



Storyline ideas

As students return to campus this fall, including the graduating class of Canada's sesquicentennial year, this is an opportunity to share student-centred stories of how universities nurture and mobilize Canada's talent for a brighter future. The following storylines and key messages reflect the priority advocacy issues of Canada's universities. They can be easily customized to your own institution's stories, experiences and successes. We hope you find them useful in undertaking an effective back to school communications campaign for your university.

1. Follow my lead

Indigenous role models make a difference

Canada's Indigenous youth have lower-than-average rates of university attainment than non-Indigenous Canadians and face unique obstacles on the path to higher education. But research shows that staying connected to their identity and having a sense of community can make a significant difference in Indigenous students' ability to successfully navigate university studies.

In particular, role models are critical to educational access and success for Indigenous students. Universities increasingly offer transition programs and support services that connect future and current Indigenous students with mentors who can help them reach their potential.

What services, mentorship programs or reach-back initiatives does your university offer? Who are your role models for Indigenous youth?

Key message

Universities foster Indigenous leadership, help create role models for the next generation of Indigenous innovators and leaders, and play a vital role in reconciliation through education.

Supporting Data

- Sixty-nine percent of Canadian universities offer programs to help Indigenous students transition into university studies, including outreach programs in Indigenous communities, academic support and mentorship for students starting as early as the elementary school level.
- Canadian universities offer 233 undergraduate programs and 62 graduate-level programs with a focus on Indigenous issues or specifically designed for Indigenous students – a 33 percent increase since 2013.
- Seventy-nine percent of Canadian universities have physical spaces where First Nations, Métis and Inuit students can gather and find counselling, support and connections to their culture, including local elders.
- Eighty-six percent of universities offer targeted support services including academic counselling and peer mentorship to meet the unique needs of Indigenous students.

Source: Universities Canada survey of members, 2015



Storyline ideas

2. Learning on the job

Work-integrated learning gives today's students tools for success

Applied learning is fast becoming the norm for today's university students. Starting early in undergraduate studies, students are participating in research and work-integrated learning experiences that give them the knowledge and skills they'll need to succeed.

What work-integrated learning programs does your university offer – including outside of the STEM disciplines? Can you share examples of summer research projects, service learning, capstone projects or business partnerships that help students build skills outside of the classroom? Has your university made commitments to making co-ops and internships more widely available to students?

Key message

Universities equip students with the hands-on, 21st century skills they need to thrive throughout their careers and personal lives.



Supporting Data

- Seventy-six percent of large employers agree that graduates of Canadian universities are coming to the workforce 'job-ready,' up from 68 percent in 2013.

Source: Business Council of Canada and Aon Hewitt, *Developing Canada's future workforce: a survey of large private-sector employers*, 2016

- More than half of today's undergraduates benefit from experiential learning – such as co-ops, internships and service learning – as part of their university education.

Source: Canadian University Survey Consortium, *Graduating University Student Survey*, 2015.





Storyline ideas

3. Navigating change

Canada needs more liberal arts grads

The liberal arts are essential to building a resilient, nimble and prosperous Canada. Our increasingly complex, multicultural and technologically advanced world needs the knowledge, skills and adaptability that are integral to an education in the humanities and social sciences.

Employers increasingly value soft skills over technical knowledge, including relationship-building, communication and problem-solving skills, teamwork, and analytical and leadership abilities – attributes developed and honed through studies in the social sciences and humanities. Armed with these skills, liberal arts students are prepared for rewarding and well-paid jobs that contribute to Canada's society and economy.

How is your university re-imagining programs and transforming the way the liberal arts are taught? How are the liberal arts embedded across disciplines in ways that align with employer demand for well-rounded grads? How are your students benefitting from innovation in the liberal arts?

Key message

The liberal arts help students and societies navigate change, and contribute to building an innovative, prosperous and inclusive Canada



Supporting Data

- The liberal arts nurture the skills and capabilities Canada's largest employers seek when hiring entry-level candidates:

Collaboration/teamwork skills

67%

Communication skills

59%

Problem-solving skills

51%

Relationship-building

48%

Source: Business Council of Canada and Aon Hewitt, Developing Canada's future workforce: a survey of large private-sector employers, 2016

- The majority of the world's leaders with higher education have degrees in the social sciences and humanities. A recent study across 30 countries looked at current professional leaders with higher education qualifications, across sectors, and found that the social sciences and humanities together make up more than half of bachelor's degrees among leaders.

Source: British Council study, Educational Pathways of Leaders: an international comparison – Findings of a 30 Country Study of Professional Leaders, 2015

- A recent study found that social sciences and humanities graduates enjoy steady increases in earnings throughout their careers, experiencing earnings growth of more than 70 percent over an eight-year period, similar to engineering and science graduates.

Source: Education Policy Research Initiative, *Barista or better? New evidence on the earnings of post-secondary education graduates*, 2016



Storyline ideas

4. Welcome to campus – now pack your bags!

When students go abroad, Canada benefits

In order for Canada to become a global innovation nation, young Canadians need to understand the world and its rich diversity of cultures. There's no better way to gain these global skills than by having a learning experience overseas during university – whether it's through study abroad, field school, research abroad, or international co-ops and internships.

To help young people gain global skills, however, we need to significantly increase the number of Canadians students who take part in an experience abroad. Too few students are taking advantage of these critical opportunities.

What kinds of international experiences does your institution offer students? Who are some returning students with compelling stories about these experiences? How have these experiences helped prepare them for the global knowledge economy?

Key message

Increasing the international mobility of university students is a crucial step in developing the leaders of tomorrow and sharpening Canada's competitive edge.

Supporting Data

- While 97 percent of universities offer international experiences, just 3.1 percent of full-time undergraduate students took advantage of these opportunities in 2012-13. Canada needs more students to gain the global competencies that employers demand.
Source: Universities Canada internationalization survey, 2014
- More than 80 percent of Canadian hiring managers feel that graduates with cross-cultural understanding and knowledge of a global marketplace are assets to the competitiveness of their companies.
Source: Leger Marketing employer survey for Universities Canada, 2014
- Almost 90 percent of graduates with international education agree that global experiences contributed to their career achievements.
Source: Canadian Bureau for International Education, A World of Learning: Canada's performance and potential in international education, 2014
- Ninety-six percent of Canadian universities include internationalization as part of their strategic planning; more than 80 percent identify it as one of their top five planning priorities. This is up five percent from 2006.
Source: Universities Canada internationalization survey, 2014





Storyline ideas

5. With open arms

Refugees find new opportunities on Canadian campuses

Canadian universities have a long history of offering assistance to scholars and students fleeing conflict zones. This past year, universities across the country responded to the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis by raising funds, offering scholarships and building on longstanding relationships with established refugee assistance programs. Many have also incorporated these efforts into course curricula, offering students invaluable applied learning opportunities.

Is your institution hosting a student refugee? How have your students mobilized to welcome and assist these new Canadians? What stories can you tell about the positive impact of refugees on your campus and in your local community?

Key Message

Canadian universities offer refugees a welcoming learning environment and help new Canadians integrate into their new communities.

Supporting Data

- To date, more than 30 universities have made public commitments to sponsor Syrian refugee students and/or families, or held public events in support of the resettlement of Syrian refugees.

Source: Universities Canada, 2016

- Sixty-six Canadian universities, colleges and cégeps partner with World University Service of Canada (WUSC) to help refugee students resettle and study in Canada.

Source: World University Service of Canada, 2016

- Postsecondary institutions and students have doubled their financial support to WUSC from \$3 million in 2015 to approximately \$6 million next year. With those contributions, WUSC is sponsoring 150 refugee students at campuses across the country this year, nearly double the number of students sponsored in 2015.

Source: World University Service of Canada, 2016

- More than 20 Canadian universities offer academic programs on peace and conflict studies; refugee, migration and settlement studies; disaster and emergency management; or war studies.

Source: UniversityStudy.ca





Storyline ideas

6. Welcoming the world

Canadian campuses, global communities

International students are integral to the Canadian university community. They bring valuable cultural diversity and global perspectives to Canadian campuses, participating in an exchange of ideas and experiences that benefits both students and faculty.

How are international students contributing to life and learning on your campus? Do you have research linkages with institutions in other countries that are providing your students with valuable connections and opportunities?

Key message

International students enhance Canadian campuses and contribute fresh perspectives to teaching and learning, helping develop globally aware graduates.

Supporting Data

- International students contribute more than \$10 billion a year to Canada's economy.
Source: Global Affairs Canada, February 2016
- In 2015, there were approximately 96,000 full-time international students enrolled in undergraduate programs on Canadian campuses (approximately 12 percent of full-time undergraduates), and 46,000 full-time international students in graduate programs (almost 29 percent of all graduate students).
Source: Universities Canada internationalization survey, 2015
- Seventy-two percent of Canadian universities engage in initiatives to internationalize curriculum, including coordinating activities that develop students' international perspectives, and providing professional development for faculty to help them integrate international/intercultural dimensions into their teaching.
Source: Universities Canada internationalization survey, 2014

7. The seeds of innovation

Universities launch the young innovators of tomorrow



Canadian universities are engines of innovation, fostering the bold and inquisitive nature of today's young people. From leading social innovation that addresses needs in our communities to developing the latest apps, students are putting their ideas into action at university.

With the help of business accelerators, incubators and other partnerships with the private sector and civil society, entrepreneurial students are not only building careers for themselves, they're creating more jobs in their communities and contributing to prosperity and social inclusion.

Do you have a technology accelerator or innovation hub on campus that nurtures students' entrepreneurial spirit? How are students in the liberal arts pursuing entrepreneurship? What examples of student innovation – in research or entrepreneurship – can you share?

Key message:

Universities are producing the next generation of leading entrepreneurs who will help shape Canada over the next 50 years.

Supporting Data:

- University students are learning entrepreneurial skills in more than 265 entrepreneurship courses, programs and centres, and through other extracurricular entrepreneurship activities offered at universities, such as competitions, workshops, internships and mentorships.
Source: Universities Canada, 2016
- More than 50 incubators, accelerators and start-up programs are offered on Canadian university campuses.
Source: Universities Canada, 2016
- There are currently 26 university research parks across the country which house 1,500 companies, employ more than 65,000 people and contribute \$4.3 billion to Canada's GDP.
Source: Association of University Research Parks Canada, National Economic Impact Study, 2013

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