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## Internationalizing higher education

By Chad Gaffield

International engagement has been an intrinsic part of higher education since medieval times, but the forces of globalization are redefining the scope, pace and importance of scholarly collaboration and mobility across borders.

Until recently, the dominant global flow was one-way with former colonies and developing countries looking to cosmopolitan centres both to lead research efforts and to educate their best students.

In contrast, the new world of engaged scholarship and student mobility includes multi-directional currents of ideas and people traveling east and west, north and south within global networks.

Such currents are not evenly distributed, however, and as with all aspects of globalization, new challenges and opportunities are now foremost in the minds of leaders both on campuses and across jurisdictions. They know that the challenges threaten to leave behind their institutions while the opportunities offer increased promise for advancing knowledge and developing talent to help build successful societies in the new era. In other words, the internationalization of higher education has become a central feature of national strategies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As in many countries, the international dimension of Canadian higher education reflected its colonial legacy until the 1960s. With limited graduate programs and little research funding, universities imported most curricula material as well as foreign-trained professors, only some of whom had Canadian origins. Few institutions attracted foreign students at even the undergraduate level while Canadian students characteristically went abroad to pursue advanced degrees.

Following the Massey Commission and similar post-Second World War initiatives, this one-way flow changed dramatically as a result of a concerted effort, led by the federal government in partnership with the provinces, to create a post-secondary landscape to underpin true intellectual sovereignty. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this effort proved successful and Canada moved into the top group of countries with impressive enrolment and research activity across all disciplines and at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Now all institutions and jurisdictions are building upon this made-in-Canada post-secondary foundation as they seek to foster global research networks and to tap the international pool of student talent. These strategies are designed for success in the knowledge economy and society, and in the new culture of innovation that is becoming characteristic of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

One indication of Canada's changing position in the internationalization of higher education has been its increasing success in attracting world-class students to post-secondary institutions. Although the presence of foreign students remains below objectives, new initiatives are revealing Canada's potential as a post-secondary magnet for world-class students.

In 2008, the federal government announced the creation of the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship program, which provides \$50,000 per year up to three years for PhD students from any country in the world. The ambition is to develop academically-gifted PhD students who will become leaders on campus and in the larger society. The program will support 500 students annually.

The first group of Vanier scholars demonstrates how far Canada has come both in producing world-class students and in attracting outstanding graduates from around the world. Noor Johnson came to Canada from the United States to pursue her PhD in anthropology at McGill University. Working with the Inuit in Canada's North, Noor's research focuses on how traditional knowledge and understanding can be brought to light in policy making surrounding climate change.

Elsayed Ali moved to Canada from Egypt and has embarked on a PhD at Carleton University. He was attracted to Carleton by the strength of its faculty and its reputation for conducting important work in Physics in conjunction with the National Research Council. Elsayed's research focuses on how to fine tune cancer radiation therapy to ensure the best possible results for patients while minimizing unwanted radiation exposure.

As a complement to the Vanier program, the new Michael Smith Foreign Study supplement provides support to recipients of the Canada Graduate Scholarship (CGS) for travel to, and accommodation at, foreign universities to enrich their Canadian program experience. This initiative extends the role of the CGS program in raising doctoral education in Canada to an unprecedented level of excellence during the past decade.

Moreover, the Foreign Study supplements offer another option for Canadian students who can also pursue entire graduate programs abroad, thanks to programs such as Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's doctoral fellowship which has no restrictions on the destination country; indeed, about one-fifth of recipients use their support to study outside of Canada. Similarly, about one-third of SSHRC postdoctoral researchers take their fellowships abroad.

In addition to enhancing student mobility, the new internationalization of higher education includes Canada's emergence as a leader of global research networks. Recently, for example, the SSHRC established a partnership with the International Development Research Centre to provide \$8 million in funding for community organizations and Canadian universities to team up with their partners in the developing world within collaborative research projects.

These research connections do not follow the tradition of scholars studying communities from the outside; rather, the new approach involves researchers collaborating with those in communities in order to advance knowledge and develop innovations within integrated teams.

The increasing extent of Canadian engagement in international research collaborations is illustrated by trends in publication. In the social sciences and humanities, Canadians now co-publish with foreign researchers more than the global average. In many fields, co-authored publications with foreign researchers have doubled over the past 20 years.

International collaboration is now seen as essential for access to the world's pool of knowledge and expertise, and to bring diverse research perspectives to bear on key global issues. Such collaboration also informs comparative perspectives on social, cultural and economic issues, and thereby helps Canadians pool knowledge and resources to address complex domestic and international issues.

Overall, the new internationalization of higher education is seeking to ensure that geopolitical boundaries do not act as barriers to developing talent, gaining insight and making connections in the rapidly changing 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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