Crossing borders, opening minds

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Studying and working abroad transforms Canadian students into global citizens, helping them develop inter-cultural awareness, adaptability and problem-solving skills. It also gives them a hiring edge with today’s employers. Leaving one’s home province to study can also be a transformative experience, increasing students’ understanding of the diverse cultures, histories and values that make up our country.

Whether learning abroad or in another province, these experiences deepen students’ awareness of the diversity of Canadian and international communities, while strengthening bonds between campuses across Canada and worldwide.

Too few Canadian students, however, benefit from the mobility experiences that can prepare them to enter a globalized labour market. Improving the international and interprovincial mobility of university students is a crucial step in developing our next generation of leaders and sharpening Canada’s competitive edge.

What Canada’s government should do
Canada needs to do more to encourage a culture of mobility among Canadian students. Universities Canada recommends that the federal government invest in a bold program of support for short-term domestic and international student mobility – in celebration of Canada’s 150th anniversary in 2017 – to help graduates better understand their country and the world.

Global and interprovincial experiences matter to employers
Studying in another country or another province helps students develop the cross-cultural skills that today’s employers increasingly demand. Canada’s export-driven economy depends on international trade, and Canadian businesses need to work seamlessly with partners across the country and around the world. Those who’ve studied and lived in another province or another country are highly sought-after by today’s employers, and are crucial to Canada’s global competitiveness.

The facts

2/3 say Canada at risk
Two out of three hiring managers say Canada is at risk of being left behind by dynamic global economies like China, India and Brazil unless young Canadians learn to think more globally.

Global experiences enhance competitiveness
Eighty-two percent of employers that hire recruits with international and intercultural experiences say employees with cross-cultural knowledge and an understanding of the global marketplace enhance their company’s competitiveness.

Employers value interprovincial experiences
Seventy-two percent of employers who seek recruits with interprovincial experience believe these graduates perform better in their job than others without these experiences.

Better employment outcomes
Europe’s Erasmus international mobility program is a successful example of how international experiences help students get ahead. Erasmus offers opportunities for European students to work and study abroad. Five years after graduation, the unemployment rate for Erasmus students was 23 percent lower than for those who had not gone abroad.

“An overseas exchange program to study or work is a fantastic way to develop creative thinking and adaptability.”

“Canada’s future will be largely shaped by the educational experiences of our young people, now and in the years ahead. And in a world of growing complexity, these experiences must increasingly extend beyond our own borders.”

Vianne Timmons, president of the University of Regina, in Embassy News, December 10, 2014

**What Canada’s universities are doing**

Universities across the country are committed to building international and interprovincial connections for students. While strengthening mobility opportunities that already exist, universities are working to embed more opportunities directly into academic courses and programs, and address the barriers that prevent students from engaging in these experiences.

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**The facts**

**97% offer study abroad opportunities**

Ninety-seven percent of Canadian universities offer their students international experiences such as academic coursework, field schools, work-terms and community service learning.¹

**92% have exchange agreements**

Ninety-two percent of Canadian universities have reciprocal exchange agreements with foreign partner institutions for students to complete either study or research practicums of one to six months.⁶

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**Addressing barriers to mobility**

Improving mobility for Canadian students is an ongoing challenge. Despite universities’ efforts to offer programs and financial support, too few Canadian students benefit from these valuable career-boosting experiences. Canada’s approach to mobility must also include increased emphasis on new study destinations, as well as provisions for non-traditional learners who face unique barriers to studying away from home.

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**The facts**

**Only 3% of students go abroad**

Just 3.1 percent of full-time undergraduates (about 25,000) had a short-term international experience in 2012-13. Only 2.6 percent had a for-credit experience abroad. These figures have remained steady over the past eight years.⁷

**Only 10% of students leave their province**

Current estimates suggest that only one in 10 young Canadians crosses a provincial border to complete their university degree.⁸

**91% say financing a challenge**

Although 78 percent of institutions provide some funding to support student participation in study abroad programs, 91 percent of universities say that lack of funds or financial support is one of the top three reasons for low student mobility rates, and more than half cite it as the top reason.⁹

**Encouraging students to develop experience and linguistic skills in these emerging economies is essential to growing a globally competitive Canadian economy.**

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**For more information**

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