

U.S.-Canada Educational Exchange: Academic Alliances and Opportunities

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Overview: Opportunity for Educational Exchange Across a Shared Border

As is the case with the U.S. and Mexico, the U.S. and Canada have long had a cross-border flow of post-secondary students and educators. However, important initiatives are currently underway in Canada and the U.S. to recruit and retain international scholars.

Due to the expansion of post-secondary education programs and the demands of a globalized economy, Canada and the U.S. share a growing interest in cross-border academic initiatives, such as international student enrollment and outreach to professionals in the field of education. According to a 2013 report by World Education Services, the enrollment of international undergraduate students in the U.S. and Canada has grown by 40 to 50 percent in the past decade.

Historical Trends

U.S. philanthropists and academics have had a longstanding interest in Canadian colleges, universities, and research facilities. For example, in addition to funding more than 100 public libraries in Canada at the turn of the twentieth century, U.S. philanthropist Andrew Carnegie also provided funding for the Birge-Carnegie Library at the University of Toronto.

Former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau received a master's degree from Harvard University. Other Canadian scholars and students have gone to the U.S. for careers and degrees for various reasons, especially for access to certain experts and facilities. According to the Institute of International Education Open Doors Data, during the 2012-2013 academic year, 27,357 students from Canada attended schools in the U.S.

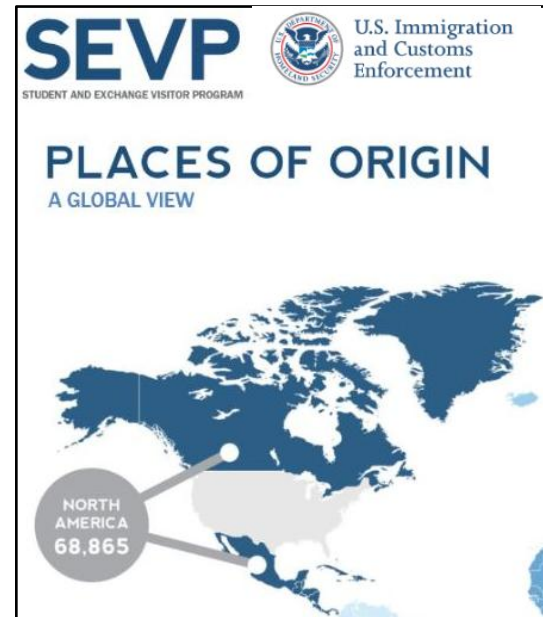


Figure 1. Excerpt from Student and Exchange Visitor Program, "Places of Origin: A Global View."

Likewise, many U.S. scholars and students live and work in Canada. Lately, the Government of Canada, U.S. college placement advisors, and U.S. media outlets have urged U.S. high school students to consider enrolling in higher education programs in Canada, which are often praised for having lower tuition rates than comparable institutions in the U.S. To encourage this trend, some Canadian institutions, such as the University of Windsor, offer preferential international student tuition rates to students from the U.S.

In "Academic Migration at the Canada-US Border," Remy Trémbly and his colleagues provide an overview of the impact that open border-crossing policies have had on hiring in higher education. They note that, although "there are currently more Americans residing in Canada and more Canadians living in the US than at any time in the last 40

years,” educational exchange has been slowed by factors like preferential hiring for Canadian scholars.

Many professors from the U.S. were recruited in the wake of the rapid expansion of post-secondary education in Canada in the 1960s. Partially in response to this concentration of U.S. scholars, particularly at newer Canadian universities, legislation passed in 1981 continues to ensure preferential hiring for Canadian candidates for academic positions in Canada.

Cross-border hiring of U.S. scholars in Canadian schools and Canadian scholars in U.S. schools occurs to this day, although at lower rates than one might expect for such close neighbors. The “brain drain” and “brain gain” of academic opportunities tends to flow both ways across the U.S.-Canada border, with undergraduate students, graduate-level students, post-doctoral fellows, early career scholars, tenured professors, and other researchers spending time in both countries.

Educational Programs

Since 1990, Fulbright Canada has offered academic exchange opportunities for citizens of the U.S. and Canada in support of cultural exchange and public policy debate to foster bi-national dialogue and mutual understanding. The Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC), established in 1994 as the U.S.-Mexico Educational Interchange Project, expanded its mandate in 1997 to support collaborative academic programs in the U.S., Mexico, and Canada.

Canada’s strategic plan to increase access to cutting edge research and development in the contemporary knowledge-based economy includes initiatives to attract scholars from around the world. For example, the Canada Research Chairs program, created in 2000, involves an annual investment of roughly \$265 million to attract academic researchers to institutions of higher learning across the country.

As of 2013, roughly 10,000 U.S. students are enrolled in Canadian institutions. This small

number is surprising, particularly in light of recent publicity regarding lower tuition rates in Canada for U.S. students in popular media outlets such as *Inside Higher Ed*, *NBC News*, and *USA Today*.



Figure 2. Excerpt from Breitbart News, “Canadian Colleges Wooing US Students with Lower Tuition.”

Economic Impact of International Education in Canada

The Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (DFATD) is responsible for government participation in major scholarships for international academic institutions, faculty, researchers, and students. A report from DFATD estimates that international students in Canada spent approximately \$7 billion in 2010 on education services including tuition, accommodation, taxes, and other expenses.

In 2010, students from the U.S. in Canada were ranked fifth in terms of value of international education services (approximately \$370 million), coming after China, Korea, India, and Saudi Arabia. Compared to export goods trade, estimated at

nearly \$300 billion in 2010, the value of educational services provided to U.S. students in Canada is only 0.1 percent of all goods exported from Canada to the U.S.

Immigration Services Supporting International Education in Canada

In the interest of attracting international students and retaining them to contribute to the economy, Canada has created a flexible program to facilitate study permits, work permits, and permanent residency requirements for non-Canadian graduates of Canadian institutions. International students in Canada can apply for a study permit that enables them to work both on and off campus. Upon completion of academic programs, international students are eligible to apply for a Post-Graduation Work Permit, and are then eligible to apply for permanent residence in Canada through the Provincial Nomination Program. The much-touted flexibility of these arrangements (as modified in June 2014) enables international students to pursue various paths of working, studying, and pursuing citizenship in Canada.

Immigration Services Supporting International Education in the U.S.

In the wake of the tragedies of September 11, 2001, and subsequent restrictions placed on border crossings, the U.S. policy for international students has generally resulted in stricter visa requirements. The various visas through the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services available to international students include the F-1 (student status) and the H-1B visa (nonimmigrant temporary working visa). The latter involves obtaining a job offer as well as the support of an employer. Despite the somewhat more complicated immigration processes involved for study in the U.S., universities in the U.S. remain a popular destination for many international students. According to the Embassy of the United States in Ottawa, Canadian citizens do not require visas to study in the U.S. Instead, Canadian students require a Certificate of Eligibility from their institution and Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVIS) registration.



Recommendations

A May 2012 report issued by DFATD offered a series of recommendations reflecting the importance of international students to the Canadian economy. These recommendations included the coordination of data collection on international student population through Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Statistics Canada, universities, colleges, and training institutions. Such data collection could include exit surveys for international students when they return to their home countries, a national survey to determine international student enrolment, and consistent record-keeping at local and national levels to determine the fiscal impact of international students. This could help service providers and stakeholders to better recognize and support the experiences of the international student population.

Federal policies in Canada have fostered an increase in international student enrollment, with a target of 450,000 by 2022, nearly doubling the 2011 figure of 240,000 international students. The creation of the Canadian Experience Class to retain educated international students after degree completion in Canada is one such policy intended to attract enrollment. With access to reduced tuition rates for U.S. students at some institutions, as well as changes to immigration requirements that err on the side of flexibility for students, Canada seems to be making a concerted, strategic effort to promote international student enrollment from the U.S. and other countries.

To build upon the flexibility of immigration policies and the appeal of low tuition rates, Canadian institutions of higher learning could develop more competitive programs of study and provide more funding for research, student services, and educational resources such as libraries and laboratories. Increasing funding for higher education could increase the appeal of academic

studies in Canada for international students, which would support Canada's International Education Strategy, announced in January 2014. As part of Canada's Economic Action Plan, the International Education Strategy contributes to the goal of creating jobs and economic growth in a "more prosperous, innovative and competitive" Canada.

In the U.S., there does not seem to be a particularly strong emphasis on the recruitment of Canadian students. In 2011, President Obama initiated the "100,000 Strong in the Americas" program, with a target of 100,000 students moving from the U.S. to Latin America and the Caribbean by 2020, more than doubling the current figure of 40,000 U.S. students studying in the region. A parallel program for cooperating with Canada would be useful to improve Canada-U.S. academic exchange and opportunities for educational collaboration.

Scholars such as the late Robert A. Pastor have urged trilateral approaches to trade and policy throughout NAFTA countries, rather than dual-bilateral arrangements, particularly in the education sector. In *The North American Idea*, Pastor noted that Canada and Mexico rank fifth and seventh, respectively, in sending students to the U.S., with only about 1,000 Mexican students studying in Canada in 2011. He advocated trilateral governmental support for the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC), scholarships to study abroad within North America, and other educational funding initiatives.

Catering visa requirements to match the needs of students and education professionals could also be helpful. Such efforts are partially under way with the Student and Exchange Visitor Program in the U.S. and updates to Citizenship and Immigration processes in Canada, but a concerted effort to integrate and expedite student visa applications would be useful to foster increased academic dialogue. Additional support for initiatives like on-campus mentoring programs could also be useful for supporting international students.

Overall, there are many areas for improvement in the education sector in Canada, the U.S., and

Mexico. Considering the sheer size of North American trade, trans-border educational funding mechanisms and cooperation lag far behind other forms of international collaboration. Researchers like Rem Trémbly and his colleagues find the paucity of academics from the U.S. who work in Canada, and vice versa, "quite surprising." While their study focuses on geography departments, the similarly limited exchange of students between the U.S. and Canada, as well as a general lack of priority on cross-border educational initiatives, leaves room for further international collaboration, cooperation, study, and understanding.

Action Items

Certain policy changes could help foster academic exchanges across the Canada-U.S. border:

- 1) Cater visa requirements to students and education professionals. For example, a rigorous pre-screening process for individuals or institutions aligned with the academic calendar could expedite the exchange of students and knowledge across the border. While preferential treatment exists somewhat for students from Canada and the U.S., additional improvements to the process could be helpful for fostering stronger collaborative educational ties.
- 2) Collect more information on the experiences of international students through surveys and other tools. These data could be used to enable recognition of and support for the international student population in both countries.
- 3) Increase trilateral support for the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration, scholarships to study abroad within North America, and other educational funding initiatives.
- 4) Provide on-campus resources for international students, such as scholarships, mentoring programs, and support groups.

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