

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

[AN ACTION PLAN FOR THE FUTURE]

Linking Alberta to the World

Alberta

CONTACT INFORMATION

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA:
For information on Alberta's educational system please visit:

www.studyinalberta.ca
www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca

Global and Provincial Realities

The Government of Alberta believes it is essential for Alberta's citizens to acquire the skills, knowledge and abilities to function effectively within a global context. The internationalization of Alberta's post-secondary education is central to this goal and to positioning Alberta for the future.

More than ever before, it is essential to provide our students with international learning experiences linking them to the world. Local and national economies are increasingly international as a result of expanding trade opportunities. Global environmental, political and societal issues are becoming more complex. International labour mobility means that people are employed in many economies and countries. Concurrently, there is rapid growth in knowledge-based industries and an increasing emphasis on developing knowledge-based societies. An education that enhances the international and intercultural competencies prepares students to live and work within this interconnected world.

The Government of Alberta has set a course for Alberta through its 20 year strategic plan that focuses on unleashing innovation, leading in learning, competing in the global marketplace, and making Alberta the best place to live, work and visit. International education directly supports these goals by:

- Diversifying the economy – international education is a growing and important sector in terms of the sale of educational products and services internationally. The economic impact of international education is estimated at \$2.5 billion in Canada (CEC Network, 2001).
- Increasing the relevancy of education – international education provides important opportunities for students to develop the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to effectively live and work in an increasingly globalized world.
- Improving international competitiveness – international education helps establish connections and understanding - the foundation for educational, political and economic links.
- Creating a vibrant cultural mosaic – the presence of international students and faculty within institutions and communities provides significant cultural, social and educational benefits.

Internationalization Context

"Internationalization is the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education" (Knight, 2003, p.1). There are a number of mechanisms that facilitate internationalization, including:

- internationalizing the teaching and learning practice
- student study abroad and faculty work abroad programs
- international institutional linkages
- international education projects and contracts
- offshore campuses
- collaborative research with international colleagues

Planned institutional strategies enable internationalization across the institution. Some of the key organizational strategies that support this process are internationally-focused senior academic leadership, active leadership throughout the institution, planned comprehensive approaches to internationalization and providing resources and appropriate professional development at all levels -- support staff, faculty and administration.

A Call to Action

Increasingly jurisdictions around the globe are recognizing the importance of international education and are developing and implementing a comprehensive series of plans, policies and programs. In 2001 the Government of Alberta proposed Alberta's International Education Strategy which identified a provincial vision for international education and a set of objectives. Alberta Advanced Education has revisited this strategy by assessing the current state of internationalization in the post-secondary sector and developing a set of objectives to respond to the present realities.

While research has revealed that there is a good foundation of internationalization activities being undertaken by the post-secondary system, there are a number of areas that require attention in terms of enhancing the profile of the post-secondary sector internationally, strengthening the competitiveness of the sector, providing programs that support internationalization, facilitating a more coordinated approach and developing the understanding of the importance of internationalization. Therefore, Alberta Advanced Education has updated its international education strategy and identified a set of objectives that extend and strengthen internationalization and set a new course of action for the future.

Vision

Alberta will be internationally recognized as a leading provider of education and training and Albertans will be well-prepared for their role in the global marketplace and as global citizens.

Objectives

Albertans will have increased opportunities to develop international and intercultural knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes.

As the world becomes more complex and connected, the need for students to understand other countries and cultures becomes increasingly important. A powerful way of acquiring and integrating this knowledge is through direct experiences, and study abroad is one of the ways of achieving this. Another way is by internationalizing the teaching and learning practice in order to create opportunities for all students to develop the competencies required now and for the future. An important aspect of this is creating opportunities for faculty and staff to develop and strengthen their international literacy.

International students will choose Alberta to meet their education and training needs.

International students are an important part of the internationalization process. International students bring an intercultural perspective to the classroom and the communities in which they live, contribute to our innovative competitiveness and return home with an understanding of Canadian people and culture. This provides a foundation for future academic, political and economic linkages. Given the important role that international students play, it is no surprise that many countries and regions are actively engaged in promoting their jurisdictions as study destinations of choice.

Alberta will be more competitive in supplying educational products and services internationally.

Education and training products are a multi-billion dollar sector and can be an important mechanism for opening up new markets in international education. More importantly, as a mechanism of internationalization, international education projects and contracts provide faculty, staff and administrators with an opportunity to increase their international experience and share this experience on campus, in the classroom and in the community.

International education linkages provincially, nationally and internationally will be strengthened and enhanced to support a more comprehensive and coordinated strategy.

Within Canada there is a growing international education sector that includes a wide variety of players who are engaged in a range of international education programs and services. Given growing international competition, it is increasingly important to create opportunities to share information on approaches and to examine methods to strengthen collaboration and cooperation among the players in order to maximize the impact of internationalization activities.

Understanding and awareness of internationalization will be strengthened.

Internationalization is a complex process but its benefits are significant. It is through internationalization that internationally and intercultural knowledgeable graduates are developed, enhanced opportunities for research and learning are created, a worldwide network of faculty and students is developed, the economy is strengthened, connections and understanding are established, and innovative and economic competitiveness are enhanced.

A comprehensive range of integrated programs is required for effective internationalization to occur. Alberta Advanced Education has identified a broad range of potential programs to achieve the outlined objectives and will implement these based on the availability of resources.

Core Principles

In order for current and future activities to be sustainable and effective, Alberta Advanced Education recognizes the need for the following key elements:

- adequate financial and staffing resources to support and strengthen efforts;
- effective coordination of initiatives within/between divisions, departments, institutions and schools;
- collaborative leadership in the development, implementation and management of approaches;
- a strategic, focused and comprehensive approach that balances the entrepreneurial and educational components;
- a commitment to ensuring the delivery of quality programs and services;
- the ongoing examination of the outcomes of initiatives to ensure their effectiveness.

Conclusion

The Alberta government is renewing its commitment to internationalization and the important role that it plays in proactively positioning the province for the future. With a sustained, strategic and comprehensive approach, undertaken in collaboration with its provincial, national and international partners, internationalization will play an important and vital role in the economic, social and educational growth of Alberta, now and in the future.