

Educators Discuss Canada's Gains in Internationalizing Campuses and Ways of Extending That Trend

By KAREN BIRCHARD

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Internationalization is now the norm on Canadian campuses, with the vast majority of universities and colleges including a commitment to international education in their mission statements, Web-site statements, and strategic planning, the author of a national report said here on Tuesday at the annual conference of the Canadian Bureau for International Education.

That emphasis has meant increases in foreign students, faculty members teaching overseas or visiting from other countries, study-abroad programs, and international partnerships over the past six years, along with curriculum changes. But there is still room for improvement, the author, Tom Tunney, said during a panel discussion of a recent survey of internationalization efforts on campuses.

Mr. Tunney is a senior analyst with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, which conducted the survey. Mr. Tunney's report on some of the findings of the survey, which was conducted in 2006, were released this fall (*The Chronicle*, September 14), and the final part of that report will be available early next year. The 2006 survey updates data from an earlier survey on internationalization, taken in 2000.

"While we see an increase since the previous survey in 2000 in the number of Canadian students studying abroad, up from 1 percent to 2.2 percent," he said, "we heard Germany say at this conference that it wants to have 50 percent of its students study abroad. So clearly there's a long way for us to go."

Mr. Tunney said he was also concerned over a decline in the number of institutions that include a foreign-language component in their degree requirements, which fell from 16 percent in the earlier survey to 9 percent in 2006.

A comparison of the two surveys shows a rapid growth in foreign students on campuses, both full time and part time, Mr. Tunney said, but administrators want more. "A number of universities said they had target numbers in their strategic planning, and two-thirds said they had not yet met the target," he said.

Sixty percent of the universities now use faculty workshops to internationalize their curricula, the latest survey found. Another panel member, Sabine Lehr of the University of Victoria, in British Columbia, described how such workshops at that institution help faculty members make "world-mindedness" part of their teaching.

"The term 'internationalization' might put some off," said Ms. Lehr, who is assistant director of the university's international office, "so we tell them to come up with their own terminology but make the world the point of reference for everything they do in the classroom."

The session also heard from Nipissing University, a small institution in Ontario that didn't have an international office until 2003 and had virtually no international activity six years ago. It went from three foreign students to 50 this year and intends to keep on growing, said Karen Strang, Nipissing's international director.

She described how "thinking outside the box" helps Nipissing foster internationalization efforts on a budget. One strategy involves arranging student exchanges with partner institutions overseas.

"It can be very expensive to go abroad," Ms. Strang said. "So we let a student from a less wealthy country pay the residence fee at his or her home university, and our student pays the residence fee at Nipissing, and the two students switch countries and rooms."

Meanwhile, a few blocks from the conference, the president of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, Claire Morris, was appearing before the Finance Committee of the Canadian Parliament's House of Commons. Ms. Morris urged the politicians to provide more support for graduate education, saying the money was needed to attract top foreign students to Canada and keep the nation's own talented students in Canada.

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