

# Canadian university engagement in international development cooperation

*“Training human resources and strengthening university institutions in the Third World (as it was known after World War II) represented the very heart of early Canadian university initiatives. These initiatives did much to lay solid institutional underpinnings for internationalization by bringing foreign students to Canada in increasing numbers and engaging universities in the management of contracts awarded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Little by little, nearly all university institutions became involved in development assistance and found themselves adopting a vision that became an essential feature of the Canadian higher education system.”<sup>1</sup>*

International development cooperation involving the training of human resources and institutional capacity building in the South has been an important, even foundational, feature of internationalization within Canadian universities over the years. Since the 1970s, members of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) have engaged in over 2,600 international development projects and have trained more than 265,000 people in the developing world.<sup>2</sup> During this time, Canadian universities have cemented strong linkages with developing country institutions, many of which have grown from initial partnerships that addressed development challenges to include other forms of interaction.

Findings from AUCC’s 2006 survey on internationalization (see p. 8) suggest that there is an increasing complexity of engagement to members’ international development cooperation efforts. This engagement cuts through and interacts with other facets of internationalization, including student and faculty mobility, the internationalization of the curriculum, the export of educational services abroad and international research collaboration.



Faculty members Linda Ogilvie (right), from the University of Alberta’s faculty of nursing, and Mary Opare (left), head of the school of nursing at the University of Ghana, proudly stand by the first six students to obtain their graduate degree in nursing from a new MPhil program established through the University Partnerships in Cooperation and Development program.

Barbara J. Astle, RN, PhD(c)

Survey responses show that engagement with developing countries is a priority for many institutions and an increasing area of interest for students and faculty members. The leading rationale among responding institutions for recruiting students from developing countries to campus is to ensure that developing country perspectives are represented on campus. Similarly, many member universities are sending Canadian students to developing countries to ensure that students are imbued with a global outlook that includes an understanding of developing country issues.

Survey respondents also identified a number of issues that continue to have an impact on the levels and types of engagement possible. Paramount among these is the issue of resources. While Canadian institutions contribute resources to support their engagement in international development cooperation, they rely on outside sources of funding, particularly from CIDA. Relatedly, the issue of recognition of the important role of higher education to international development was identified, particularly in terms of research collaboration with developing country partners. Findings

1 S. Bond & J.-P. Lemasson (ed.), *A New World of Knowledge – Canadian Universities and Globalization*, 1999, p. 240

2 AUCC, internal database and estimates

suggest that mechanisms to recognize this value within Canadian universities themselves and within the federal government are required.

Despite such challenges – and with their extensive experience and partnerships and their continued desire to engage with the South in a growing number of ways – Canadian universities appear well poised to contribute even further to international development cooperation.

## A prominent place in strategic plans

Given the relatively long history of collaboration between Canadian universities and partners in developing countries, it is not surprising that international development cooperation remains a priority for Canadian universities and their students, faculty and staff. Engagement in international development cooperation was identified as a medium

or high priority by 73 percent of survey respondents in terms of their strategic plans for internationalization.

*International development cooperation was identified as a medium or high priority by 73 percent of survey respondents in terms of their strategic plans for internationalization.*

The survey also confirms an increasing interest on the part of students and faculty to participate in international development cooperation. Two-thirds of respondents indicated an increased level of interest by faculty members since 2000 to engage in research collaboration with developing country partners and to conduct research on global issues. A similar proportion of respondents indicated that the level of interest among Canadian students to become more engaged in developing country issues has also increased since 2000.

International development cooperation occupies a favoured place in many institutions' internationalization strategy. The executive offices of member institutions were asked to provide examples of their most successful and innovative internationalization initiatives, and well over half of the examples provided involved collaboration with developing country partners. Not all examples of collaboration with developing country partners were limited to the more traditional forms of international development cooperation such as training of faculty and students and institutional capacity-building activities. They also included mutually beneficial research collaboration and the establishment of joint degree programs.

A further demonstration of Canadian universities' commitment to international development cooperation can be found

in the resources that they contribute to support such cooperation. For example, Canadian universities have committed more than \$100 million in financial and in-kind contributions to the CIDA-funded University Partnerships in Cooperation and Development (UPCD) program since its inception in 1994. This amount represents a cost-sharing contribution of approximately 34 percent of the total Canadian contribution.<sup>3</sup>

## Mutually beneficial cooperation

Canadian university participation in international development cooperation projects often has an impact in partner countries through human resource development, capacity building and research collaboration. It can also have an impact on campuses in Canada. Jim Shute, in his contributing chapter to the 1999 International Development Research Centre publication, *A New World of Knowledge – Canadian Universities and Globalization*, illustrates this point. He describes a Scotiabank-AUCC Awards for Excellence in Internationalization winning initiative which, in addition to benefiting the host country, led to impressive changes at the Canadian university, including new content for advanced



*Students Kevin Herman and Gillian Koh (standing together at the back), of King's University College at The University of Western Ontario, learned about governance and community services during their internship in India through the Students for Development program.*

courses, the establishment of two-way student exchanges, a new language course, a master's thesis and two doctoral theses, as well as more than \$600,000 worth of funding for research projects.<sup>4</sup>

The above example illustrates some of the important benefits to Canadian universities that result from involvement in international development projects. Survey findings confirm that many member universities are active in ensuring that the campus benefits from international development cooperation and that developing country perspectives are reflected across other facets of internationalization such as two-way student mobility, the internationalization of the curriculum and research collaboration.<sup>5</sup>

## Bringing a Southern perspective to campus

Survey findings suggest that from the point of view of the universities, the top benefit of internationalization to Canadian students is the development of a global perspective and values. Similarly, respondents identified the promotion of an internationalized campus and the development of responsible and engaged “global citizens” as the most important reasons for recruiting international students and for sending Canadian students abroad. More than 60 percent of respondents assigned a medium or high priority within their institutions’ internationalization strategies to recruit students from develop-



*McGill University received one of the four 2006 Scotiabank-AUCC Awards for Excellence in Internationalization for its International Courts and Tribunals Program, which allows law students to work for nine months in international courts and tribunals like the Special Court for Sierra Leone.*

ing countries and to support Canadian student mobility to developing countries. This suggests that in their efforts to promote a more internationalized campus and develop engaged global citizens, many universities find it important that the global outlook includes perspectives from the developing world.

As indicated earlier, Canadian students are increasingly interested in international development cooperation. Understandably, much of the interest is directed toward study abroad opportunities. Comments from respondents suggest that students are looking for more for-credit study abroad opportunities in developing countries and for the institutions to secure greater funding support for such opportunities. Students’ interest in international develop-

ment cooperation is not, however, limited to study abroad. Students are also calling for more courses and on-campus activities devoted to international development.

## Growth in international development programs

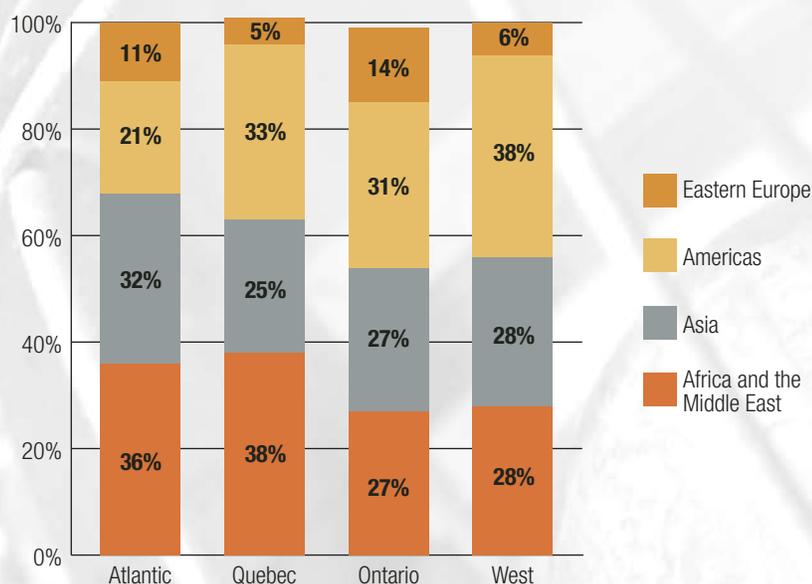
Internationalization of the curriculum is clearly another strategic priority for Canadian universities. Respondents almost unanimously say that bringing an international dimension to the curriculum and teaching/learning process is an overall strategic priority at their institution, and roughly 65 percent report an increased growth in international programs in the last five years. When asked which international programs were experiencing

<sup>3</sup> AUCC estimates

<sup>4</sup> S. Bond & J.-P. Lemasson (ed.), *A New World of Knowledge*, 1999, p. 35. More information on the winning initiative (by Université du Québec à Montréal) can be found in the AUCC document *Towards a More Global Campus* (1999), available at [www.aucc.ca/\\_pdf/english/publications/global1999\\_e.pdf](http://www.aucc.ca/_pdf/english/publications/global1999_e.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> A separate publication will address international research collaboration, including research related to international development cooperation, in more detail.

**Figure 1**  
**Top regions for international development cooperation**



the most growth, roughly one-third of respondents mentioned international development studies, third only to programs related to international business and international affairs, many of which have courses and concentrations in international development studies.

A review of the number of universities with international development programs over time also confirms a tripling in the number of Canadian universities with international development studies programs, from about six in 1986 to 19 in 2006.<sup>6</sup>

## The growing complexity of partnerships

The changing relationship between some Canadian universities and their partner institutions in developing countries reflects the increasingly multifaceted and cross-cutting nature of international development cooperation at Canadian universities. In particular, Canadian university involvement with institutions in China and India highlights this growing complexity. Historically, China has been the top country of

Canadian university involvement in international development, with 234 development projects since the 1970s. India follows with 106 projects.<sup>7</sup> Survey findings show that China and India are also ranked at the top in terms of institutional priority countries for international development cooperation, research collaboration with developing countries, international student recruitment, two-way faculty mobility and the export of educational products and services.

Comments from survey respondents also highlight the increased depth of relationships between Canadian universities and their partner institutions in China and India. Emerging initiatives include the establishment of joint degrees, student exchanges and strategic joint research collaboration. For example, one respondent outlined new strategic initiatives that include mechanisms and seed funding to establish new research collaboration with partner institutions in India in such priority research areas as nanotechnology, neuroscience, energy and environment, and genomics. Moreover, China and India are also emerging economies and have become strategic research partners for Canada, as evidenced by Canada's recent signing of science and technology agreements with both countries.

## Involvement in many countries and sectors

Notwithstanding the particular importance of China and India, survey findings show that Canadian university engagement

<sup>6</sup> AUCC Directory of Canadian Universities. This number reflects the growth in international development studies programs only. Other programs with courses or a concentration in international development were not counted.

<sup>7</sup> AUCC CUPID database

*Canadian universities' expertise in the areas of governance, environment, health and basic education – important priorities for Canada's international development assistance – is notable.*

in international development cooperation is very broad and diverse, reaching out to many countries and sectors.

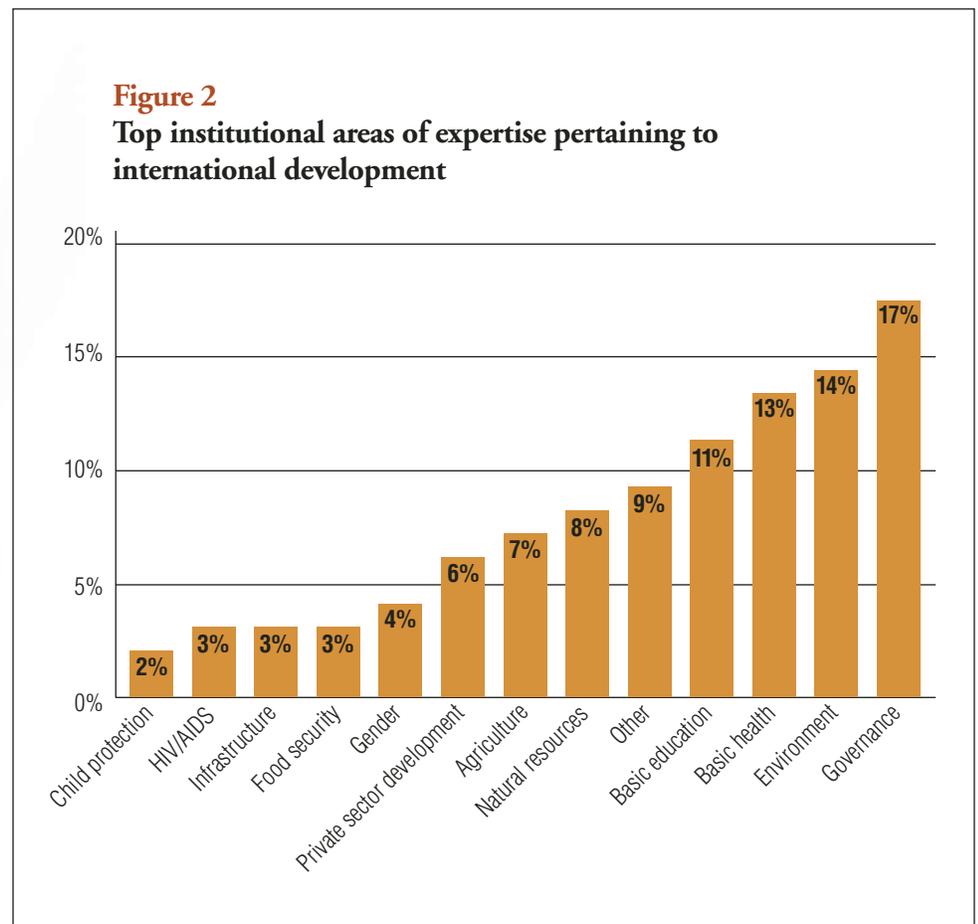
Canadian universities are engaged in international development cooperation across the South (see Figure 1) with countries at varying levels of socio-economic development. One-quarter of the more than 60 developing countries identified by respondents as priorities for their international development efforts are given a low ranking on the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index (HDI) – and are mostly located in sub-Saharan Africa. The majority, 65 percent, involve developing countries with a medium HDI, and the remaining 10 percent are developing countries with a high HDI.<sup>8</sup>

Canadian universities, particularly from Quebec, continue to have important links with institutions from countries belonging to *La Francophonie* such as Morocco, Vietnam and Senegal. When asked about the top countries for their international development cooperation efforts, 46 percent of respondents from Quebec institutions cited developing countries belonging to *La Francophonie* (and Algeria). This compares to 31 percent of responses

in Atlantic Canada, 20 percent in Ontario and 13 percent in Western Canada.

Respondents were also asked to identify the top three areas of expertise at their institutions which correspond to CIDA's sectors of priority. They identified strengths in each of the 12 main sectors listed (see Figure 2). Responding institutions' expertise in the area of governance, which remains an important priority for Canada's international development assistance, is notable. Canadian universities also bring expertise from across all disciplines to their research

**Figure 2**  
Top institutional areas of expertise pertaining to international development



8 UNDP Human Development Report 2006

## *Survey respondents identified a lack of grants or funds as the top barrier to Canadian faculty engagement in research collaboration with developing country partners.*

partnerships with developing country partners. In terms of priority sectors for *research* collaboration with developing countries, respondents identified more than 80 different sectors and sub-sectors, with environment, health, agriculture and rural development, governance, education and private sector development featuring most prominently.

### **Barriers and opportunities for further collaboration**

Sheryl Bond and Jean-Pierre Lemasson, in their 1999 publication *A New World of Knowledge*, point to the important role that CIDA has played in making international development cooperation an essential feature of the Canadian higher education system. They also highlight CIDA's role in increasing the number of university actors in international development cooperation and in creating the conditions for even greater university engagement.<sup>9</sup> Findings from the 2006 survey suggest that CIDA remains the primary source of funding for Canadian university engagement in inter-

national development cooperation overseas. More than 60 percent of respondents referenced one or more CIDA-funded initiatives, and almost 50 percent identified

one or more UPCD projects. Furthermore, according to AUCC's CUPID database, of the 2,600 international development projects in which Canadian universities were involved since the 1970s, approximately two-thirds received funding from CIDA.<sup>10</sup>

While Canadian universities remain generally reliant on CIDA for funding of international development cooperation activities overseas, the university community saw decreasing levels of funding by CIDA throughout the 1990s.<sup>11</sup>



*A team of Nicaraguan researchers develop their environmental management capacity by partnering with University of Calgary researchers through the Central American Water Resource Management Network project, funded by the University Partnerships in Cooperation and Development program.*

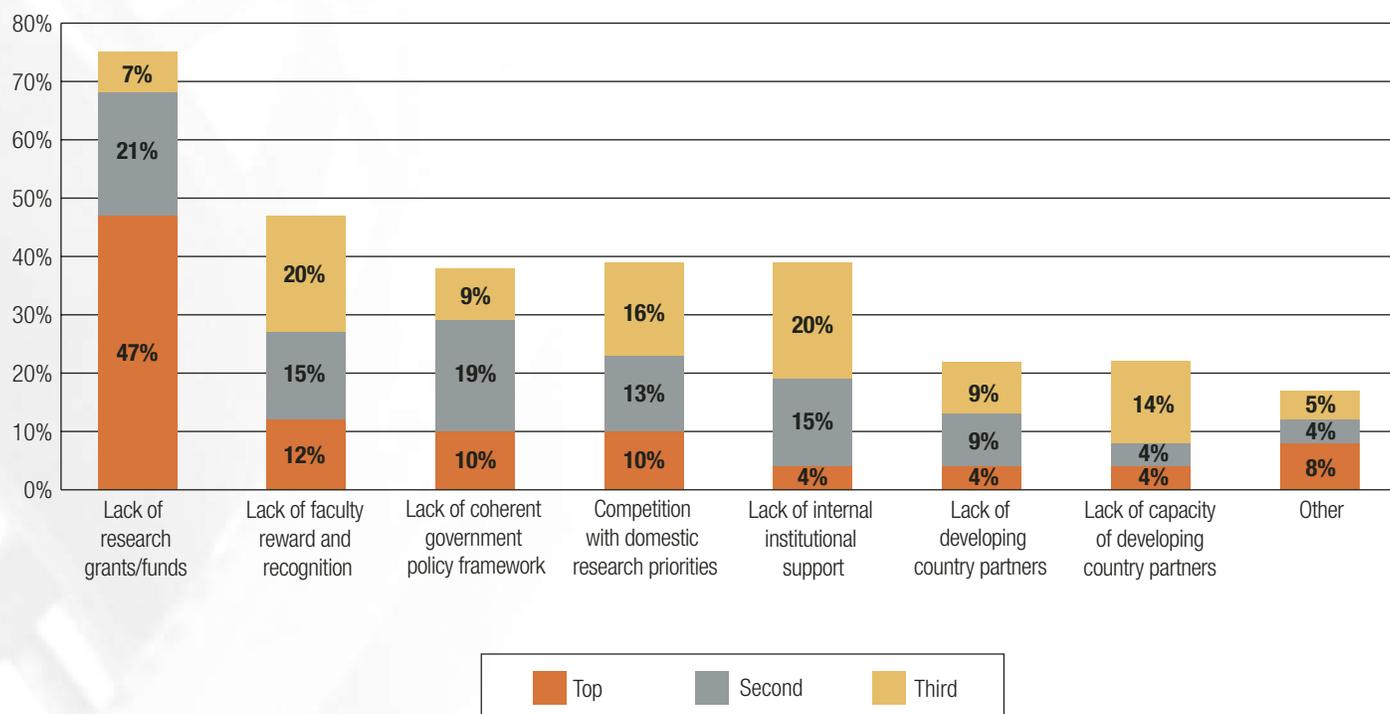
9 S. Bond & J.-P. Lemasson (ed.), *A New World of Knowledge*, 1999, p. 240

10 AUCC CUPID database. Other funding agencies include both Canadian (e.g., IDRC) and international (e.g., World Bank) bodies.

11 J. Shute, *A New World of Knowledge* (S. Bond & J.-P. Lemasson, ed.), 1999, p. 28-29

**Figure 3**

**Top barriers to Canadian faculty engagement in research collaboration with developing country partners**



Universities' efforts to further contribute to Canada's international development goals are therefore somewhat hampered by limited resources. For example, survey respondents identified a lack of grants or funds as the top barrier to Canadian faculty engagement in research collaboration with developing country partners (see Figure 3). University participation in the UPCD program also supports this assertion. While 103 of the 389 proposals submitted for UPCD funding between

2002 and 2006 were deemed to merit funding by the program selection committees, funds were available to support only 53.<sup>12</sup> Figure 3 also shows that lack of appropriate faculty recognition and reward structures and lack of a coherent government policy framework impede international research collaboration with developing countries.

Fortunately there are signs of increasing recognition of the critical role of higher

education as a sector that supports all other sectors in a country. For example, World Bank reports such as *Higher Education and Economic Development in Africa* (2006) and *Higher Education in Developing Countries – Peril and Promise* (2000) point to the pivotal role that higher education plays in economic growth and poverty reduction. The Commission for Africa's 2005 report, *Our Common Interest*, noted a state of crisis in higher education in Africa and called on the interna-

12 AUCC estimates from internal database

tional community to significantly increase its contribution to revitalise Africa's higher education institutions.<sup>13</sup>

There are also signs of a growing appreciation within Canada of the importance of international research collaboration, particularly with such countries as China, India, Mexico and Brazil, for Canada's own development and competitiveness in the global economy. For example, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research are developing new internationally focused initiatives and integrating an international dimension into other existing programs.

Evidently, Canadian universities contribute to and benefit from international development cooperation in diverse and significant ways. A fuller recognition of this fact, coupled with a general recognition of the critical role higher education plays in a country's development, will help ensure that the expertise and interest in international development cooperation are supported with sufficient opportunities, recognition and resources for the faculty members, students and staff involved.

## The AUCC 2006 internationalization survey update

Since the early 1990s, AUCC has sought to track the depth and breadth of its member institutions' international activities with a view to understanding how this has contributed to the integration of an international and intercultural dimension to teaching/learning, research and community service on campuses across the country. An initial survey in 1991 was followed by a more extensive and systematic survey in 1993, which resulted in the publication of the national report *Internationalization of Canadian Universities: The Changing Landscape* (Knight, 1995). In 2000 AUCC published the findings of a 1999 follow-up survey in its comprehensive report *Progress and Promise – The 2000 AUCC Report on Internationalization at Canadian Universities*.

Six years later, in September 2006, AUCC launched a seven-part survey update of its member institutions (89 at that time) to gather comprehensive, up-to-date information about the nature and scope of internationalization at Canadian universities. Seven member institutions, as affiliates, were included in the responses of some of their parent institution. A total of 64 member institutions submitted at least one of the seven questionnaires, for an overall response rate of 78 percent. The cross-section of respondents reflected the diversity of size, mission and region of Canada's universities.

For this fact sheet, 56 responses to Questionnaire 6 – Canadian University Engagement with Developing Countries – were examined. The 56 participating institutions represent a 68-percent response rate. The questionnaire included both qualitative and quantitative questions. Because AUCC's report in 2000 did not include an in-depth examination of international development cooperation at Canadian universities, the current analysis represents an increasing effort to gather information on this issue.

All publications based on the 2006 internationalization survey update appear on AUCC's web site at [www.aucc.ca/internationalization](http://www.aucc.ca/internationalization).

<sup>13</sup> Commission for Africa, *Our Common Interest*, 2005, p. 139-140