HEQCO: Driving Fundamental Change in Higher Education

Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education
University of Calgary
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“Establish a Council on Higher Education...to:
advise government on how to achieve its learning mission,
set targets and measures for improvement,
monitor and report on performance and outcomes,
co-ordinate research on higher education, and
encourage best practices.”
Evidence-based Policy Advice

Conducting research: experiments, interventions, consortia; international best practice

Engaging leading research and policy organizations

Convening expertise on key issues

Mobilizing knowledge with relevant audiences
HEQCO’s Key Questions

Access
How can we improve access to higher education for groups that are underrepresented?

Quality
Are Ontario students graduating with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life and work?

Accountability/
System design
How can Ontario provide a high-quality postsecondary education in a period of continued growth and diminishing resources?
Access
Canada 3\textsuperscript{rd} in OECD in overall PSE attainment

Canada in middle of OECD pack in university attainment
Not all groups in society participate equally
Quality
Greater focus on quality
Are students learning what they need to succeed in life and work?

Define what graduates should know and be able to do.

Measure whether the desired knowledge and capacities have been acquired.
Classes of skills

**Discipline knowledge**
- Solve equations
- Know concepts

**Basic cognitive skills**
- Literacy
- Numeracy

**Higher order cognitive skills**
- Problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Communication

**Personality (soft) skills**
- Persistence
- Initiative
- Determination
- Attitude
The quality of the university experience is diminishing

“The current system is not sustainable if quality is to be preserved or enhanced.”

It’s all about the job
Does postsecondary education adequately prepare students for work?

- 72% of educators say yes.
- 45% of graduates say yes.
- 42% of employers say yes.

- 96% of chief academic officers say university does a good job of preparing students for the work force.
- Only 11% of business leaders agree.


People are questioning the value of university education

When *The Economist* worries whether university is worth it, you know others are asking the same question.
Enrolments in professional programs are growing faster than in the liberal arts.

Growth in Undergraduate Enrolment in Canada from 1994 to 2013

Source: Statistics Canada, Postsecondary Student Information System (PSIS)
Arts & humanities enrolments are dropping

Arts applications in Ontario: 2013-2015 15%

Humanities enrolments in USA from 2012-2014 9%

Enrolment changes in Maritime universities last 10 yrs

- Architecture & engineering: +29%
- Business: +10%
- Health: +21%
- Humanities: -31%
- Physical & life sciences: +6%
- Social & behavioural sciences: -6%
Do skills developed in PSE predict labour market success?

Postsecondary and Workplace Skills Project

K-12 → PSE → Post Graduation/Labour Market

- Measure critical thinking skills at start of program (Fall 2016)
- Measure critical thinking skills at end of program (Winter 2017)
- Link skills and admin data to tax records (January 2020-2021)

PSE Admin Data
Tax Data
Essential Adult Skills Inventory

Test at start of program

Use online PIAAC to measure change of literacy, numeracy & problem solving

Test at end of program

15 colleges: Humber, Seneca, Sheridan, Algonquin, Fanshawe, Centennial, Conestoga, Georgian, St. Lawrence, Fleming, Sault, George Brown [ON]; Holland [PEI]; SAIT, Columbia [AB]

6 universities: Ryerson, Laurier, York, Ottawa, Queen’s, McMaster [ON]; Quest [BC]
“Changing a college curriculum is like moving a graveyard--you never know how many friends the dead have until you try to move them!”

Woodrow Wilson, President, Princeton University
Accountability/System Design
The Canadian Funding Bind

- Under Government Control
- Under Institutional Control

Growth in Operating Revenues (Grants + Tuition)
- Less: 2% inflation
- Less: 4% Enrolment Growth
- Less: 1% Wage Increases above inflation
- Less: The Sucking Sound of Research
- Less: Productivity Loss (teaching)

Canada-wide data.
Teaching Productivity Losses

• Reduced teaching loads (3.6 half courses/year).
• 21% faculty get teaching release for administrative purposes.
• 13% of full professors do not teach undergraduates.
• 13% faculty do no research.
• Faculty who do no research teach less than one additional half course relative to research active faculty.
• 19% of faculty do no service work.

Source: Council of Ontario Universities. Faculty at Work. 2014
This is what governments are told
This is what governments know
Funding does not predict system performance

Go to postsecondaryperformance.ca for customized analyses
Governments want performance-based funding

“Outcomes-based funding...will not resolve a state’s budget problems, but it is an effective tool for clarifying what a state expects from its public postsecondary institutions”.

http://publications.sreb.org/2012/Outcomes_Based_Funding.pdf
Governments want more measurement and reporting

“Not everything that counts can be measured. Not everything that can be measured counts.”

“What gets measured gets done.”

Albert Einstein

Peter Drucker
Governments want more productivity

Two areas for productivity increases

1. System redesign
2. Faculty workload distribution
A Brawl Over Tenure on Wisconsin Campuses

Professors reacted to the budget move as if lawmakers had tried to ban tweed jackets with elbow patches.

By CHRISTIAN SCHNEIDER

Government shots across the bow

Government plan to allow 'better' universities to raise fees

Shakeup will see universities that rank high on student satisfaction, teaching quality and employment outcomes permitted to charge more.

Social sciences and humanities faculties 'to close' in Japan after ministerial intervention

Universities to scale back liberal arts and social science courses.

Cash-strapped Nova Scotia universities could ban strikes with new bill

Proposal would require UNC professors to teach eight courses a year

Faculty teaching loads vary across UNC system
The Only Person that Likes Change is a Baby with a Dirty Diaper
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HEQCO Projects Assessing Learning Outcomes

• Learning Outcomes Assessment Consortium.
  – Critical thinking
• Learning Outcomes Assessment Survey.
• Measurement of resilience.
• Postsecondary and Workplace Skills Project (PAWS).
  – Critical thinking, linked to tax files
• Essential Adult Skills Inventory (EASI).
  – Literacy, numeracy, problem solving acquisition over postsecondary programs
Strategies being used to meet the challenge

1. Governments manage a system, not institutions.
2. Clear & transparent accountability and monitoring mechanisms.
3. Focus on outcomes, not inputs.
4. Greater system differentiation.
The government challenge

How to deliver a higher quality education to more students with no more, or even less, money per student?
Institutional differentiation

Greater institutional differentiation...maximizes the quality of the overall system by enabling each institution to make an optimal and distinctive contribution to the province’s higher education system as a whole.”