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# Understanding the Differences

A Working Paper Series on  
Higher Education in Canada,  
Mexico and the United States

Working Paper #9

## Academic Mobility in North America: Towards New Models of Integration and Collaboration

by

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## Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) is a public interstate agency established to promote and to facilitate resource sharing, collaboration, and cooperative planning among the western states and their colleges and universities. Member and affiliate states include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

In 1993, WICHE, working in partnership with the Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI), developed the U.S.-Mexico Educational Interchange Project to facilitate educational interchange and the sharing of resources across the western region of the U.S. and with Mexico. In 1995, the project began a trilateral focus which includes Canada, with the goal of fostering educational collaboration across North America. In 1997, the project changed its name to the "Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration" (CONAHEC). The "Understanding the Differences" series was developed as a resource for the initiative and was created under the direction of WICHE's Constituent Relations and Communications and Policy and Information Units. CONAHEC's Web site is located at <http://conahec.org>.

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- Working Paper #3: *The Educational Systems of Mexico and the United States: Prospects for Reform and Collaboration* (Publication Number 2A263)
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“UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES”  
A WORKING PAPER SERIES ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN MEXICO, CANADA,  
AND THE UNITED STATES

WORKING PAPER NO. 9

ACADEMIC MOBILITY IN NORTH  
AMERICA: TOWARDS NEW  
MODELS OF INTEGRATION AND  
COLLABORATION

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BY

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## PREFACE

While regional trends in North America, especially the North American Free Trade Agreement are moving rapidly and strongly toward greater integration of the economies of Canada, Mexico, and the United States, important issues that need to be addressed in higher education have for the most part been overlooked. CONAHEC (the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration) has attempted to fill some of the gaps in information, analysis, and discussion with a research series comparing various aspects of higher education in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Perhaps the most important, and certainly the most visible, aspect of the internationalization of higher education in North America is mobility of students and faculty. This paper describes the present state of academic mobility in each country since the signing of NAFTA. It then analyzes the efforts made thus far to foster mobility and the barriers we have encountered in doing so. Finally, it suggests new models of academic integration that would begin to move toward true partnerships encompassing the higher education systems of Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The greater integration of higher education in North America would assist us in shifting NAFTA from what has been largely an economic trade partnership to encompass all areas that are critical to our societies' development and prosperity, particularly education.

*Academic Mobility in North America: Towards New Models of Integration and Collaboration* is the ninth in a series of reports that analyze educational practice and policy in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Its authors are Lorna Smith of Mount Royal College, Canada; Fernando León-García of CETYS, Mexico; and Dewayne Matthews of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, United States. The CONAHEC series of reports, entitled *Understanding the Differences*, was initiated in 1994 to highlight both the differences and similarities between the higher education systems of North America. It was undertaken with the encouragement of two officers of The Ford Foundation: Norman Collins, the former Representative for the Office for Mexico and Central America; and Alison Bernstein, Vice President of Education, Arts, and Culture. WICHE and CONAHEC hope that this series will foster improved understanding of significant higher education issues in Canada, Mexico, and the United States, promote meaningful discussions among higher education leaders and policymakers, and lead to new cooperative efforts to increase educational opportunities across North America.

The series includes:

- *Understanding the Differences: An Essay on Higher Education in Mexico and the United States* by Judith I. Gill and Lilian Alvarez de Testa.
- *Working Paper #1: Policy Approaches to Evaluation and Incentive Funding in U.S. and Mexican Higher Education* by Peter Ewell and Rollin Kent.
- *Working Paper #2: Higher Education Faculty in Mexico and the United States: Characteristics and Policy Issues* by Cheryl Lovell and Dolores Sánchez Soler.
- *Working Paper #3: The Educational Systems of Mexico and the United States: Prospects for Reform and Collaboration* by JoAnn Canales, Leticia Calzada Gómez and Néllyda Villanueva.
- *Working Paper #4: Higher Education's Responsiveness in Mexico and the United States to a New Economy and the Impacts of NAFTA* by Elizabeth Santillanez.
- *Working Paper #5: The Role of Technology in Higher Education in North America: Policy Implications* by Glen Farrell, Sally Johnstone, and Patricio López del Puerto.

- *Working Paper #6: The BORDER PACT REPORT: A Region in Transition: The U.S.-Mexico Borderlands and the Role of Higher Education* by Beatriz Calvo Pontón, Paul Ganster, Fernando León-García, and Francisco Marmolejo.
- *Working Paper #7: Teaming Up: Higher Education-Business Partnerships and Alliances in North America* by Guillermo Fernández de la Garza, Bertha Landrum, and Barbara Samuels.
- *Working Paper #8: The Vancouver Communiqué Revisited: An Assessment* by John Mallea, Salvador Malo and Dell Pendergrast.
- *Within and Across Borders: Higher Education in Canada, Mexico and the United States* by John S. Levin.
- *Working Paper #10: At a Crossroads: Access to Higher Education in North America* by Rodney Clifton, Richard Jonsen, Luis Llorens Baez, and Manuel Ortiz.

*Academic Mobility in North America: Towards New Models of Integration and Collaboration* was written to serve as a basis for the discussions at CONAHEC's October 27-29, 1999 Sixth Annual North American Higher Education Conference, hosted by the Universidad Veracruzana. The conference is entitled *Academic and Professional Mobility in North America and Beyond: Fulfilling the Promise*.

We would like to thank the members of the 1999 Planning Committee for their many insights that helped form this paper. They include Don Alper, Víctor Arredondo, Franck Biancheri, Sally Brown, Jocelyne Gacel, Augie Gallego, Madeleine Green, Jaime Gutiérrez, Olga Hernández-Limón, Stella Hryniuk, Dewayne Matthews, Ricardo Mercado, Dolores Sánchez Soler, Walter Uegama, and Thomas Wood.

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And, of course, we thank the trilateral team of authors of this working paper who freely gave of their time to share their expertise with others. The authors eagerly worked through differences in perspective and logistical obstacles in the spirit of true cross-border cooperation and exchange, as should characterize a project of this nature. We hope their efforts will inspire other researchers to pursue future North American collaboration.

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## INTRODUCTION

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The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1994 and other international agreements have contributed to growing integration of business, industry and the professions across North American borders. The economic interdependence of Canada, Mexico and the United States is now taken for granted, and trade between the three countries has increased significantly, from \$300 billion USD in 1993 to \$500 billion in 1997. Each of the three countries has a growing awareness of the other two and their roles in North America. However, this growing integration and awareness is not yet fully reflected in North American higher education.

The trend toward North American integration is creating a need for greater institutional and governmental investment in international programs, especially trilateral programs within North America. Indeed, there has been a great deal of activity in this arena, and trends in student and institutional participation are positive. However, there is a need now for deeper, more fundamental cooperation that will require further institutional and governmental commitments. Without such commitments, the current momentum could be easily lost, not least because of the continued reliance on “soft” money that would make international programs vulnerable in an eventual economic downturn.

Until now, most international programs in higher education have promoted academic mobility. There is a need for mobility programs to grow and involve more students and faculty, but the changing international environment is creating a need for cooperation and collaboration beyond simple mobility, especially among the countries of North America. What is now needed is international academic integration. Academic integration includes such initiatives as the joint development of courses and programs, shared faculty appointments, multinational student cohort-based programs, and international delivery of programs via distance education technologies. The strategy that supports academic integration best is active collaboration between higher education institutions and systems.

This paper has five parts. The first discusses the current status of international programs with a focus on North America in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The second describes some of the current activity in each of the three countries to foster greater internationalization of higher education, especially in North America. The third section addresses the barriers to further internationalization which these efforts face. The fourth describes how more active forms of academic collaboration could promote the greater internationalization of higher education in North America. Finally, the fifth section makes several specific suggestions about how to promote the greater integration of the academic systems of North America, and in particular discusses how organizations such as the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) can foster such collaboration.

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## ACADEMIC MOBILITY WITHIN NORTH AMERICA SINCE NAFTA

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The primary form of academic mobility within North America is the exchange of students, either through agreements between institutions of higher education, government-supported programs, or individual student choice. With few exceptions, however, student exchange in North America almost always takes place in a bilateral context — resulting in three independent, and very different, relationships. These relationships — between Canada and the United States, the U.S. and Mexico, and Mexico and Canada — each have their own dynamics, trends, issues, and opportunities. While comparable data on international exchanges is not available across the three countries (an issue that should be addressed), available data offers a snapshot of the current status of internationalization and North American student mobility in each country:

- **CANADA** — Canada has traditionally hosted more international students than it has sent abroad. In 1997, some 99,359 foreign students studied in Canada for three months or more (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade 1998, 2). That same year, an estimated 27,000 Canadian undergraduates — just over 3 percent of the Canadian students — studied abroad (Kane and Humphries 1999, 13-16).

The U.S. continues to be the major recipient of Canadian students. Of the 27,000 Canadian students estimated to be studying overseas in 1997, about 22,000 were reported to be in the United States. Geographic proximity, the English language, and the ability to get degrees in high-demand fields at prestigious schools drive this phenomenon. Few of these students were part of any organized program; most were self-financed. While traditionally many Canadian students have attended U.S. higher education institutions, few have participated in Mexican programs. Perhaps the most visible change in North American student mobility since NAFTA has been increased mobility between Canada and Mexico. Though there are no data that concretely demonstrate this trend, some information lends it support. For example, North American Mobility Program (NAMP) quotas were overfilled in Canada-Mexico exchanges but not met for Canada-U.S. exchanges.

- **MEXICO** — Although the number of Mexican students involved in North American exchanges has been growing significantly, it is still relatively small compared to total student enrollments. In 1997, 9,559 Mexican students were studying in the United States. While this number is an increase of 6.5 percent from the prior year, students from Mexico nevertheless represent only 2 percent of all foreign students in the U.S. (Davis 1999) One tangible change since the enacting of NAFTA is a significant increase in mobility between Mexico and Canada. Between 1991 and 1996, the number of Mexicans studying in the United States grew by 30 percent. But for the same period, the number of Mexican students studying in Canada grew by 134 percent. (Adelman 1999, 31-33) The United States and Canada accounted for 55 percent of all Mexican exchange destinations in 1996 (46 percent to the United States and almost nine percent to Canada) (ANUIES 1998). Likewise, 51 percent of all fellows supported to study abroad by scholarships from the National Council on Science and Technology (CONACYT) were enrolled in Canada or the United States (SEP-CONACYT Newsletter 1998).
- **UNITED STATES** — During 1997-98, 9,559 students from Mexico and 22,051 from Canada attended colleges in the United States. Both of these numbers were a decline



from the previous year (Davis 1999). In contrast, Japan, Korea, and China each send more than 40,000 students to the United States, and their numbers are growing by as much as 15 percent a year (Davis 1999). Less than one percent of all U.S. students participated in credit-granting study abroad programs in 1997-98 (Davis 1999). Although the number of U.S. students studying in Mexico grew by 35 percent between 1991 and 1996, only 6,865 students from the United States studied in Mexico in 1997-98, and even fewer studied in Canada. More students from the United States studied in Costa Rica than in Canada (Davis 1999). As one observer put it, “about 1 percent of American undergraduates at four-year colleges take part in study abroad programs. Of those, most go for a semester, take part predominantly in American packaged programs, and have England as the primary destination.” (Altbach and deWit 1995)

In spite of these national differences in the rates and patterns of participation in student mobility programs, the situation regarding student mobility in North America is far from bleak. The Institute for International Education’s 1997 Survey and Evaluation of North American Higher Education Cooperation is the latest trilateral data available on student mobility programs in North America. It notes that bilateral and trilateral program links among the three countries are on an increasing trend. U.S. linkages had tripled between 1990-97 (from 57 to 190), Canadian linkages had increased 10-fold over the same period (from 7 to 73) and Mexican linkages had risen by 30 percent (from 142 to 189) between 1993-97. Still, significant gaps remain. The IIE report notes that respondents to its survey indicated that plans for future linkages were more likely bilateral rather than trilateral, often because of the difficulty of managing trilateral programs (Institute of International Education 1997, 1).

One of the few visible higher education initiatives to result directly from NAFTA that has involved the governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States is the North American Mobility Program (NAMP).<sup>1</sup> NAMP is a grant competition supported by the three governments to promote student mobility across the three countries. During its first three years, NAMP provided about \$4 million to international collaborations or consortia made up from 28 Canadian, 25 Mexican and 28 U.S. colleges and universities. About 700 students participated. All three countries have announced plans to continue supporting NAMP, which is soliciting another round of proposals this year.

One problem in analyzing the extent and success of North American higher education mobility is the dearth of good data, especially data comparable across the three countries. Data about North American academic mobility are sketchy at best, even contradictory. For instance, the estimates of U.S. students studying in Canada in 1997 published in reports vary from 682 to 7,836. Data are practically non-existent for faculty. The numbers of faculty involved in North American mobility programs is probably minuscule. This is extremely unfortunate since faculty mobility is critical to international programs, which are often sustained by faculty initiatives and relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> In the United States, this trinational government program is referred to as the “North American Mobility Program” or “NAMP”. In Canada, it is called the “Program For North American Mobility In Higher Education” or “Le Programme de mobilité nord-américaine en éducation supérieure”. In Mexico it is referred to as “El Programa de Movilidad Estudiantil de América del Norte” or (PROMESAN).

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## EFFORTS TO FOSTER MOBILITY AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

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The North American Mobility Program is the most visible trilaterally organized effort to promote international education among Canada, Mexico and the United States, but is hardly the only initiative targeted to promoting the internationalization of higher education in North America. Because the focus of internationalization efforts has been quite different in each of the three countries, each has its own successes and failures to report. International initiatives have been prevalent at both the national and institutional levels, with considerably less attention paid by provincial and state governments. At the national level, Canada has the most aggressive approach of the three countries to internationalizing its higher education system, with several programs initiated by the federal government. In Mexico and the United States, government and higher education organizations are also maintaining several significant efforts targeting international education. But in the United States, because it has consistently been a destination for hundreds of thousands of foreign students every year, many higher education administrators and government officials falsely believe that U.S. campuses are already internationalized and have become complacent in their efforts to make real changes.

### CANADA

In Canada since the mid-'90s, the internationalization of higher education has been high on the political agenda both nationally and provincially. Canada has come to view its higher education system as an economically valuable resource, an export commodity to be marketed in the same way the country markets wheat, meat, textiles or nickel. In February 1995, when tabling his new Foreign Policy Statement in the House of Commons, the Hon. André Ouellet, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, said:

*Vitality in our cultural, academic and scientific interchange is essential to our success in the new knowledge-based world economy; it is also essential to our growth, prosperity and success nationally. In order to remain competitive, our institutions of higher learning, our students, our future workers need to adapt to a profoundly and constantly changing international labor market, to expose themselves to the new technologies, and to master new knowledge.*

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is aggressively marketing Canada's "education industry." A new unit of DFAIT is coordinating the marketing effort along with a new national Education Marketing Advisory Board. Canada Education Centres and similar points of service have opened in more than 20 countries, Canada Education Fairs are held in a variety of countries, and "Study in Canada" CD-ROMs have been distributed around the world.

Much of this effort can be traced to the Trilateral Task Force<sup>2</sup> on North American Higher Education Collaboration, which resulted from the 1992 Wingspread Conference and met from 1993 to 1996. Several key members of this effort are now advisers to the Department of Foreign Affairs and

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<sup>2</sup> The members of the Trilateral Task Force were appointed by the Trilateral Steering Committee as a means to involve stakeholders in higher education and other relevant sectors. The committee was established in 1992 and consists of three high-level governmental/educational authorities from Mexico (SEP—Secretaría de Educación Pública), Canada (DFAIT—Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade), and the United States (USIA—United States Information Agency). The committee's role is to coordinate government involvement in the trilateral process.

International Trade, Human Resources Development Canada, and key ministers who have championed strengthening Canada's role in international education.

Within this overall context of support for internationalization, key Canadian coordinating organizations including the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), and the World University Services of Canada (WUSC) came together to prepare a significant document for the public and private sector representatives working on this issue. The document, *Turning the Forces of Globalization to our Advantage: An International Learning Strategy for Canada* was released in October 1998. Its concrete targets and measures for academic mobility are precedent-setting. It advocates building upon the successes of the existing North American and European mobility programs by:

- Building a critical mass of human resources in Canada that have knowledge of the political, economic and social landscapes around the world, the ability to work effectively in intercultural environments, and the capacity to communicate in a range of languages;
- Enhancing Canada's capacity to generate and apply new knowledge through international research and technical cooperation; and,
- Making Canada a "partner of choice" with international higher education officials in other countries.

The document proposes several goals, and benchmarks to support these goals. For example, the report suggests that three percent of Canadian undergraduate students (27,000) receive support from "study abroad incentive grants" and international mobility programs; that three percent (2,250) of graduate students a year pursue research abroad with support from scholarships for international graduate study; that one percent (600) of faculty/teachers a year receive "fellowships for internationalization;" that 10 percent (25) of post-secondary institutions set up new academic exchanges and language study programs in areas of strategic interest to Canada with support from new partnership development grants; and that more cooperative projects be established involving consortia of Canadian and foreign post-secondary institutions working on curriculum and public policy (Turning the Forces 1998).

The targets recommended in the document may seem inconsequential, but may be realistic within the Canadian financial and demographic context. If the learning strategy is approved and implemented in a coordinated fashion, it may help to build on the modest successes of NAMP and brighten the promise for better North American mobility and integration.

## **MEXICO**

After supporting NAMP for the first three years of its pilot phase (1995-1997), there was no competition in 1998, since Mexico decided instead to focus its limited resources on faculty development. Mexico still views academic mobility as important, but perhaps not as strategically important as faculty development. As a result, Mexico has redirected some funds to target the upgrading of faculty credentials, specifically doctoral degrees. Mexico intends to increase the number of faculty with doctorates from 4,000 to 15,000 by 2006 (ANUIES, January-March 1997, 133). Supporting students to study abroad is part of the government strategy to upgrade faculty credentials. More recently, Mexico restored funding for the third round of NAMP and several key figures in the

Mexican government and higher education system are promoting the international agenda in general and trilateral mobility in particular.

The Mexican National Association of Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES) has been very active in this arena for its 100-plus member institutions, promoting collaboration through umbrella agreements in Canada such as those with the Association of Colleges and Universities of Canada (AUCC) and the Council of Rectors and Principals of Quebec (CREPUQ), and with the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Association Liaison Office (ALO) in the United States. The Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI) has also played an important role in promoting networking between college and university representatives from Canada, Mexico, and the United States. This networking has resulted in raised consciousness about what it takes to pursue an international partnership in general and specifically a bilateral or trilateral linkage. As recently stated by the AMPEI President Jocelyne Gacel-Avila:

*The new challenge to Mexican universities, and indeed to all universities throughout the world, is to confront the challenge presented by globalization to prepare professionals who must function in different cultural environments, in the utmost interdependence, and who will promote the understanding and respect of diversity.*

*-Jocelyne Gacel-Avila (1999, 130)*

CONACYT and SEP (the Mexican Ministry of Education) have directed special funding to promote the international agenda, in particular within the framework of faculty development. Border PACT, formed in August 1997 by CONAHEC to promote U.S.-Mexican border collaboration, and ICEED (International Consortium on Economic and Educational Development), which encompasses mostly community and technical colleges across the three countries, are also noteworthy.

There have been several attempts to promote professional mobility across borders, including discussions of accreditation, recognition of credentials and credits, and creation of quality assurance mechanisms. Progress has been more bilateral than trilateral. In particular, a joint effort of the U.S. Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) and Mexico's Commission for Accreditation of Schools of Engineering (CACEI) has led to Mexican engineering schools developing and adopting standards somewhat similar to their counterparts from the United States. Indeed, by early 1999 CACEI had already accredited 17 different programs across Mexico (CACEI, No.5, February 1999).

Mexico has also established Committees for the International Practice of Professions (COMPI) to work with Canadian and U.S. counterparts since 1994 on the mutual recognition of degrees and certifications. COMPIs were created in actuarial science, agronomy, architecture, accounting, law, nursing, pharmacy, engineering, medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry, and psychology. This system potentially makes a coordinated response to internationalization in the professions much more feasible in Mexico than in Canada or the United States. For example, in the field of accounting, bilateral initiatives are limited in Canada and in the United States where the profession is regulated at the provincial and state level, while the Mexican government has created a Committee for the International Practice of Accountancy for the entire country (Peace Lenn and Miller 1999).

Also, private Mexican universities have recently established accreditation programs similar to those in the United States. This effort is crucial to the portability of credits and course equivalency across

borders. The Mexican Federation of Private Institutions of Higher Education (FIMPES) has structured an accrediting process whereby 48 of 93 applying institutions to date have already concluded self-studies, had on-site visits and been told whether they meet the criteria. The process is analogous to those used by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and other accrediting bodies in the United States. Among public universities, the evaluation of quality has been promoted through the Mexican National Commission for the Evaluation of Higher Education (CONAEVA). The Inter-institutional Committees for the Evaluation of Higher Education (CIEES) have addressed program evaluation, and two additional efforts are also worth mentioning: the Mexican National Center for the Evaluation of Higher Education (CENEVAL) and the Council for the Normalization and Certification of Work Competencies (CONOCER).

#### UNITED STATES

Of course, the United States has been a participant in the various joint initiatives described in the earlier sections of this report on Canada and Mexico. However, given the vast size and scope of the United States higher education system, these efforts are arguably having relatively less direct impact on the day-to-day operations of colleges and universities in the U.S. than in Canada and Mexico. Internationalization has had a significant impact on research, and the U.S. is the destination of choice for very large numbers of international students. But the unfortunate fact is that internationalization of the academic life of colleges and universities is still generally an add-on, dependent on external funding and affecting a relatively small percentage of students. Most successful faculty members and administrators don't spend significant amounts of time in other countries, and may in fact see time spent abroad as a detriment to their careers. Higher education funding offers few incentives for international cooperation. Colleges can and do promote exchanges, but with the heavy demands placed on students today by their academic programs, participation may slow down the student's progression towards a degree. These are significant barriers to greater internationalization for both students and higher education institutions.

This situation is not changing for the better. Part of the problem is that international programs operate on the fringes of most colleges and universities:

*Despite valiant efforts of many international educators, American universities failed to mainstream international education when soft funding was available, so that now it appears to be the "new kid on the block," one that must meet the exceptionally strict standards for approval. Especially disheartening is that universities claim they are "doing international education" and produce long lists of international activities in support of that claim. They often point to the presence of international students as evidence of the international ambiance on their campus, but one has only to question those international students and to examine the vaunted activities, curricula, international agreements, and joint academic ventures to find that the quality leaves a great deal to be desired. Even in terms of quantity, dismally small numbers of targeted audiences are reached by international activities.*

— Josef A. Mestenhauser (1998, No. 2-3)

As a nation, the United States is proud of the international reach of its colleges and universities, but internationalization of higher education at most institutions in the U.S. is superficial at best. Many faculty participate in international conferences and research projects and several hundred thousand foreign students attend U.S. colleges and universities. On many campuses, international students often don't interact significantly with other students. They come to the university to receive training and return home having made few if any friends and other lasting relationships. This is a lost opportunity

of enormous consequence. By the same token, many faculty participate in international career activities, but it is hard to see how these activities directly affect the core activities of the university. For the most part, curricula are not international in structure. While students benefit from the broader perspectives that faculty bring as a result of participating in international activities, the experience is indirect.

Despite the fact that few U.S. campuses have successfully implemented true internationalization strategies, there are a few exceptional initiatives which have been launched more recently. Two federally-funded programs which focus on academic integration include FIPSE's European Community-United States of America Joint Consortia for Cooperation in Higher Education and Vocational Education, and the Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) funded through Title VI of the Higher Education Act. While these programs have been quite effective, they impact a relatively small number of campuses, leaving much work to be done in this area.

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### **BARRIERS TO THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF NORTH AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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Most colleges and universities in Canada, Mexico, and United States have commitments to globalization or internationalization in their mission statements. Nevertheless, most them also are struggling with what it means to be internationalized. What constitutes a balanced international program that takes into account the needs of the community, the culture of the institution, and the expertise and interests of students and faculty? How can such programs be financed? While everyone acknowledges the importance of academic integration to improving student employability, strengthening the curriculum, and adding value to the academic experience, other issues sometimes get in the way.

There are five fundamental barriers to greater international integration of academic programs. They are: finance, language, differing needs among countries; immigration and visa policy; and sustainability.

#### **FINANCE**

Finances are often a significant barrier to international cooperation. Travel is an essential feature of international programs, and travel is expensive. So is the time of professionals engaged in international activities. Financial issues can, however, mask other less obvious problems. Most colleges and universities have never fully integrated international activities into their planning or curriculum. So time spent on international initiatives is seen as an "add-on" or discretionary activity requiring additional earmarked support, usually from external sources.

Student mobility often is hindered or prevented by residency and tuition policies driven by financial considerations that are disconnected from state or institutional goals for internationalization. Highly restrictive residency and tuition policies are shortsighted, because no one saves money when international students cannot attend an institution because they can't pay tuition that far exceeds the direct cost of their enrollment.

Subsidies for international study appear to make all the difference. The reality is that many students cannot afford to finance their own participation in an international mobility program. A survey conducted by the Canadian International Mobility in Higher Education Program (IMHEP) shows that without some subsidy, the average Canadian student or faculty member is unlikely to take part in a North American short-term academic exchange. Even though most students also had to take out loans,

borrow from family or friends, fundraise or use their savings, the subsidy of approximately \$3,000 made the difference in their decision to participate. Likewise in Mexico, the most common problem cited for the lack of academic mobility was financial limitations. The ANUIES survey cited earlier points out that 84 percent of respondents underlined financial issues as barriers impeding greater collaboration.

Higher education institutions in all three countries face the challenge of finding increased support from stable sources, including government, the private sector, and mainline institutional budgets. There are, however, examples of how institutions which have developed creative new approaches to deal with lack of funding. In the United States, Texas has assessed a \$1 fee statewide for every registered student in higher education to support international programs. In Mexico, the Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua created a fund devoted exclusively to strengthening academic exchanges (Fondo para el Fortalecimiento del Intercambio Académico). In Canada, several institutions (Malaspina University College and Mount Royal, among others) have set aside a portion of unbudgeted revenues from international projects as seed money for international programs.

### **LANGUAGE**

International mobility is certainly possible and worthwhile even when some of the participants are monolingual. However, at least some of the participants will need to speak the language of the others in order for communication to take place, and therefore the exchange takes place in a single language. Furthermore, when participants in North American exchanges must rely on a single language it is usually English. But true international integration won't happen in a single language. It is certainly true that many professionals in Mexico and Quebec speak English, but without bilingual participants on both sides, exchanges always suffer from a certain superficiality. It is not that students and faculty don't want to learn other languages; it is rather that opportunities to do so are limited. While participation in international activities is almost always supported by universities and fellow academics, paradoxically the time spent to learn a new language is too often seen as not professionally legitimate.

In Mexico, the ANUIES survey shows that the second most common problem for exchange students is language. Almost half of all respondents said language was a barrier. In Canada, 35 percent of project directors for international exchanges reported problems arising from language deficiencies. The Canadian experience with French-English bilingualism indicates that there can be a direct correlation between economic necessity and language learning. For example, federal civil servants receive promotions only after they have completed mandatory language training and demonstrated competence in the second official language. It is unlikely that the same people would master a second language without this financial and career incentive. The teaching of Spanish, English, and French should be improved and better supported in North American higher education institutions. Short-term language exchange programs should be encouraged, along with internships and co-op opportunities. Colleges and universities also should develop innovative and realistic language programs that aid all students and faculty — but particularly those in professional programs.

### **DIFFERING NEEDS**

Students and higher education institutions in Canada, Mexico, and the United States have a great deal in common, but also have very different needs that can't be addressed through simple exchanges. Many of the differences can be accounted for by the asymmetries between the three nations and their educational systems. The asymmetries are especially pronounced in terms of student needs. Examples abound — in certain career areas, both Canadian and Mexican students seek degrees from United States institutions, but few U.S. students seek degrees from Mexican or Canadian universities. On the other hand, U.S. students do need to attend Mexican or Canadian universities for intensive Spanish or

French language instruction, exposure to new perspectives in their disciplines, and the enrichment of cultural exchanges. Canadian students can enhance their employment opportunities with better second language skills, cross-cultural competencies and an understanding of U.S. and Mexican business environments, and Mexican business needs employees with English and French language skills, cross-cultural competencies and an understanding of Canadian and U.S. business environments. U.S. employers in most fields do not have the same appreciation of international experiences, especially compared to their Canadian counterparts. Likewise, higher education institutions in the three countries are very different in terms of needs, organizational culture, and what they expect from international activities.

Because of these asymmetries of need, North American mobility efforts can end up as a series of bilateral exchanges operating in a trilateral framework. These asymmetries will affect any type of academic mobility pursued in North America.

### **IMMIGRATION POLICY AND VISAS**

The policies and regulations that control immigration and migration, especially the issuing of visas, are a barrier to internationalization of higher education that according to many observers is becoming more serious. Tightening U.S. immigration policy has made it more difficult and time consuming for students, faculty, and other professionals to get visas, just as countries in other parts of the world are streamlining their procedures. As a response to the change in U.S. policy, both Canadian and Mexican governments have tightened enforcement of their immigration and border processes. Many students and faculty in Canada, Mexico and the United States on short-term professional development activities are forced into the convenient fiction of describing themselves as “tourists” to border officials.

In the long run, however, another issue is potentially even more serious. Many higher education programs are moving to integrate professional experiences into the curriculum through internships, clinical models, experiential learning, cooperative learning or other means. These approaches can be strengthened by international participation and offer new and exciting opportunities for internationalization. However, these programs are a significant challenge for immigration policy because they blur the distinction between “study” and “work.” Likewise, the ability of institutions to share faculty is constrained by immigration policy requirements.

By 2008, NAFTA will eliminate all tariffs on approximately 9,000 categories of goods and services produced and sold in North America. What is not yet commonly known is that the agreement regards publicly funded higher education as a service governed by NAFTA, and professors, administrators, trainers receive most-favored-nation treatment. For example, a Canadian professor teaching in the United States or Mexico must receive the same contract, salary and benefits that a local professor receives at the same institution. NAFTA also encourages organizations within each country to develop and recommend mutually acceptable standards and criteria for the licensing and certification of professionals. Increased professional mobility within North America is arguably an inevitable outgrowth of greater economic integration, but progress is lagging behind other forms of free trade. Full professional mobility would benefit higher education institutions directly in promoting greater sharing of faculty and other professionals, and should also expand demand for international program experiences by students.

Canadian, Mexican and U.S. institutions need to urge their governments to streamline immigration policies for exchange students, faculty and professionals.



## SUSTAINABILITY

More than 70 percent of NAMP project directors reported that some aspects of their projects would continue after the three-year initial funding period. However, these figures refer largely to the student mobility component of the NAMP programs. Strategies to promote the larger goal of international academic integration are more difficult to sustain. Only about half of the NAMP programs reported that some form of curriculum development or customized programming had evolved as a result of the project, and even fewer (about 25 percent) developed or applied learning technologies to help the internationalization of course instruction. True sustainability of international efforts will only occur when funding is moved from external or “soft sources” and into core institutional budgets. Integration of international perspectives and activities into the curriculum will support this process.

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## TOWARD NEW MODELS OF ACADEMIC INTEGRATION

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The rapidly changing environment for higher education in North America is expanding the need for new models of academic cooperation and mobility across borders. Exchanges of both students and faculty are extremely important tools to promote greater internationalization of higher education, and much can be done to expand the level of exchange of students, faculty and others between colleges and universities in Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

However, the integration that needs to take place among North American higher education systems goes beyond simple exchanges. The three systems need to jointly plan academic programs; share faculty and other resources; and use telecommunications to share education among the countries and beyond. Institutions must incorporate their international initiatives into the mainstream of their strategic planning and institutional development activities; otherwise, the likelihood of marginalization is quite high.

What could more active international academic collaboration look like in the future? The following are some ideas:

- **SHARING OF FACULTY:** Many academic programs would benefit from international faculty perspectives. While arrangements such as visiting professorships are common, they still affect only a small percentage of faculty or students and should be expanded. However, better collaboration between institutions in different countries would lead to better faculty integration through adjunct or joint faculty appointments.
- **JOINT COURSE DEVELOPMENT:** A step beyond sharing faculty is the joint development of courses by two or more institutions operating in a consortium. The University of Victoria, the Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas, and the University of Arizona collaborated on development of a course in educational technology, which is now owned by all three institutions. Joint courses can be offered to cohort student groups from the participating institutions, further promoting integration.
- **JOINT PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT:** Programs in international relations, law, or trade obviously could, and probably should be developed and taught by a shared international faculty. The opportunities for joint program development aren't limited to these fields, however. Almost every field could benefit from the inclusion of

international partnerships and perspectives. University linkages should go beyond business and industry to include service learning.

- **BUILDING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COHORTS:** Information technology is creating new opportunities for students from different countries to study together in courses, work together in teams and collaborate on research. Traditional student mobility is not a prerequisite to this type of collaboration. Through the Internet, students can communicate on a regular basis and develop relationships that will lead to richer experiences when they participate in a mobility program. While trilateral mobility programs have traditionally focused on undergraduates, graduate student participation should be stressed as well and may lend itself even better to cohort-based approaches.
- **USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:** In North America, it should be imperative to take advantage of information technology to move educational resources between institutions and countries and promote academic integration. Use of technology is probably the only way to assure that the internationalization of higher education is not limited to just the participants in international exchanges. Through technology, all students in participating programs — whether in an international exchange or not — would have access to international experiences and perspectives as part of the curriculum. This way internationalization can affect many more students than those fortunate few who are able to travel. This kind of academic future redefines who can take what course, where, and at what cost. Technology could also be applied to conferences, consortia and other meetings so that international exchanges of knowledge and ideas could take place more easily and frequently without depending on costly travel.

There are already several example of the use of information technology to promote internationalization in higher education. The International Training Center at San Diego State University has established a telecommunications link throughout the Americas, and a web-based Technology Master's program is operated jointly by the University of British Columbia and ITESM. Another example is the online courses in accounting and international management to be delivered shortly by Paradise Valley Community College (Arizona) and CETYS Universidad.

In spite of these early successes, access by higher education institutions and their students and faculty to advanced information technology is highly problematic in all three countries, but especially in Mexico. Developing the technology infrastructure to support its use in higher education is a growing imperative.

The concept of academic integration through active collaboration is relatively new for North America, but is not unknown in other parts of the world. European higher education mobility and integration initiatives have received enormous impetus as a response to the requirement of the European Union for full professional mobility within Europe — a requirement that is still missing from NAFTA. European governments and higher education institutions are addressing program articulation; equivalency of credit and credentials; tuition and fees; and other issues (Davis 1999). New academic programs are being developed in response to Europe's changing economic environment. These programs offer students a full range of academic, cultural and linguistic experiences that are designed to prepare them to function internationally. NAMP is a first step in this direction, but it is a meager attempt compared with European efforts. While the European movement toward greater integration of their higher education systems is not without difficulty, the effort suggests models that

could be applicable to North America. At the least, their initiatives are expanding our ideas of what is possible.

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#### **FUTURE DIRECTIONS: COLLABORATION AND THE ROLE OF CONAHEC**

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Meeting the challenge posed by internationalization will require a sustained effort on multiple fronts. Some of the ways in which this agenda could be supported are:

- **CLEARINGHOUSE AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE:** Few formal agreements between higher education institutions transcend pledges of cooperation and promote actual collaboration. In fact, many institutions in Canada, Mexico and the United States desire partnerships with other North American institutions but lack contacts, information and ideas. Many current arrangements derive from chance encounters between faculty and administrators and don't reflect a clear understanding among the participants of their expectations for the agreement. Access to a database or clearinghouse of potential institutional partners would help all institutions find partners with similar or complementary needs, resources, and interests. A clearinghouse would also help institutions with a limited experience in international collaboration to get started.
- **DATA COLLECTION, INTERPRETATION AND RESEARCH:** There is no trilateral group engaged in this task, and each North American country collects and interprets its own data. The result is an apples-to-oranges-to-plums analysis that can present more confusion than useful information (Hok 1998). In addition, examples of how to create international cooperation in higher education are scarce. There is an almost desperate need for more information about actual examples, especially in the rapidly changing environment created by economic globalization and information technology.
- **DISSEMINATION OF BEST PRACTICES AND MODELS:** The evaluation of effective programs can be used to identify new models of international collaboration that could apply to a variety of settings. Likewise, evaluations of innovative international programs are all too often not used to guide future initiatives (Adelman 1999, 33). The dissemination of best practices can be very effective for promoting change, and there is a ready audience for this information.
- **ADVOCACY FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION:** While the economic and trade aspects of NAFTA have captured the attention of policymakers, the educational dimension has gotten scant notice. Higher education internationalization is almost universally endorsed, but actual campus initiatives often have to fight for acceptance and support. All those in a position to help foster greater collaboration in North American higher education should have the chance to learn what they can do to help.
- **ADVOCACY FOR GREATER PROFESSIONAL MOBILITY:** Professional mobility is an inevitable outgrowth of greater economic integration. Higher education has its own needs to support professional mobility, for faculty and others involved in more integrated academic programs. We should prepare for a future in which professional mobility is more accepted.

- PROMOTING NEW APPROACHES TO TUITION RECIPROCITY AND FINANCIAL AID: Tuition reciprocity is a simple but effective technique to promote internationalization. Unlike other initiatives, state governments in the United States would play a key role in expanding the option of reciprocity. However, even with expanded tuition reciprocity, it is important to find ways to directly support students with significant financial needs, so that they can participate in international academic exchanges. Financial aid targeted to international students who could not otherwise participate in international programs may be the best approach to solving this problem.

Internationally integrated academic programs will never have the support they need — financial and otherwise — until they are seen as an integral part of the educational enterprise. Programs must be developed that are fully international from the start, with the expectation that participants will travel, participate in international conferences, spend time in other countries and use information technology to accomplish their goals. Those in North American higher education should view the region as a resource that can improve their programs and better prepare students for a global future. Only in this way will international cooperation become a part of higher education instead of an add-on that is always dependent on outside funding and subject to cancellation at a moment's notice. The goal is that North American perspectives and experiences become an essential element of higher education for all North American students.

Accomplishing this vision — attaining true integration among higher education in Canada, Mexico and the United States — will be based on greatly expanding consortial relationships between North American higher education institutions. Webster defines a consortium as “an agreement, combination, or group formed to undertake an enterprise beyond the resources of any one member.” The internationalization of higher education is clearly beyond the resources of any one institution or nation. However, organizations such as CONAHEC can help. Supporting, developing and sustaining these consortia is a role that the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration is uniquely poised to fill.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## Commonly Used Acronyms in North American Higher Education

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### Listado de Siglas

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### Abréviations couramment utilisées dans l'enseignement supérieur nord-américain

	English	español	français
<b>ABET</b>	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology	Consejo Estadounidense para la Acreditación de Programas de Ingeniería y Tecnología	Conseil pour l'accréditation pour les programmes en génie et en technologie
<b>ACCC</b>	Association of Canadian Community Colleges	Asociación Canadiense de Colegios Comunitarios	Association des collèges communautaires du Canada
<b>ACE</b>	American Council on Education	Consejo Estadounidense de la Educación Superior	Conseil américain pour l'enseignement supérieur
<b>ALENA</b>	North American Free Trade Agreement	Tratado Trilateral de Libre Comercio de América del Norte	Accord de libre-échange nord-américain
<b>ALO</b>	Association Liaison Office	Oficina Estadounidense de Coordinación de las Asociaciones de la Educación Superior	Association pour la Coordination de l'enseignement supérieur
<b>AMPEI</b>	Mexican Association for International Education	Asociación Mexicana para la Educación Internacional	Association mexicaine pour l'éducation internationale
<b>ANUIES</b>	Mexican National Association of Higher Education Institutions	Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior	Association nationale des universités et des établissements d'enseignement supérieur
<b>AUCC</b>	Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada	Asociación de Colegios y Universidades de Canadá	Association des Universités et Collèges du Canada
<b>BORDER PACT</b>	Border Partners in Action	Pacto Fronterizo: Red de Universidades de la Frontera México Estados- Unidos	Réseau d'universités de la frontière mexicano-américaine
<b>CACEI</b>	Mexican Commission for Accreditation of Schools of Engineering	Comisión para la Acreditación de Escuelas de Ingeniería	Commission d'agrément des écoles d'ingénieurs
<b>CBIE/BCEI</b>	Canadian Bureau for International Education	Oficina Canadiense para la Educación Internacional	Bureau canadien de l'éducation internationale
<b>CENEVAL</b>	Mexican Center for Evaluation of Higher Education	Centro Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior	Centre national d'évaluation de l'enseignement supérieur
<b>COMPI</b>	Mexican Committees for the International Practice of Professions	Comité Mexicano para la Práctica Internacional	Comité mexicain de la pratique internationale
<b>CONACYT</b>	Mexican National Council on Science and Technology	Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología	Conseil national de la science et de la technologie
<b>CONAEVA</b>	Mexican National Commission for the Evaluation of Higher Education	Comisión Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior	Commission nationale pour l'évaluation de l'enseignement supérieur

	<b>English</b>	<b>español</b>	<b>français</b>
<b>CONAHEC</b>	Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration	Consortio para la Colaboración de la Educación Superior en América del Norte	Consortium pour la collaboration dans l'enseignement supérieur en Amérique du Nord
<b>CONOCER</b>	Mexican Council for the Normalization and Certification of Work Competencies	Consejo para la Normalización y Certificación de Competencias Laborales	Conseil de normalisation et de certification des compétences professionnelles
<b>CREPUQ</b>	Conference of Rectors and Principals of Quebec Universities	Asociación de Rectores de Universidades de Quebec	Conférence des recteurs et des principaux des universités du Québec
<b>DFAIT/ MAECI</b>	Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade	Ministerio Canadiense de Asuntos Exteriores y Comercio Internacional	Ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Commerce international
<b>EUMC</b>	World University Services of Canada	Servicios Universitarios Mundiales de Canadá	Entraide universitaire mondiale du Canada
<b>FIMPES</b>	Mexican Federation of Private Institutions of Higher Education	Federación de Instituciones Mexicanas Particulares de Educación Superior	Fédération des établissements privés mexicains d'enseignement supérieur
<b>ICEED</b>	International Consortium for Educational and Economic Development	Consortio Internacional para la Educación y el Desarrollo Economico	Consortium international pour l'éducation et le développement économique
<b>IIE</b>	Institute for International Education	Instituto Internacional para la Educación	Institut pour l'éducation internationale
<b>IMHEP</b>	International Mobility in Higher Education Program (Canada)	Programa de Movilidad de Estudiantes de América del Norte	Programme de mobilité internationale en éducation supérieure
<b>NAFTA</b>	North American Free Trade Agreement	Tratado Trilateral de Libre Comercio de América del Norte	Accord de libre-échange nord-américain
<b>NAMP</b>	North American Mobility Program	Programa de Movilidad de Estudiantes de América del Norte	Programme de mobilité nord-américaine en éducation supérieure
<b>PMIES</b>	International Mobility in Higher Education Program (Canada)	Programa de Movilidad de Estudiantes de América del Norte	Programme de mobilité internationale en éducation supérieure
<b>PROMESAN</b>	North American Mobility Program	Programa de Movilidad de Estudiantes de América del Norte	Programme de mobilité nord-américaine en éducation supérieure
<b>SEP</b>	Mexican Ministry of Public Education	Secretaría de Educación Pública	Ministère mexicain de l'Éducation
<b>TLC</b>	North American Free Trade Agreement	Tratado Trilateral de Libre Comercio de América del Norte	Accord de libre-échange nord-américain
<b>WUSC</b>	World University Services of Canada	Servicios Universitarios Mundiales de Canadá	Entraide universitaire mondiale du Canada