education, collegiality, and student success. Increasingly, faculty speak of being cogs in “the business of education”, and perceive that management is attempting to deliberately de-skill and demoralize professors, counselors, and librarians.



Online Course Delivery

“Faculty report that many students are unable to learn effectively online, and that they feel they are being “ripped off” by required courses either being offered only online, or in “blended” format, in which a certain percentage of a course’s face-to-face instruction time is replaced with online time.”

Online Course Delivery

The current system-wide drive to offer more online courses has far-reaching implications for faculty, students, and quality education. Every college is now offering some amount of online delivery, but there are substantial differences in terms of how it is being used, where it is being used, and who determines the appropriateness of its use. In addition, there is considerable debate concerning the valid uses of online courses, and their effectiveness in comparison to traditional, face-to-face courses.

The majority of college faculty consulted for this report think that online technologies have a place in post-secondary, and in the CAATs. Faculty see their use in complementing face-to-face instruction, and also in enabling access for students who for various reasons are unable to attend traditional classes. However, the great majority of faculty also think that online education is not an adequate replacement for face-to-face instruction, and that its use needs to be based on pedagogical criteria, not on budgetary considerations. In addition, at each of the 24 CAATs, faculty identified a significant number of student complaints concerning online courses. Faculty report that many students are unable to learn effectively online, and that they feel they are being “ripped off” by required courses either being offered only online, or in “blended” format, in which a certain percentage of a course’s face-to-face instruction time is replaced with online time.

In addition to concerns about quality of education, faculty have also expressed fears that online education’s cost-savings will come largely from a reduction in the number of professors. As college professors have no academic freedom or intellectual property protection, all curriculum they develop can be sold by their employers to whatever third party the employer chooses – be it a

publishing company, a private, for-profit college, or a technology company. In addition, the colleges themselves can commodify and profit from faculty curriculum, while also using digital lecture recordings, presentation slides and other online content as a means to move courses fully online, expand class sizes, and replace full-time with part-time professors.

The research literature on online courses is strongly supportive of faculty concerns, and highly critical regarding the reasons why online courses are proliferating, their relative efficacy compared to face-to-face instruction, their labour-intensiveness, and their tendency to limit access as much as they might extend it. Interestingly, even the claim that online learning is more cost-effective than traditional, face-to-face instruction is highly controversial. Some researchers indicate that in fact online courses are cost-prohibitive to many educational institutions, and especially to those institutions that serve poor communities.¹⁴⁰ This fact has led some to suggest that online learning is largely a means of shifting public resources away from students and faculty, and toward college management and private corporations.¹⁴¹

Cost Cutting and Commodification

Regardless of its actual ability to reduce costs, it is widely noted that online learning is being pursued by post-secondary institutions as a means to lower the cost of education. As mentioned in the discussion surrounding the MTCU’s proposal for “differentiation” in post-secondary, online learning is seen as a means of ameliorating the impact of fiscal austerity. Even in research that argues in favour of online learning, the delivery method is

clearly identified as a means of confronting “the challenge of how to manage costs in the face of tighter funding”.¹⁴²

This cost-cutting motivation is important to keep in mind, and yet it only represents one half of the driving force behind online learning. The other half consists of corporate interests that see online as a massive opportunity to enter into the field of public education, to privatize curriculum and course delivery, and to profit from both. In North America, a rapidly expanding field of “EdTech” (education technology) companies has emerged in the past ten years, as the lucrative online market within public education opens up. Powerful education publisher Pearson is an example of this expansion, having recently purchased EdTech companies Certiport, EmbaNetCompass, Nook Media, TutorVista and Learning Catalytics. These new acquisitions are added to Pearson’s existing catalogue of an LMS system, ready-made online courses, and e-textbooks. As the market for hard-copy textbooks has declined, large publishers like Pearson now receive over half their revenue from digital sources.¹⁴³

Companies like Coursera, Udacity and edX have also been rapidly expanding their delivery of Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in partnership with some of the largest universities in Canada and the United States. MOOCs are open-registration courses with no student cap, and with enrollments often in the hundreds of thousands. The big three MOOC-offering companies all represent partnerships between large American universities, and all are aggressively acting to increase the market for online courses – both in North America, and world-wide. Udacity was founded in 2011 by San Jose State University professor Sebastian Thrun, and Peter Norvig, director of research at Google. Coursera was started by two Stanford computer scientists - Andrew Ng and Daphne Koller - in partnership with Stanford, Harvard, and Princeton. EdX is a collaboration between MIT and Harvard.¹⁴⁴

Canadian universities have now signed up to offer MOOCs through Coursera and EdX, with the University of Alberta being one of the early adopters.¹⁴⁵ While MOOCs started out as free and open courses, all of the big three EdTech companies are now offering credit courses with registration fees. In 2014 Coursera launched a new, fully-online credential that offers vocational training in a wide range of fields, including music, data security, and critical thinking.¹⁴⁶ The expansion of MOOCs has been accompanied by considerable hype from technology and business media and from government. MOOCs are being predicted to revolutionize the field of higher education, and in 2011, the New York Times declared 2012 “The Year of the MOOC”.¹⁴⁷

EdTech companies have also been pursuing market expansion through political means, and this has been particularly apparent in the United States. An example is Virginia-based company K-12 Inc., which in 2011 contributed \$50,000 to the election of Idaho superintendent of public instruction, Tom Luna. Once Luna was elected, K-12 received \$12.8 million from the state to create “online charter schools” that offer digital courses to high schools.¹⁴⁸ State governments in the U.S. are also partnering with MOOC providers and mandating the expansion of online courses in public colleges and universities. In May of 2013 Coursera signed a deal with 10 U.S. state university systems to offer courses on its platform.¹⁴⁹

As with the elementary and secondary levels, expanding online education in colleges and universities is being driven by government incentives. In 2012 California governor Jerry Brown announced \$20 million for online course development within the state. A related bill mandated that public universities would have to offer credits for MOOCs in the 50 most-subscribed introductory courses. The MOOCs would be offered by EdTech giants like Coursera and Udacity. The proposed legislation ended up drawing intense criticism from professors state-wide, and was eventually altered to fund faculty-driven online initiatives. Despite this

modification, each year millions continue to be allocated by state governments for online development.¹⁵⁰

In the U.S., there has been a clear link between conservative political organizations and expanded online learning, with Florida Governor Jeb Bush's Foundation for Excellence in Education lobbying for all states to expand online learning and remove bans on for-profit virtual schools. This right-wing support has led experts like Arizona State professor Alex Molnar to remark that "What they want is to substitute technology for teachers". State teachers' unions have echoed this concern, noting that the same forces pushing online are the ones who have been lobbying for "right to work" and "education choice" laws.¹⁵¹ In 2011 Tennessee passed the Virtual Public Schools Act that allowed private online course providers to offer high-school classes. The Act was drafted by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a far-right organization that provides government law-makers with ready-made legislation tailored to corporate interests. This type of political pressure has been mounting in the United States, with states like Minnesota and Idaho also considering ALEC-tailored laws that mandate students to take online classes.¹⁵²

The interest of corporations in commodifying and privatizing public education has been a driver of the online learning phenomenon from the very beginning. Canadian historian David Noble noted this emerging trend back in 1998, in an article entitled *Digital Diploma Mills: The Automation of Higher Education*. Noble traced the impetus for online education to the mid 1970s, when North American corporate and political leaders realized that the profitability of traditional industries (manufacturing, resources extraction) was declining, and that "knowledge-based" industries held the most promise for future wealth. The growing importance of "intellectual capital" led to a focus on universities and colleges as places in which knowledge could be privatized and turned into profit-generating commodities. Noble argued

that the drive for commodification led to a shift in resources within universities from education to research, and from open, curiosity-based research to more marketable, corporate-friendly forms. The assertion of control by universities over patents and intellectual property rights was a part of this first phase of commodification, and by the 1990s the second phase, involving the commodification of instruction, had begun. As government funding to post-secondary decreased and class sizes and tuitions swelled, cries that the system was "unsustainable" became commonplace, and online education was presented as the solution. In essence, Noble noted that "The second phase of the commercialization of academia, the commodification of instruction, is touted as the solution to the crisis engendered by the first."¹⁵³

Noble argued that online education was far from a benign and non-political instance of technological change. In contrast, it was a phenomenon being explicitly driven by an agenda to accelerate government underfunding of post-secondary, to reduce academic faculty, and to increasingly funnel public education dollars into the hands of private education and technology corporations. In a statement that remains highly relevant today, Noble addressed the implications of "digital diploma mills":

For faculty and their organizations it is a struggle not only over the proprietary control of course materials per se but also over their academic role, their autonomy and integrity, their future employment, and the future of quality education. In the wake of the online education goldrush many have begun to wonder, will the content of education be shaped by scholars and educators or by media businessmen, by the dictates of experienced pedagogy, or a quick profit? ¹⁵⁴

Noble's warning concerning the online agenda is directly applicable to the Ontario post-secondary sector. While U.S. state governors have begun

mandating online expansion and offering financial incentives for institutions to participate, the differentiation mandate and Ontario Online initiative serve the same function domestically. In addition, massive EdTech companies are hungrily eyeing the Ontario education market. On the web site of Contact North, the government-funded consortium of colleges and universities that runs Ontario Learn, a document called *The Corporate Educators are Coming...* lays out the EdTech vision for Ontario's post-secondary sector. The document notes Pearson's rush into digital course production and delivery, and the lightning-quick spread of MOOCs - both indicators that the online market is reaching a tipping point. Given the growing importance of college and university credentials for employment, the document notes that "the attention of corporate educators and venture capitalists is becoming more focused on assessment and accreditation." In essence, corporate profits will come from replacing both faculty, and the institutions in which they teach. *The Corporate Educators* sees "the arrival of the private sector at this large scale as 'game changing' for public education", and their vision of what such a radically altered post-secondary field could look like is worth quoting at length:

Imagine: A future in which Pearson and Google partner to dominate online learning resource provision – powerful and effective course development and delivery software, a large array of low-cost or free-to-use courses, textbooks, video, audio, simulations and games all linked to the flexible use of their massive content libraries. The business model would be built around the provision of credits in a multitude of formats.

Imagine: A new merger creates Google Phoenix, bringing together Google Scholar, Google apps, the University of Phoenix online curriculum, and a growing collection of digital learning objects, all shareable through the Google Plus

collaboration network. In addition to the UPhoenix credits, Google Phoenix also creates a digital badging system, awarding the kind of credential that a college degree once conveyed.

Imagine: Disney, Sony, and Apple complete a merger, incorporating the iTunes library, Pixar studios, theme parks, the Sony gaming division and the extensive Columbia Pictures film archive. The Disney Foundation begins to acquire a number of struggling campuses worldwide, promising to invigorate them with Disney magic and to develop a catalogue of courses that will entertain while they educate.

These scenarios may seem extreme but, three years ago, who would have imagined an online course with 160,000 students around the world as Coursera is currently realizing?¹⁵⁶

The document finishes by describing a "brave new online world" in which the Darwinian struggle for education profits leads to winners and losers:

The return on investment will come from specialized content, assessment, and accreditation and the awarding of credentials. Globally respected institutions will do well, but those who have weak global reputations or are small "no name" players in an increasingly global market will struggle. This is part of the "game changing."¹⁵⁷

The vision of Ontario post-secondary presented in *The Corporate Educators are Coming* is almost surreal – education as a kind of virtual, corporate Disneyland. However, it is echoed in other documents produced by Contact North. In a report entitled *Reducing Costs through Online Learning*¹⁵⁸, Contact North indicates that whether online courses can save money depends on whether or not institutions engage in five "best practices", identified as:

- Improve teaching and learning efficiency;
- Reduce development and support costs through shared services;
- Integrate new sources of educational content;
- Reduce space and infrastructure costs; and
- Uncover new revenue streams.

For the first strategy, the authors reference studies conducted by the National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT) in which online instruction was able to reduce the cost of course delivery by an average of 37% per student when compared with traditional, in-class delivery. They admit that “Cost savings largely came from reduced demand for faculty time or substitution of less expensive instructional assistance, such as graduate students or peer tutors”.¹⁵⁹ As such, the first way to cut costs through online education is to use it to reduce the number of faculty and to substitute higher paid, full-time, highly credentialed faculty with lower paid, lower credentialed, part-time faculty. The second cost-cutting strategy is similar, but scales up the “less is more” approach from faculty to entire campuses and even institutions. To this end the authors note that “Reducing the duplication of courses and delivery infrastructure on separate campuses can be a key contributor to cost containment”.¹⁶⁰ The report’s third recommendation refers to open educational resources (OERs), which are course content and materials that have been created and disseminated for free. As online courses utilize this free content, they will not need to pay professors or librarians to develop courses. The fourth recommendation is based on the fact that online learning occurs “without consuming scarce and expensive campus ‘places’”.¹⁶¹ More courses online equals a greater ability to increase enrollment without increasing classroom capacity.

The final strategy involves generating profit through competing in the national and international online education market. The report notes “While reliable global revenue figures do not seem to be available, it is clear that a lot of money is on the table”. The authors then point to the possibility of joining “the MOOC ecosystem” to offer “ancillary services” like awarding credits. In this last instance, the real work of education – developing and delivering courses – would be fully privatized, and public institutions would simply exist to “award credit”, or rubber-stamp the corporate product.¹⁶²

Effectiveness of Online Courses

Proponents of online courses generally move quickly from a discussion of cost-reduction, corporate partnerships and profit-making, and into assertions that online can also improve the quality of education and improve student access. These additional claims are widely cited by online’s champions, but what does the existing literature say?

When considering the studies that have been conducted to date on the effectiveness of online education, what is clear is that it is appropriate in certain contexts and for certain student groups, and that it is clearly sub-standard and counter-productive for others. As such, it is imperative that online technologies be used critically and judiciously, and that qualified educational experts determine where and how best they can be employed.

In 2009 the U.S. Department of Education released a report that was supposedly a meta-analysis of studies examining online learning courses and their outcomes. Upon its release it was widely cited by proponents of online learning as proving that “students who took all or part of their class online performed better, on average, than those taking the same course through traditional face-to-face instruction”.¹⁶³ The USDE report looked at 99 studies that contrasted some aspect of online and face-to-face instruction, and identified 50

different points of comparison between the two course delivery methods. Boosters of online learning held the study to be proof that concerns over quality were unsubstantiated, and that online was in fact more effective than face-to-face. Referencing the results, CNN columnist Gregory Ferenstein boasted that “Cash-strapped school districts, from Florida to Washington, have discovered that minimally supervised students hunched over laptops can outperform their lectured counterparts for a fraction of the cost.”¹⁶⁴

The USDE study has also been used as justification for the effectiveness of online by Contact North, the government-funded consortium of higher education institutions that run Ontario Learn. In a 2013 document posted to the Ontario Learn web site, entitled *Reducing Costs Through Online Learning*, Contact North first reassure their audience:

Before discussing cost-effectiveness it is essential to establish that quality is not sacrificed with online learning. Fortunately for the potential of online learning technologies to change the cost equation, a large body of research contradicts the fear that online learning cannot meet the standards of the classroom. A watershed finding came in 2010 when a U.S. Department of Education meta-analysis concluded that “students in online conditions performed modestly better, on average, than those learning the same material through traditional face-to-face instruction.”¹⁶⁵

Interestingly, the 2009 USDE report (Contact North gets the date wrong) is the only study referenced among the “large body of research”. However, when this report is itself analyzed, it clearly does not support its own conclusions, nor does it support the many assertions made on its behalf. Shanna Smith Jaggars, from the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Columbia University, has studied online learning extensively in

U.S. community colleges, and with CCRC director Thomas Bailey published a 2010 critique of the USDE report. In their critique, Jaggars and Bailey first note that 20 of the 23 studies involving “hybrid courses” actually required students to attend the same amount of in-class hours as did traditional courses. As such, these courses added an online component over and above the standard amount of contact time. This speaks to the considerable confusion accompanying definitions of “blended” or “hybrid” course delivery. To some institutions, such as Mohawk College, “blended” courses must involve a portion of contact time being removed from the classroom and placed fully online. By this definition, a 3 hour course that is “50% blended” would have one 1.5 hour class per week, and an additional 1.5 hours of online instruction or coursework. This is a condition dealt with in only 3 of the 99 studies considered in the USDE report.¹⁶⁶

Because of the USDE study’s inconsistency in the definition of hybrid or blended courses, Jaggars and Bailey focused on only the 28 studies that compared fully online courses with face to face courses. When these studies were filtered to account for different institutional settings, only 7 were found to deal with undergraduate or graduate students in semester-long online courses. Upon examining these applicable studies, the researchers found that three showed no statistically significant differences in learning outcomes between online and face-to-face groups. One found no difference, but noted that upon completion students in the face-to-face group felt better prepared for the workplace than the online group. One study showed no difference between standard in-class and online courses, but a clear preference for an “advanced” online group that had access to highly interactive learning tools not available to the other groups. The sixth study showed worse outcomes for the online students, who handed in fewer assignments and achieved lower grades. The final study showed positive results for the online students, but had no random assignment to research

groups. As well, the study found that students in the online class actually improved less overall than did students in the face-to-face class. As such, Jaggars noted that this study should actually be considered negative in terms of online. In addition to these findings, six of the seven studies did not report course withdrawal rates. As online courses are known to have higher attrition rates than face-to-face courses, withdrawals could have substantially skewed the study results.¹⁶⁷

The CCRC critique not only revealed the USDE's review methodology to be flawed and their conclusions unfounded, but it also argued that the results were even less applicable to three-year community colleges. The seven undergraduate-level studies involved classes at large to medium-sized universities, five of which were categorized as "highly selective" or "selective". As a result, the student groups involved did not represent the much broader range of student abilities typically found in community colleges. In order to assess the impact of online learning in this different learning environment, Jaggars and her colleague Di Xu conducted two large studies with students in the Virginia and Washington state community college systems.

The 2010 Virginia colleges study examined two cohorts of students – a 2004 cohort was followed for four years, while a 2008 cohort was followed for one year. The 2004 cohort involved 23,823 students and 317,812 courses. The 2008 cohort involved 28,389 students and 200,503 courses. For the 2008 cohort the researchers compared demographic characteristics and completion rates for face-to-face, online, and hybrid courses. The 2004 cohort did not distinguish between online and hybrid courses, and as a result only fully online and face-to-face courses were compared for this group.¹⁶⁸

Results for both cohorts showed that online courses were more popular among women, white students, those aged 25 and over, students who received federal need-based aid, fluent English

speakers, and students with a stronger level of academic preparation.¹⁶⁹ Out of the 371,000 2004 cohort courses, 12% were online, while 88% were in-class. When examining completion rates in the 184,357 courses taken by students who experienced both face-to-face and online instruction, 81% of face-to-face courses were completed, compared to 68% of online courses. The difference in completion rates was much greater for 13,126 remedial courses examined, with 64% of students completing face-to-face courses, and only 43% of students completing online equivalents.¹⁷⁰

For the 2008 cohort, the same demographic differences were observed in which students were more likely to take an online course. However, these differences were not observed with hybrid courses, which were slightly more likely to be preferred by Asian and ESL students. Out of the 77,853 courses taken by students who had experienced both online, hybrid and face to face instruction, 79% of face-to-face courses were completed, 70% of hybrid courses were completed, and only 67% of online courses were completed.¹⁷¹

The 2012 Washington colleges study again examined two cohorts of students. A 2004 cohort was followed for five years, and a 2008 cohort was followed for one year. The 2004 cohort involved 50,306 students and 590,169 courses. The 2008 cohort involved 57,427 students and 336,879 courses. Both cohorts showed demographic variables similar to the Virginia study concerning which students were more likely to take online courses. However, one additional variable found to correlate with online course registration was high socioeconomic status (being in the highest income quintile). For both cohorts, the demographic characteristics of students enrolled in hybrid and face-to-face courses did not differ significantly.¹⁷²

In the 2004 cohort, out of the 323,528 courses that were taken by students who had experienced both online and hybrid courses, completion rates

were 90% for face-to-face courses, 89% for hybrid courses, and 82% for online courses. The study also showed that students who were less strong academically responded differently to online and hybrid courses. For students who had taken a previous remedial English course, completion rates were 88% for face-to-face, 85% for hybrid, and 80% for online. For students who had taken a previous remedial Math course, completion rates were 90% for face-to-face, 88% for hybrid, and 82% for online. The research also showed that students who had taken an online course in their first semester or first year were more likely to drop out of school than were students who took only face-to-face classes. When assessing the results of the Washington study, Xu and Jagers noted that:

Overall, the findings of the current study do not provide strong evidence regarding the effectiveness of hybrid courses.... In contrast, the evidence regarding online courses was fairly clear. We found that students who participated in online courses had lower success rates on a variety of outcomes, even after controlling for a rich array of student characteristics, including prior academic performance and concurrent hours of employment.¹⁷³

In reflecting on their study results, Xu and Jagers noted that fully online courses were less likely to be completed in all cohorts, even when controlling for all other variables. In addition, rates of online and hybrid course completion were worse for students who had taken remedial English or Math courses, suggesting that weaker students were less adept at non-face-to-face learning. The researchers also noted that “some students – in particular males, African American students, and students with lower levels of academic preparation – had much more difficulty in online courses than they did in face-to-face courses.” This finding was consistent with other research showing that worse outcomes in online learning are associat-

ed with low student GPAs and receiving financial assistance. When considering whether online and hybrid courses support the success of diverse students, Xu and Jagers conducted a qualitative survey of Virginia students and faculty in 23 online courses. Students told the researchers that they did less well in online classes because they received “less instructor guidance, support, and encouragement.” The researchers then noted:

For highly confident, highly motivated, and high-achieving students, this relative lack of interpersonal connection and support may not be particularly problematic. However, low-income, ethnic minority, or first-generation students – that is, most community college students – are often anxious about their ability to succeed academically, and this anxiety can manifest in counterproductive strategies such as procrastinating, not turning in assignments, or not reaching out to professors for help. An array of studies suggest that instructors’ caring, connection, encouragement, and guidance are critical to help alleviate these students’ anxiety, build their academic motivation, and support their success.¹⁷⁴

To date, the Virginia and Washington studies on online and hybrid courses are the most rigorous and statistically powerful explorations of these delivery methods in a community college setting. Given this, it is important to consider their results when evaluating Ontario Online’s goal of greatly expanding online and hybrid course offerings in Ontario community colleges. In contrast to the assertions of online proponents, what the research presents to us is a message of strong caution. Although some students clearly can succeed in online and hybrid courses, both studies show that on average, face-to-face delivery consistently leads to better outcomes. In addition, both studies show that students with weaker academic skills have a harder time with online and hybrid cours-

es, as do minority students and students with low socioeconomic status. Given these results, three firm conclusions can be drawn:

- First, it is scientifically and empirically invalid to claim that, in community colleges, online and hybrid courses provide comparable or superior quality of education in relation to face-to-face courses.
- Second, it is clear that the deficits of online and hybrid courses in community colleges are greater for students who are male, low-ses, from minority groups, or less academically prepared.
- Third, it is clear that the utility of online and hybrid course delivery in community colleges is far from uniform. It varies greatly based on the student group, course, program, and institution in question.

Given these conclusions, two practices in relation to online and hybrid learning seem of primary importance:

- First, it is imperative that the use of online and hybrid courses be determined by pedagogical criteria and student success, not by simple “one size fits all”, cost-cutting imperatives. These delivery methods can be effective for certain students and courses, and significantly detrimental to others. The use of non face-to-face delivery should be assessed on a course by course and program by program basis, with academic faculty determining when and how they are used.
- Second, it is imperative that rigorous studies of comparative educational outcomes in online, hybrid, and face-to-face courses be conducted in Ontario colleges. This research should

deal with the concerns raised by Xu and Jagers, and by the significant critical literature on online education.

Online Courses in the CAATs: Faculty Experience and The Case of Mohawk College

The strategies currently being used to integrate online learning in the CAATs are highly diverse. Some colleges have not pursued much online and blended course development, and are just now directing serious resources to this end. In contrast, other colleges have been pursuing online education for some years. Some colleges are pursuing an online development strategy that is faculty and student-driven, and that accounts for critical differences in course, program, and student group. Other colleges are enacting top-down approaches to online development, in which upper management enforce institution-wide “quotas” of online and blended course offerings. Although a few colleges continue to have faculty meaningfully involved in decisions around online course delivery, the overall trend seems to be toward colleges dictating quotas for online courses, and ordering faculty to comply.

With no faculty academic freedom, no language in the collective agreement concerning online course delivery, and overwhelming external pressure from government, college management may abandon any pretense of collegiality and instead take a completely authoritarian approach to expanding online. While this has not been the case at all, or even most of the CAATs to date, it is happening at some institutions. A particularly relevant case study in this regard is Mohawk College, which has pursued by far the most aggressive management strategy for online and blended course delivery. Mohawk College’s approach to “e-learning” is instructive as an example of how online and blended learning can be utilized where an autocratic

administration can make decisions uninformed by research and without meaningful input from students, faculty, or even I.T. specialists.

In 2008, Mohawk College management announced a strategic plan that included “advancing educational outcomes through the strategic integration of learning technologies”.¹⁷⁵ As a first step in this plan, administrators chose a single learning management system (LMS) for use college-wide. This platform, Desire to Learn (D2L), was to be rolled out over the next five years, with every course having its own LMS page. The college then announced a goal of having a significant number of courses blended by 2014. The specific quota of blending, and how the quota would be determined, remained vague from 2009 to 2012, with faculty hearing first that 50% was the required quota, but later hearing that 25% might be the target. As well, faculty were told that quotas might involve flexibility within and between academic programs, so that some courses and programs might become blended more heavily than others, and that the blending quota would be averaged over the entire college. The Mohawk Humanities and Social Science department became one of the first academic areas to experience the imposition of quotas, and all faculty in this area were told to examine their courses to determine how they could be blended. At the same time, all of the general education (gen-ed) courses offered through the department were mandated to become 50% blended, while several more gen-ed sections were offered fully online.

As the blending process moved forward, some faculty found legitimate ways in which online delivery could be productively used to improve access to core courses and general electives. However, many other faculty concluded that their courses, and their students, would not benefit from blended or fully online delivery. Increasing faculty calls for discernment and flexibility in the use of online were dismissed by management, leading faculty to fear that academic criteria and quality were of little to no importance in the eLearn strategy. In addition,

as the number of online and blended courses began to increase, faculty began hearing growing complaints from students concerning the change in delivery. An overwhelming complaint was that some students could not learn as effectively online, and that students were not being given a choice to take certain courses in a face-to-face setting. In response to faculty and student complaints, and the perception that management was unwilling to hear them, members of the college faculty union, Local 240, decided to do a study on the experience of online learning at Mohawk. This study involved a forum and focus group discussion including faculty and students, and also an in-class survey of students’ perceptions of online learning. The forum took place on March 21, 2011, and the survey was administered to general education students in April of 2011. In all, 898 students completed the survey. The results of the forum and survey were released in November 2011 as the *Report on Online Learning: Student and Faculty Experience at Mohawk College*.¹⁷⁶

The March 21 forum took place at the Fennel campus of Mohawk College, and involved approximately 80 participants. Participants broke up into 8 small groups, each including a mix of students and faculty. Each group had a faculty facilitator to moderate discussion and record participant contributions. Groups each discussed three questions, for 20 minutes each. The questions were:

1. What does research and our own experience as teachers and students tell us about where and in what ways online learning improves student access and learning? What does it tell us about where it fails in these areas? In your own courses and programs, would a decrease in face-to-face class time be beneficial or harmful?
2. What questions does online learning raise about assumed technical knowledge, student access to technology,

appropriate levels of training and support, faculty and student workloads, and intellectual property rights?

3. Who should determine the way in which online learning is used – students, faculty, or administration? Who determines what kinds of programs, courses, information or skills it is used for?

Responses to each question were recorded for each group, compiled, and analyzed using the Grounded Theory method of qualitative data analysis.¹⁷⁷ This method involves finding common themes within qualitative responses, and when this was done for the forum results, it was found that faculty responses grouped into the following categories:

1. Quality of Education (quality of learning, lack of research)
2. Technical Issues (sufficient technology, sufficient training)
3. Quality of Workplace (workload, health)
4. Implementation / Decision-Making

Student responses to the forum questions were grouped into these categories:

1. Quality of Education (quality of learning, value of education, health)
2. Technical (sufficient technology, sufficient training)
3. Access to Education
4. Implementation / Decision-Making

There was considerable overlap between faculty and student response categories, with shared concerns about the quality of education, lack of sufficient technology and training, and who decides how online and blended learning are used. Students raised the additional issue of access, noting that online learning can improve access by allowing them to work around busy schedules, but also that it can reduce access by being less

user friendly to low income students, young mothers, ESL students, young students, and learning disabled students. Faculty noted the additional workload issues surrounding blended and online delivery, and both faculty and students questioned the health impacts of requiring more time sitting in front of computers.

The student survey was given to students in face-to-face general education classes. The questionnaire gave a brief description of blended learning, and indicated that the course the students just completed would next be offered in blended format. The ten questions then asked students to reflect on whether they would prefer the course in a blended format or not (See Appendix 2). Local 240 members believed it was useful to assess student preference, as there had been no attempt to do so by college management. However, the results need to be taken with caution, as it was unknown what prior experience the students had with online courses. Despite this limitation, the responses were overwhelmingly supportive of face-to-face over blended or online methods of delivery.

Given student and faculty feedback in the focus groups and questionnaire, the *Report on Online Learning* questioned the lack of student consultation, stating:

A problematic aspect of Mohawk's eLearn strategy to date is that students have not been consulted or surveyed regarding their opinions on or experience of online education. Given the results of this report and the clear student concern expressed in the research literature and in our College survey, this lack of consultation is troubling. If students were clamoring for less face-to-face instruction and were faring much better in blended and online courses, there would be little reason to write this report. However, the reality is starkly different and can be readily ascertained by actually reading existing studies or speaking with students.¹⁷⁸

In addition, the *Report* noted the problematic way in which online and blended learning were being rolled out at Mohawk, noting:

Another cause for concern regarding the College's eLearn strategy relates to the unilateral imposition of blended or online delivery by management. This strategy has seen decision-making around which courses are suitable for blended or online delivery taken completely out of the hands of faculty, who are the experts in their respective fields. At Mohawk, faculty experience so far has been that management completely dismiss concerns regarding which courses are suitable for blending. Furthermore, there is little consideration of which courses instead rely heavily on the interactive and context-rich delivery environment of face-to-face instruction. Despite personal experience with the limitations of online instruction in teaching communication, interaction and other "soft" employment skills, coupled with negative student feedback, faculty calls for meaningful input into decision-making have been ignored.¹⁷⁹

Management response to the *Local 240 Report on Online Learning* was to ignore the document's concerns and recommendations. Instead, the college abandoned any pretense of academic discernment and announced that as of January, 2014, all college courses would become 33% blended, and would lose an hour of in-class time. Some exceptions were made for courses that were designated as "laboratory" delivery, but faculty and even associate deans had to make an argument for why a course could be exempted from blending. In the face of this new directive, faculty college-wide began to scramble to modify their courses, and those who tried to make exceptions for certain courses on academic grounds were overwhelmingly refused. In Humanities and Social Sciences, imposition of blending required removing in-class presentations from some cours-

es – an essential employability skill that could no longer be taught. Courses that envisioned innovative, hands-on approaches to learning and student placements were shelved. Courses where in-class dialogue about sensitive material concerning race, gender, and sexuality were told to put these discussions online, over the strong objections of faculty. Courses that relied on the individual knowledge and experience of professors saw a scramble to find Youtube clips and TED talks in order to fulfill the quota of blending. To many faculty, the experience has been the final straw in convincing them that college education no longer cares about quality, academic standards, or student success. One program coordinator mentioned how hard it was for him to stand in front of students and represent the new blending mandate, while "knowing that the students are getting jobbed."

Apart from the pervasive concerns about quality of education and academic freedom raised by Mohawk College's across-the-board blended learning mandate, faculty there are also struggling with overwhelming workloads. The widespread perception is that there are insufficient resources available in terms of technical support and course development. In addition, there is not an adequate amount of time being allocated for course re-development. Ultimately, many faculty feel that they are "flying blind", with no clear direction on effective online pedagogy and course design. When faculty have questioned the blending mandate based on either academic or workload concerns, they have been met with blunt management threats of "either do it, or face disciplinary action". In the face of this workplace culture, one is reminded of Michael Skolnik's reflection on the 1980s management decision to unilaterally reduce course contact from 4 hours per week to 3:

We find it inconceivable that colleges would introduce such significant changes affecting faculty and academic programs without substantial consultation with faculty. This type of blatant disregard for the legitimate professional concerns of

faculty could hardly fail to evoke cynicism among faculty regarding the colleges' genuine commitment to quality education and equitable treatment of faculty. The attitude toward faculty that is reflected

in such an action needs to be replaced by one of commitment to collegial decision-making.¹⁸⁰

That Skolnik's comments are directly applicable to the current blended learning mandate at Mohawk College shows just how little has changed in the CAATs over the past 30 years.



The Need for Academic Freedom

“In Ontario community colleges, faculty currently have no guaranteed academic freedom. This means that management can completely control what is taught, how it is taught, and how it is evaluated.”

The Need for Academic Freedom

The single issue linking many of the threats to education of concern to by faculty is academic freedom. This is a concept that has not often been associated with community colleges, but which is being increasingly acknowledged as critical to the maintenance of academic standards, and as important to fostering an environment of excellence and innovation. The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) describes these important aspects of post-secondary education:

Academic freedom includes the right, without restriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom to teach and discuss; freedom to carry out research and disseminate and publish the results thereof; freedom to produce and perform creative works; freedom to engage in service to the institution and the community; freedom to express one's opinion about the institution, its administration, and the system in which one works; freedom to acquire, preserve, and provide access to documentary material in all formats; and freedom to participate in professional and representative academic bodies. Academic freedom always entails freedom from institutional censorship.¹⁸¹

Although academic freedom is most commonly associated with freedom of research, publication, and speech, it also embodies the work that educators perform in the classroom. In his article on academic freedom and research in Ontario colleges, Thomas Fleming (2006) states that “academic freedom is a far more broad ranging issue than simply acting as a catalyst to research. It extends through the depth and breadth of the professional life of academics and affects classroom teaching, selection of course materials, and teaching style.”¹⁸² Similarly, CAUT also notes “that

academic staff must play the predominant role in determining curriculum, assessing standards, and other academic matters.”¹⁸³

In Ontario community colleges, faculty currently have no guaranteed academic freedom. This means that management can completely control what is taught, how it is taught, and how it is evaluated. It does not matter if the professor teaching a course has a Ph.D. and 20 years of experience in her field, while her manager has absolutely no relevant expertise; the manager can dictate academic terms to the faculty member. Such a situation sounds absurd to many who first hear it, and yet the lack of academic freedom has been a constant fact, and constant source of conflict, from the very beginning of the CAATs. While at times and in certain institutions there have been cultures of collegiality in which managers left academic decisions largely to faculty, these instances have always proven to be fleeting, and susceptible to changes in management, changes in government mandates, and funding pressures. Today, with a climate of intense fiscal austerity, and a corporate approach to administration, the lack of college faculty academic freedom is being felt more acutely than ever.

Lack of Faculty Control over Academic Decisions

Academic freedom concerns how students are evaluated, and in several colleges professors have indicated that managers are changing faculty grades. The most common scenarios see grades being artificially inflated in order to boost retention, or students being allowed to complete extra assignments, re-write missed or failed tests, or submit missed or failed assignments. Normally faculty members assess these cases on a student by student basis, and with an eye to academic

integrity and fairness. Based on these criteria, it is sometimes advisable and academically defensible to provide extra consideration for student evaluation; however, at other times it is completely legitimate for students to fail a course they have taken. These are important academic decisions, and faculty system-wide report that they are increasingly being made by managers for non-academic, financial reasons.

Managers are also increasingly determining the kinds of college courses that are developed, and course content. Textbooks are being imposed on faculty, and managers are also increasingly making deals with publishers to provide pre-developed “courses in a can” for faculty to teach. As mentioned in the discussion about workload, managers are also manipulating evaluations, and proscribing the type of evaluation that professors can use based on budgetary constraints, not on educational outcomes. Increasingly, faculty are being left off of online curriculum development committees, and have no voice in determining how learning technologies will be used in their courses. In essence, the entire issue with online and hybrid learning in the college system is about academic freedom – about faculty’s ability to determine how best to teach their area of expertise, and to ensure student success.

Inability to Criticize Poor Management Decisions

An important aspect of academic freedom concerns the ability of faculty in post-secondary institutions to speak freely concerning the institutions in which they teach. This is especially important in a climate of fiscal austerity, in which cut-backs are occurring and decisions being made that degrade the quality of education. In such cases it is critical for faculty to be able to speak up and to criticize management decisions based on scholarly and professional concerns. The unfortunate reality in the CAATs today is that many faculty who have been critical of management decisions have had their employment terminated. Other ways in which

faculty are punished for questioning poor management decisions is by receiving overwhelming workloads, being assigned to multiple campuses in a given semester, and being prevented from teaching certain courses. Throughout the college system it is well known by faculty that defying management wishes or criticizing decisions places one at considerable risk of retaliation. In such an environment, there is no critical assessment of college policy, and faculty are afraid to speak up if they feel a management directive is negatively affecting quality of education or student safety.

No Intellectual Property Protection

Another key aspect of academic freedom is the right of professors to ownership of the intellectual property they create. To academics, the course content, research and publications they produce are a large part of the considerable value they provide to post-secondary education. It is widely noted that to encourage innovation, producers of knowledge must have some ownership over the fruits of their labour. If they have none, then there is a profound disincentive for intellectual workers to innovate, create, and develop new knowledge. In the CAATs today, all intellectual property developed by faculty is seen as the legal property of the college that employs them. This knowledge can then be sold to whomever the college wants, can be given to other faculty, and can be used to replace the faculty who created them and eliminate their jobs. The lack of faculty intellectual property protection places a chill on innovation in the college system, and creates a disincentive for faculty to bring their best knowledge, skill and experience to the courses that they teach.

Inability to Advocate for Student Learning and Student Success

Without academic freedom, faculty are unable to effectively advocate for the interests of students. Faculty face management retaliation when speak-

ing up for students who clearly do not want online learning, or who are otherwise being underserved by the college due to large class sizes, enforced changes to curriculum, requirements to purchase expensive learning technologies, cancellation of popular, but less profitable programs, modification of student timetables and schedules, classroom

and building health and safety, and increasing tuition fees. The lack of academic freedom is particularly challenging when considering how online learning affects learning disabled students, ESL students, low income students, and students who have a highly tactile and social learning style.



Threats to Quality in Focus

“One indication that supports faculty perceptions of decreasing quality is the fact that student satisfaction, graduate satisfaction, and student perceptions of the quality of education they are receiving have all declined from levels seen in 2005/06 through 2007/08.”

Threats to Quality in Focus

The overarching concern that unites the various challenges expressed by faculty in this report is diminishing quality of education. The fear that insufficient public funding, industrial-style management, and less effective online instruction are reducing the value of a college degree is pervasive among faculty. These fears are not new. Michael Skolnik noted in 1985 that “the weight of evidence about the ‘quality problem’ is awesome, if still circumstantial.” In his report, half of the associate deans and chairs that he interviewed felt “that quality had deteriorated significantly”, and “that students were not getting the education for which they were paying.”¹⁸⁴ Skolnik also mentioned in his report that, apart from faculty perceptions, quality is difficult to empirically measure. Additional indicators could include course completion rates, graduation rates, ratings of student satisfaction, post-graduation job placement rates, and feedback from the employers of recent college graduates.

Since 1999, several variables dealing with quality have been measured each year in a survey of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) that is compiled for each college. The KPIs are based on a survey given to students enrolled at each college, to recent graduates, and to the employers of recent graduates. These surveys measure student satisfaction with their educational experience and college services, and employer satisfaction with recent graduates. In addition, KPIs contain information on graduation rates and employment rates six months after graduation. KPIs are also linked to funding for the colleges, and as such there are powerful incentives for administrators to achieve high scores. The KPI surveys are administered by CCI Research, a private, Ontario-based company, and have been compiled yearly since 1999. The following table shows system-wide KPI scores from 1998/99 to 2011/12.

College Key Performance Indicators - 1998/99 to 2011/12

YEAR	GRADUATION RATE	EMPLOYMENT RATE	EMPLOYER SATISFACTION*	STUDENT SATISFACTION*	QUALITY OF EDUCATION*	GRADUATE SATISFACTION*
1998/99	55%	90%	91%	68%	75%	80%
1999/00	57.7%	91%	90.9%	74.9%	79.1%	82.6%
2000/01	57.5%	88.7%	91.7%	74.4%	78.6%	81.4%
2001/02	56.8%	87.4%	92%	75.1%	79%	79.8%
2002/03	57.4%	87.7%	92%	75.1%	78.9%	79.7%
2003/04	58.5%	88%	92.7%	76.3%	80.1%	80.5%
2004/05	60.1%	89.3%	92.1%	70.8%	81.2%	81.6%
2005/06	63.3%	90.1%	92.6%	77.4%	81.1%	82%
2006/07	64.9%	90.5%	93.1%	77.9%	81.8%	82.8%
2007/08	64.6%	88.9%	93.3%	78.4%	82.4%	82.7%
2008/09	65%	84.8%	93%	76.3%	80.2%	79.8%
2009/10	64.2%	83%	93.2%	76.1%	80.2%	79.1%
2010/11	65%	83%	92.8%	76.8%	80.8%	78.9%
2011/12	64.8%	83.6%	93.4%	77.1%	80.5%	80%

* = percentage of respondents indicating they were either Very Satisfied or Satisfied

When examining the 14 years of available KPI data, it is clear that impressive system-wide gains have been made in some key quality indicators since the first survey was administered in 1998/99. The graduation rate has increased by 10%, and employer satisfaction, although only increasing slightly, remains above 90%. Gains are also apparent in student satisfaction, and in students' perception of the quality of their educational experience. Only graduate satisfaction appears to be at similar levels today, while the graduate employment rate has significantly declined. From these results, professors have clearly been maintaining, and in most cases increasing, the quality of college education over the last 14 years; however, there are some causes for concern.

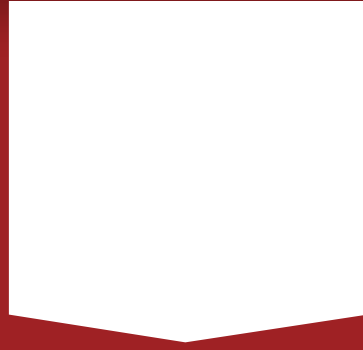
One indication that supports faculty perceptions of decreasing quality is the fact that student satisfaction, graduate satisfaction, and student perceptions of the quality of education they are receiving have all declined from levels seen in 2005/06 through 2007/08. These declines are admittedly slight, but become more concerning given the fact that in recent years a number of colleges have been "priming" students to take the KPI survey by holding student appreciation events before the surveys are administered in mid-February, and by giving promotional presentations or showing promotional videos immediately before the questionnaire is filled out. As competition between the colleges for students has intensified, managers have begun seeing the marketing potential of good KPI scores, and the potential liability of poor scores. Given these institutional strategies to boost scores, one would think that student perceptions would continue their positive growth in the past four years, not decline.

An additional question can be asked of the impressive 10% increase in graduation rates that

has occurred across the colleges. This is an undeniably welcome achievement, but given faculty concerns about administrators inflating grades, reducing the difficulty of evaluations, and increasing pressure for "retention at all costs", it is reasonable to ask how much of this change is actually due to improved quality of education? A final confounding factor in the KPI data is likely the period of economic recession that began in 2009, and that is still being felt today. A difficult job market is obviously reflected in lower graduate employment rates, and could also be a factor in lower satisfaction rates. A stagnant economy can result in increased financial pressure on students, increased stress, and decreased satisfaction. Given this possibility, it seems even less advisable for the province to deepen cuts to post-secondary funding, and to push forms of course delivery that can lead to lowered educational outcomes.

The one caveat that argues against a decrease in quality is the strong level of employer satisfaction, which reached its highest percentage in 2011/12. This trend indicates that, as many faculty have expressed in this research, quality education might be under threat, but it is by no means absent from the system. College faculty are still doing their job in preparing students for the work world, for professional responsibilities, and for future academic study. However, what they are overwhelmingly suggesting is that the maintenance of quality has been increasingly coming at the expense of faculty time, energy, morale, and even health.

Faculty are indicating that cracks in the facade of quality are now appearing, and that as government funding decreases, student enrollments grow, part-time faculty numbers expand, workloads increase, and online courses proliferate, today's cracks could become tomorrow's chasms.



**Public Perception
of College
Faculty
and College
Education**

Public Perception of College Faculty and College Education

For this research, two public opinion polls were commissioned from Vector Marketing. The first poll was conducted in September, 2013, and assessed the perceptions of Ontario citizens concerning a wide array of public policy issues. This poll involved an online survey of 1,180 adults, and the results are reliable at a 95% confidence rate, within 2.9 percentage points. The second poll was conducted in February of 2014, and assessed perceptions of Ontario citizens concerning college education specifically. This poll involved an online survey of 1,000 adults, and is reliable at a 95% confidence rate, within 2.9 percentage points (See Appendix 1).

Both polls show strong public trust for college faculty in providing quality education, as well as support for faculty academic freedom and faculty control over online learning. These results are supportive of faculty perceptions that if quality education is to be maintained in Ontario colleges, then professors, counselors and librarians need the ability to uphold academic standards and ensure student success.

College Professors are most trusted to ensure quality

When asked who they trust the most to ensure that students at Ontario colleges get a high quality education, Ontarians chose college professors over administration or government.

62% - College professors

23% - College administrators

15% - Ontario government

Of particular note, among Ontarians aged 18 to 24, 76% chose college professors as most trusted to ensure quality of education.

When asked who they trust to decide when a course or program should be offered online, or in a traditional classroom, Ontarians again trust college professors over administration or government.

57% - college professors

29% - college administrators

14% - Ontario government

College education is more than just job training

89% of Ontarians think that college education should focus on helping students learn the skills they need to get and keep good jobs, and also on learning critical thinking skills such as creative thinking, decision-making and problem-solving over a wide range of issues. Only 11% think that college education should be solely focused on getting and keeping good jobs.

College professors should have the right to criticize management

83% of Ontarians think that college professors, in defense of academic standards, should have the right to criticize college administration without fear of being punished or fired.

91% of Ontarians aged 18 to 24 think professors should have this right.

Ontarians support academic freedom for college professors

81% of Ontarians think that it is very important or important for college professors to determine what they teach in their classroom, what teaching methods they use, how students are graded, what textbooks and assignments are used, and other course requirements. Among Ontarians aged 18 to 24, 92% affirm the importance of faculty academic freedom.

Ontarians are skeptical about online learning.

Only 11% consider online courses to be of better quality than traditional, face-to face courses, 51%

consider them to be relatively equivalent to traditional courses, while 38% consider them of worse quality.

Ontarians prefer full-time college faculty.

74% of Ontarians think that having a full-time professor is either very important or important for quality of education. Among Ontarians aged 18 to 24, the number preferring full-time professors is 83%.



Education as a Public Good: Toward an Equal Partnership

“Education has long been considered the surest path by which the socially and economically marginal are able to change their status, and the original college mandate was informed by this sense of social justice.”

Education as a Public Good: Toward an Equal Partnership

As mentioned at the outset of this report, the history of the college system has been one of constant change – with different governments, fluctuating economic conditions, and shifting mandates all combining to shape the system’s development. As the professionals who actually deliver college education, faculty bring a unique perspective on this history, and an equally important perspective on the system’s future. The Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs) have, overall, weathered their many challenges intact, and have succeeded in fulfilling their educational mandate. However, from the perspective of many college faculty, the system today faces unprecedented challenges to its viability, and to the quality of education it can provide. This report has attempted to convey these faculty perceptions, and to critically examine the current path of development being pursued by college administrators and the provincial government.

To the great majority of faculty consulted for this report, the original mandate of the CAATs remains as important today as it was in 1965. In Bill 153, William Davis spoke of needing to dramatically expand access to post-secondary education in Ontario. A fast growing economy required skilled workers in a number of sectors, and there was a place for educational institutions that could be responsive to the economic and social needs of Ontario’s various regions. The colleges were seen as instrumental in supporting economic growth and community development, and in helping new generations to find careers and achieve success. In expanding access to higher education, the colleges would also reach out to learners that traditionally did not attend university. This included students from poor and working class families, from

ethnic minorities, and from native communities. To meet the needs of this diverse student group the colleges committed to a course of “total education” that would “meet the combined cultural aspirations and occupational needs of the student.”¹⁸⁶ The colleges were never intended to be simply job training centres or “diploma mills”¹⁸⁷, rather they were driven by a progressive vision. Education has long been considered the surest path by which the socially and economically marginal are able to change their status, and the original college mandate was informed by this sense of social justice.

Of course, much has changed since 1965, and one might wonder how the original vision of the CAATs compares to their current mandate, and current practice? When looking at the breadth of programs offered at the 24 CAATs, it is clear that they still provide excellent occupational training across an impressive range of economic sectors. Colleges are still places where students come to gain the skills and credentials needed to get a job, and faculty provide this essential training. However, in today’s colleges education encompasses far more than basic employment skills. Increasingly, college programs prepare students to continue their studies in collaborative degree programs, or in other degree programs at universities. In addition, colleges are serving increasing numbers of students who have already completed university bachelor’s degrees, and are seeking additional training through post-graduate certificate programs. Colleges are also preparing students to fulfill highly skilled professional and occupational roles within our society – such as nurse, engineering technologist, I.T. specialist, and airplane mechanic. To this end, college professors are responsible for ensuring the continued quality and

professional standards of these key occupations, and of ensuring that their graduates are skilled and competent. Another aspect of the modern CAATs is to prepare students for work in a technological society, in which computer literacy is essential.

The many training, occupational, and academic aspects of contemporary college education are important enough, and yet they only begin to describe the full range of its impact. Equally important is the role of colleges in developing fully-rounded and well-socialized individuals who have strong verbal and written communication skills, who have self-discipline and organizational abilities, and who are able to interact productively and professionally with a wide range of people, in a wide range of circumstances. These competencies are sometimes called “soft skills”, which is an unfortunate misnomer. Many employers note that these interpersonal abilities are in fact the most important criteria for academic and occupational success.

We can go further still when considering what today’s college education must provide. It is not enough to produce graduates who have mastered employment skills and social competencies. Faculty also help create self-aware, reflective and mature individuals who can analyze their own lives and the world around them, and can solve the many problems they will encounter. This means feeding students’ natural curiosity and honing their abilities to be life-long learners. This also means teaching students to think critically, creatively, and innovatively. Beyond workplace competency, college education needs to produce graduates who have the ability to participate fully in a healthy democracy, and who will also be able to confront the many challenges that are facing contemporary Canadian society. We live in a world menaced by runaway climate change, growing inequality, persistent conflict and instability, and mounting ecological crisis. Such a world does not need a generation of skilled automatons or obedient workers. What it requires are engaged, critical thinkers who are able to challenge dysfunctional norms and

question illegitimate authority. It requires citizens, and this is perhaps the highest good produced by college education.

What college faculty have repeatedly affirmed in the course of this research is that education is above all else a public good. Along with healthcare and social services, it is the most important public good that our society provides. It is the basis of our social and economic future, and given its importance, it is unacceptable for our politicians and corporate leaders to actively plan – through underfunding and privatization - for its eventual decline. In order to preserve and enhance this public good, we must have an equal partnership between all of the stakeholders involved in college education – federal and provincial governments, students, faculty, and administration. Each stakeholder has a critical role to play, and significant changes must be made to the college system to ensure that all are able to contribute.

The Role of Government and Students

The role and responsibility of government in renewing post-secondary education should be more to ensure that the system is adequately resourced, than to intervene directly in its operations and mandate. As mentioned by OCUFA, the flexibility of individual institutions to develop specialized programs and meet the needs of their diverse communities is actually threatened by the MTCU’s differentiation plan. Institutional flexibility must be maintained, and the innovation and specialization it fosters must be driven by faculty and by students. In this way colleges and universities will remain responsive, creative, and adaptable far beyond what is possible under a government imposed, “one size fits all” mandate. Where government does play an important role is ensuring that adequate data are collected on system metrics and educational outcomes. Comprehensive data on revenues and expenditures, staffing, and

graduation and employment rates are critical if we are to assess the performance of Ontario's community colleges.

Serious increases need to occur in the level of government funding for the colleges. This report demonstrates that a continued retreat of governments from supporting the colleges is neither necessary nor acceptable – it represents a specific and deliberate political program, not an inevitable “process of nature.” Over 30 years of tax cuts on wealthy Canadians and corporations have led to government's current fiscal crisis, and these changes can and should be reversed. The billions of dollars in yearly government revenue that would result could easily sustain post-secondary funding at levels that improve quality, reduce student tuitions, and reduce the need for privatization. Like any other open system, the college system need inputs of energy (resources) in order for it to maintain its integrity and to thrive. If resource inputs continue to drop, then pressure caused by increasing enrolment becomes overwhelming, and the system collapses. In the face of this threat, the strategy of differentiation and privatization is wholly inadequate. Envisioning a massively privatized and corporatized college system – the virtual Disney future envisioned by Contact North – is to fully abandon its original mandate, and to remove the critical process of education from public oversight.

Changes to college funding are also desperately needed for students, who have seen rapidly increasing tuition and who are struggling under record levels of student loan debt. In the spirit of the college system's original mandate, it is time that post-secondary education again became financially accessible. The Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) has key policy recommendations that should be implemented by the federal and provincial governments. College tuition fees should be reduced and then frozen, perhaps allowing for increases indexed to inflation, but no greater.¹⁸⁸ Student debt forgiveness must be considerably expanded, with the goal of cutting overall outstanding student debt in half.¹⁸⁹ To increase

accessibility, a comprehensive needs-based grant program must be available for students.¹⁹⁰ Finally, government must significantly increase funding of paid co-op placements, internships, and post-graduate employment programs. It is no longer acceptable for society to throw greater and greater financial barriers into the path of our youth, and to expect them to graduate with crushing debt-loads and few prospects for employment. Our youth deserve the best we can give them, and currently we are offering them far, far less.

With government and student roles in mind, this report's first recommendation is for the provincial government to convene an all-party select committee to examine the present and future sustainability of the post-secondary system in Ontario, and to work closely with college faculty, university faculty, and students to address the above changes proposed to taxation, funding, tuition, and student debt. We must clearly state, along with the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and the Canadian Federation of Students – Ontario, that Minister Duguid's discussion paper on post-secondary differentiation deserves a failing grade, and needs to be re-drafted. The paper is unacceptable as an accurate representation of the challenges that post-secondary faces, and it is equally inadequate as a representation of key stakeholder interests. If the provincial Liberals claim to hold power in a democratic government, they must initiate a process of post-secondary renewal that is inclusive, publicly funded, evidence-based, and committed to both free academic inquiry and to student success.

The Role of Faculty

College faculty are the front-line professionals who enact the colleges' mandate. We educate students, develop course material and content, conduct research, and drive innovation. For faculty, our responsibility within the broader renewal of

post-secondary is to excel at our work as educators and innovators. Our great need, as evidenced in this report, is the ability to fully do so.

In order for faculty to excel in their role as educators, they need to have an equal voice, along with administrators and government, in managing change within the colleges. This will require several modifications to the status quo. First, there needs to be sufficient numbers of faculty to educate a constantly increasing student body. The cost-cutting strategy of eliminating full-time positions and hiring part-time faculty must end, and minimum ratios of full-time to part-time must be established for each institution. The precarious nature of partial load and part-time faculty work must also be realized for the injustice that it is. Their current predicament is unfair to the faculty members, harmful to morale, and corrosive to quality education. Partial load faculty must be given seniority in applying for new full-time jobs, and their limited seniority in claiming workloads each semester must be strengthened. Second, faculty need enough time to do their work well, and to replenish their store of knowledge and expertise through professional development. This will require re-visiting the workload formula, and accounting for the extra time required in mentoring part-time faculty, email communication, LMS management, and online course development, preparation, and delivery.

Most importantly, faculty need to have a much greater say in academic decisions. This means academic freedom, and includes the ability of faculty to determine course content, materials, readings, evaluations, and delivery methods. It also means that faculty need to determine when it is appropriate to use online or blended learning formats, and how these technologies can be most effectively employed. Greater participation in academic decisions necessitates that faculty be meaningfully included in any proposed changes to courses or academic programs. It also means that faculty should have the right to speak openly and honestly about their work and about the institution in which they work. This right needs to hold even

if communication is critical, or if it questions the academic implications of management decisions. If complaints are not heard and responded to internally, then faculty need the freedom to make their criticisms public, and to encourage a broader debate.

Improved Institutional Decision-Making

Advocating for faculty academic freedom is not to deny that administrators have an important and legitimate role within the colleges. Managers deal with the fiscal and business-related realities of running a large and complex institution, and not every decision about resources can, or should be made solely on academic grounds. Most professors would undoubtedly prefer to have their classes capped at 10 students, have regular high-profile guest speakers, and take class trips to places of interest around the globe. These things would improve the educational experience of students, yet would just as surely place unsustainable cost burdens on the college system. Faculty understand that educational decisions will always include a negotiation between academic and fiscal priorities; however, in order for this negotiation to occur, there must be two parties of equal or relatively equal decision-making power.

In the colleges today there is no such relationship, and no such negotiation. This is an increasingly dangerous state of affairs as pressures of government underfunding and corporate privatization continue to mount. Where are the voices to suggest that system costs could as well be controlled by capping the salaries of college administrators, or thinning their ranks to be more in line with administration at the secondary level? Who will suggest that educational outcomes can be more effectively improved by hiring more faculty as opposed to investing millions in tablets, clickers, lecture capture and other technologies? These may or may not be the most effective strategies for keeping educational costs low, but surely they deserve consideration.

Academic freedom might even lead to better relations with management, a change which would be of great benefit to the colleges. Arguing for greater faculty decision-making power in no way suggests that all college administrators are soulless corporate automatons who care nothing about education. In every college visited faculty noted that there were administrators, admittedly mostly at the associate dean or department chair level, who were committed to education, supportive of faculty and students, and often critical of directives from upper management.

This is even true of Mohawk College's aggressive online learning strategy. Many lower-level managers were highly skeptical of an across-the-board, quota-driven approach, but when orders came down from the senior executive, they had no choice but to fall in line. With no union to support them, these managers have even less ability to be critical of executive decisions than do faculty. In this sense, faculty academic freedom and truly collegial relations would enable the concerns of chairs and associate deans to be openly expressed, if only through the proxy of faculty voices. As well, if faculty actually felt like valued members of the college community, and like full partners in its mission and mandate, the combative labour relationships that plague many departments and institutions would be greatly ameliorated.

Strong faculty voices are also critical when considering the close relationship between industry and the colleges. The relationship between colleges and the industries in which students will find employment is part of what makes the system unique and effective. It can also help programs of study adapt quickly to changing job markets. However, industry-college relationships also need to be subject to academic scrutiny, and the interests of students need to be balanced with the interests of individual corporations. Apple may come knocking on a college's door offering a special deal on tablets for all faculty and students, but are the devices really needed? Microsoft may propose a great deal to provide their software free for instruc-

tors to teach, but is their suite the most effective, or the only software that students need to learn to be competitive in their field? In dealing with industry, faculty must balance the undeniable benefits of partnership with the need for student skill-sets to be flexible, and to include a wide range of industry-relevant knowledge.

Courses and entire programs cannot become captive to a corporate mandate based solely on the size of cheque that business brings. Samsung may want to convince a college that getting rid of classrooms and having students pursue "mobile learning" on their cell-phones is the way to go. This would clearly be in their corporate interest, but is it in the interest of students and their future employers? Again, a balance of perspectives and interests is imperative, and faculty need to be able to ensure that student interests are protected, and industry and academic standards are upheld.

Faculty participation in academic decision-making is also critical to protect the public interest. Colleges train students for jobs that are the very bedrock of our economies, our communities, and our entire society. College graduates will build our sky-scrapers, manage the critical infrastructure of our cities, maintain our cars, busses, trains, and airplanes, and deliver life and death health services. It is due to the importance of these jobs that maintaining academic and industry standards are in turn so important.

Currently, faculty perceive that cost-cutting pressures are leading to a reduction in quality and standards, in some cases leading them to fear for public safety. Would the people of Ontario be comfortable knowing that the workers they depend on for critical services have been trained according to budget constraints as opposed to rigorous academic and professional standards? Without faculty academic freedom such scenarios would surely increase.

A Culture of Innovation

A final argument for faculty academic freedom is that if the critical task colleges are engaged in today includes preparing students to be innovative and critical thinkers, able to see new opportunities, challenge dysfunctional norms, and question illegitimate uses of authority, then don't faculty need these same rights? Can there be an open, critical and innovative educational environment when faculty are marginalized, bullied, and terminated for standing up for academic standards and criticizing upper management? To suggest that a workplace culture of fear and quiescence can in turn create an educational environment of free and open inquiry is absurd. It hasn't in the past, it doesn't today, and it won't in the future.

As colleges intensify their foray into applied research, faculty intellectual property protection will become increasingly important. Denying this protection to faculty puts a chill on innovation in the classroom, and in the laboratory. This in turn hurts students, and also the wider society that can't benefit from the higher degree of intellectual productivity that an equitable and collegial environment would provide. As colleges continue to build partnerships with universities, and as more professors with Ph.D.'s and experience in highly expert and technical fields are hired, issues of faculty academic freedom will not go away - they will only intensify.

Concerning the faculty role, this report's second recommendation is that articles guaranteeing academic freedom and intellectual property protection be included in the faculty collective agreement. Additional changes must also be made concerning the two other issues that most directly impact quality of education in the colleges today – excessive workload, and the decline in full-time faculty. Desired outcomes in these two areas should be agreed on, and these in turn should guide the process of collective bargaining moving forward.

The inclusion of academic freedom in the college faculty collective agreement is a critical step

forward, but it is not sufficient to deal with the larger issues of governance within the colleges, and the lack of faculty voice in determining system priorities. To address these broader questions, a third recommendation is for the province appoint a Task Force on College Co-Governance, including representatives from the college faculty union, the College Employer's Council, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, and university administration. This task force would examine a process to establish institutional co-governance in the colleges. The co-governance model would be based on the one already present in Ontario universities, where an academic senate, comprised of faculty, makes academic decisions, and works alongside a board of governors.

The benefits of a renewed community college system, with sufficient government funding, accessible tuitions, adequate full-time faculty, and faculty academic freedom, would be considerable. In the first place, it can be expected to improve educational outcomes, as a re-energized faculty ensure higher quality learning, better academic results, and more effective skills development. A second benefit would come from improved student success, including higher graduation rates, higher employment rates, greater access, and improved critical and creative thinking skills. Greater innovation would be a third outcome of college renewal, as academic freedom and intellectual property protection encourage professors to bring the full extent of their independent knowledge, research, and experience into the classroom. Improved faculty morale would lead to an invigorated learning environment. Finally, improved innovation would also manifest in an expanded research capacity and greater research productivity.

Some may argue that introducing co-governance in the colleges would be a major, and potentially disruptive change to their operations; however, such fears are unfounded. In the first place, the opinion polls commissioned for this research show that the public is already behind faculty academic freedom. Questionnaire responses affirm that fac-

ulty are trusted over administrators or the Ontario government to ensure the quality of college education. They also affirm that faculty are the most trusted to determine when online learning should be used. The great majority of respondents believe that faculty should have academic freedom, and should also have the right to publicly criticize management decisions. Clearly, the polls show that the people of Ontario support empowering the faculty voice in community colleges.

A final rebuttal to the notion that shared governance in the college system entails disruptive or impractical change, is that it actually represents change that is 40 years overdue. From their inception the colleges have experienced tensions – deep and recurring – between an industrial management model on one hand, and the goals of higher education on the other. The original assumption that because colleges would teach more occupationally-focused courses, their faculty did not need academic freedom, was erroneous. Such a narrow view of college education and academic freedom did not reflect reality in the 1960s, nor does it reflect reality today.

Since the first CAAT opened its doors in 1966, college faculty have needed the ability to ensure the quality of their courses and programs, and to protect the public interest by maintaining academic and professional standards. These goals are the bedrock of academic freedom in the community colleges, and the changes proposed in this report are simply intended to safeguard these goals, and to redress the system's greatest founding flaw. Faculty, students, and the Ontario public see the critical need for this change. It simply remains for the College Employer Council and the provincial government to realize it too.

Recommendations

The following are specific recommendations that can redress the founding imbalance within the Ontario college system, and ensure that faculty's

professional commitment to quality education and student success is factored into decision-making at all levels.

1. All-party Select Committee on Ontario Post-secondary Education

The first recommendation is for the provincial government to convene an all-party select committee to examine the present and future sustainability of the post-secondary system in Ontario, and to work closely with college faculty, university faculty, and students to address issues of funding, tuition, and student debt. The committee needs to consider the following proposed changes:

Commitment to Adequate Funding

- At the federal level, implement a *Post-Secondary Education Act*, as endorsed by the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), Canadian Federation of Students – Ontario (CFS-O), and the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA). This *Act* would be modeled after the *Canada Health Transfer*, and would bring federal funding for post-secondary education back to 1992 levels, or 0.4% of GDP.
- At the provincial level, bring government funding per full-time post-secondary student up to the national average.

Commitment to Affordable Education

- As endorsed by the CFS and CFS-O, reduce college tuition fees to 1992 levels.
- As endorsed by the CFS and CFS-O, cap college administrator salaries.
- As endorsed by the CFS and CFS-O, enact a program of federal student loan debt reduction intended to cut the amount of Canadian student debt in half.

- Reintroduce a comprehensive, need-based tuition grant program.

Commitment to Community-Centered Public Education

- End public-private campuses, and ensure that all new CAAT campuses in Ontario are fully publicly funded and staffed with CAAT-A faculty covered under the collective agreement.
- Give equal standing to faculty, along with colleges and the MTCU, in decisions affecting the development of the community college system. Immediately establish the Joint Task Force to deal with the issue of differentiation, and to discuss the recommendations in this report.
- Ensure that program and course offering diversity is maintained at the local level, and that individual colleges are able to determine how best to meet the educational needs of their community.
- Ensure continued funding and support for the unique needs of Northern and Francophone colleges. Evaluate the specific impact on these colleges from any mandate change proposed by the MTCU.
- Affirm federal and provincial funding sufficient to maintain appropriate statistics on the college system, including financing, operations, staffing, enrolment, student tuitions and student debt, and educational outcomes.

2. Academic Freedom, Staffing, and Workload in Faculty Collective Agreement

The second recommendation is that articles on academic freedom and intellectual property protection be included in the college faculty collective

agreement. In addition, provisions to ensure adequate numbers of full-time faculty, and sustainable workloads must also be included.

Commitment to Faculty Academic Freedom

- Include academic freedom in the college faculty collective agreement, specifying faculty control over academic decisions related to course design, content, delivery, and evaluation.
- Include intellectual property protection in the faculty collective agreement.
- Affirm faculty control over how, where, and when online course delivery is utilized.

Commitment to Full-time Staffing

- Plan to increase numbers of full-time faculty and maintain a minimum ratio within each college of full-time to part-time.
- Introduce into the collective agreement seniority for partial load faculty in terms of work assignments and hiring preference for full-time jobs.
- Introduce conversion language into the faculty collective agreement for part-time faculty.
- Ensure that all non-full-time faculty are allowed to organize into a union without interference and opposition from management or the provincial government.

Commitment to Sustainable Workload

- Modify the faculty collective agreement to account for the additional workload implications of email communications, learning management system maintenance, developing, preparing and delivering online or “blended” courses, and mentoring part-time faculty.

3. Task Force on College Co-Governance

The third recommendation is that the province appoint a Task Force on College Co-Governance, including representatives from the college faculty union, the College Employer's Council, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, and university administration. This task force would examine a process to establish institutional co-governance in the colleges.

- Examine the possibility of bicameral governance structure in the CAATs province-wide. Each institution will have an Academic Senate as well as a Board of Governors, with the Senate responsible for academic decision-making.



Appendices

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Public Opinion Polls

September 2013 Poll

Q. 1 - On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 indicates that you are “very concerned” and 1 indicates that you are “not at all concerned”, please indicate your view about the overall quality of education that students receive in the community colleges in Ontario.



Q. 2 – Please indicate how much you support or oppose each of the following changes proposed for the Ontario community college system. Is that strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose?

Requiring the colleges to provide most of their courses online over the Internet instead of having students attend regular classes.



Respondents 18-24



Q. 3 – If you had to choose, which one of the following do you trust most to ensure students in Ontario’s community colleges get a high quality education? The college administrators, the college professors, or the Ontario government?



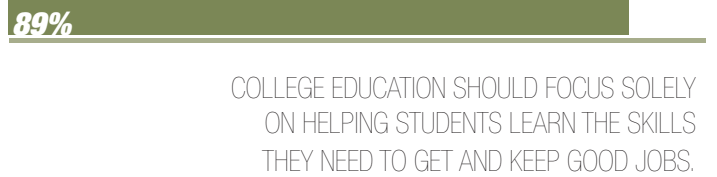
Respondents 18 -24



February 2014 Poll

Q. 1 – Which of the following statements about college education comes closest to your personal opinion, even if neither is exactly correct?

COLLEGE EDUCATION SHOULD FOCUS ON HELPING STUDENTS LEARN THE SKILLS THEY NEED TO GET AND KEEP GOOD JOBS, AND ALSO TO LEARN CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS SUCH AS CREATIVE THINKING, DECISION-MAKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING ABOUT A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES.



Q. 2 – Is the quality of online college education better or worse than traditional courses?



Q. 3 – As you may know, Ontario colleges employ full-time professors and part-time professors. Full-time professors have a permanent job, job security, and benefits.

Part-time professors generally are temporary, not permanent employees, are paid less than full-time professors, and might teach at more than one college.

In terms of giving students a quality education, please indicate how important you think it is that college students are taught by full-time professors instead of part-time professors.



Respondents aged 18-24 (N=118)



Q. 4 – If it comes down to a choice from these three options, in which one do you have the most trust and confidence to decide whether a college offers a course or program online over the Internet, or in a traditional classroom at the campus?



Q. 5 – Sometimes professors feel that decisions made by their college's management harm the quality of education. Do you think professors should have the right to publicly criticize the college administration without fear of being punished or fired, or should they not have the right to voice their criticism publicly?

PROFESSORS SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO PUBLICLY CRITICIZE THE COLLEGE'S ADMINISTRATORS.



PROFESSORS SHOULD NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO PUBLICLY CRITICIZE THE COLLEGE'S ADMINISTRATORS.

Respondents aged 18-24 (N=118)

PROFESSORS SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO PUBLICLY CRITICIZE THE COLLEGE'S ADMINISTRATORS.



PROFESSORS SHOULD NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO PUBLICLY CRITICIZE THE COLLEGE'S ADMINISTRATORS.

Q. 6 – Academic freedom refers to the ability of community college professors to determine what they teach in their classroom, what teaching methods they use, how students are graded, what textbooks and assignments are used, and other course requirements.

Academic freedom can be limited by college presidents and administrators, and by the government, through laws and education policies.

In your opinion, how important do you think it is for Ontario college professors to have academic freedom?



Respondents aged 18-24 (N=118)



Appendix 2 – Local 240 Student Blended Learning Survey

Student Feedback Questionnaire

The College is beginning to move toward a new teaching model whereby half of all material in some courses will be delivered online. This is one form of what is called Blended Learning, and it will be implemented in this way for all General Education electives beginning this fall. For example, a two-hour per week Gen Ed course will be one hour in class, and one hour online.

Within this Blended Learning model, you will be responsible for accessing and learning new material that the professor has posted on e-learn. This material may not be presented in class. In the classroom component of the course, other new material will be presented.

Please respond to all of the following statements by filling in the appropriate bubbles on the scan-sheet using the following answer key:

A – Strongly Agree B – Agree C – Unsure / Undecided D – Disagree E – Strongly Disagree

Statements:

1. I would be more likely to learn this material successfully, if half of it were delivered only online.
2. A reduction in face-to-face instruction time (replaced by online time) would enhance my learning about complex problems, concepts or issues.
3. I would have no problem regularly and reliably accessing a computer to do required online work.
4. I would have no problem regularly and reliably accessing a sufficient internet connection to do online work.
5. The College provides enough public access computers to enable students to do online work.
6. I would be more motivated to complete course work if it were presented online rather than in a face-to-face classroom setting
7. I would like to have less classroom time and more online-learning time.
8. I would like to have a traditional instructor who teaches course material in a classroom (e.g. through powerpoint, videos, whiteboard, elearn, group work, discussion & other media).
9. The Blended Learning model would work well for this course.
10. There should be choice for students about the form of courses they must take (i.e. blended or in-class delivery).



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