
University of Alberta International
November 2010
“The internationalisation of higher education is inevitable (...). Some bold universities will lead. Others will be populizers. And others will hold onto the past and will be destined to fail.”

– Arthur Levine, President of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation and former President of Teachers College at Columbia University, New York City, in his keynote address to Association of International Education Administrators in Washington/DC, February 2010.

A. Scope

This document builds on “Dare to Discover” and “Dare to Deliver,” as well as on the international companion document to the current academic plan, also named “Connecting with the World.” It provides a comprehensive concept for the University of Alberta’s internationalisation agenda. At the same time, it highlights a select number of principles and projects to inspire the forthcoming academic plan for the period of 2011 to 2015.

B. Summary

The international agenda at the University of Alberta should engage all aspects of teaching, research, service, outreach, and administration at the University. Responsibility for designing and implementing internationalisation programs and projects lies primarily with the Faculties and Departments. From the central institutional level, an overall internationalisation agenda should be set that will aim at integrating and enhancing individual efforts in the Faculties and Departments; at the same time, it should promote a select number of activities with strong visibility and high impact. Administrative units, especially University of Alberta International (UAI), will support both the Faculty-based plans and initiatives and the institutional level strategy.

The University must celebrate the presence of researchers, staff, and students from abroad and systematically support them as key promoters of the international agenda at the University. The University should thereby activate the international expertise within the institution, including the institutes and centers that specialise on the study of a particular region of the world. The University should expand and intensify the ongoing efforts to recruit top talent from abroad to the University as undergraduate students, graduate students, researchers, and professors. It should also promote the internationalisation of the learning environment at the University and will, in particular, aim at significantly improving education abroad opportunities.

The internationalisation agenda at the University of Alberta should focus on working with a select number of key partner countries and with a few priority partner institutions within those countries.
C. Objectives of Internationalisation and Globalisation

Different universities have different rationales for their internationalisation plans. At the University of Alberta, internationalisation is primarily expected to drive the reputation of the University and to further improve its worldwide standing. Perspectives and motivations for internationalisation at the University of Alberta have indeed evolved over the past few years. Internationalisation is now viewed as a key academic strategy to improve the quality of teaching, learning, and research at the University. More specifically, our commitment to internationalisation is linked to the following expectations:

- Bring additional opportunities and resources in and from other countries that will enhance the University’s research outcomes.
- Attract highly talented and motivated researchers, professors, students, and staff from around the world.
- Enrich the teaching programs through international content and international modes of delivery.
- Project the University as an institution that is actively reaching out to partners around the globe to address worldwide challenges and take responsibility as a global institutional citizen, committed to improving the well being, prosperity, health, and safety of people in Alberta, in Canada, and around the world.
- Develop the University into a worldwide hub of research and learning opportunities and create a truly global learning community.
- Transform the University into a microcosm of global citizenship with a strong commitment to seeking mutual understanding and respect between cultures, fostering curiosity and open mindedness in learning about people from all around the world.
- Associate the University with other world-leading institutions and become an active member of the most distinguished international scholarly networks.

D. Principles and Methods of Internationalisation

1. Openness and Willingness to Experiment
   Almost every leading university in North America—and for that matter, in the rest of the world—has elevated internationalisation into the ranks of its key priorities. Substantial resources are being made available to internationalise universities. There is, however, little evidence anywhere, even amongst the University’s most successful peer institutions, of clear orientations that would allow for straightforward planning and implementation of reliable strategies. There are no blueprints for easy
internationalisation. The international economic and political environment is evolving rapidly and the fundamentals of university management in North America are affected by a dynamic momentum of change. The efforts to build effective strategies for the internationalisation of our University are thus inevitably turning into the pursuit of a moving target. Therefore, we must always stay open to learning and to improving our understanding of the environment in which we operate and we must constantly seek opportunities to act and move forward whilst maintaining a reliable understanding of the risks involved with any new undertaking. Courage to experiment is as much required as determination to persist with chosen directions, which will not bear fruit unless they are nurtured and supported for some extended period of time.

2. Comprehensive approach
Internationalisation should unfold as a comprehensive process that affects the purpose, functions, and delivery of the University in order to create lasting and meaningful results (cf Jane Knight’s definition of internationalisation in 2003). The various stakeholders within the University engage in the internationalisation process in their own way. Some measure of coherence, direction, and alignment is necessary for the multitude of individual activities to achieve better efficiency and improved effectiveness.

3. Faculty-based planning and programming
Internationalisation should be embedded in research strategies and academic programs in order to be relevant and meaningful. Faculty and Departments will thus have the lead on promoting comprehensive internationalisation. Each Faculty and, in the case of larger departments, each Department should develop its own approach to internationalisation, with clearly established key partner regions, lead partners, priority projects, and programs. Internationalisation efforts within each Faculty/Department should reach across the full spectrum of the mission of that unit, thus involving undergraduate teaching, graduate studies, research, service, and administrative operations. Faculties and Departments will have to resource their programs and determine whether they will run programs and projects themselves or delegate certain elements to central administrative services.

4. Creating Alignment
Central administration’s role is to encourage Faculties and Departments to build their individual strategies for internationalisation. Central administration should reach out to all units within the University to understand the particular approaches to internationalisation, and then set incentives for international engagement that will contribute to creating alignment.

Various players in the University should work towards creating coherence and providing direction throughout the University:

- ICC (International Coordinating Council) defines the central institutional agenda for internationalisation and will oversee its implementation.
• Regional Councils, reporting to ICC, steward institutional activity and resources to achieve defined goals.
• SACIE (Standing Advisory Committee on International Engagement) serves as a forum for representatives from all Faculties to discuss their perspectives and articulate their needs and requirements. It is a vehicle for developing policy and procedures that consider the central and Faculty perspective. SACIE also enables Faculties to learn from each other and to create inter-faculty collaboration on international projects and programs.
• UAI assists with providing relevant information on internationalisation from around the world, gathering and disseminating information on internationalisation within the University and facilitating joint efforts across Faculties and Departments. UAI also supports senior management at the central level with developing and implementing its agenda, again in close cooperation with other central units and with Faculties, Departments, institutes, and centers.

5. Providing Support
Units throughout the University legitimately expect central level support with their efforts in terms of seed funding, provision of information and advice, cross-fertilisation with parallel efforts in other units of the University, and managerial assistance. On a central level, financial support, administrative services, and program infrastructure should be offered to Faculties to facilitate activity at the Faculty and Departmental levels if the activity aligns with overall institutional planning and follows some priority directions.
Central support should also:
• be directed particularly at programs and initiatives that—wherever possible and appropriate—reach beyond the single Department or Faculty.
• give preference to initiatives and developments that show evidence of sustainability. The University should aim at building activities that are likely to create lasting effects.
• decrease the opportunity cost associated with the management of international activities in numerous smaller units, aggregating them into more efficient program management operations.
• focus on large and highly visible programs and projects that will be more effective than a multitude of dispersed smaller measures.

UAI provides the majority of centralised support services for the internationalisation activities within the Faculties. Other central units also contribute within their specific area of responsibility (e.g. Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Alumni Association, Registrar’s Office, External Relations etc).
6. **Regional Focus**

At the central institutional level, a priority country approach has been adopted. Key partner countries have been identified, namely China, India, Germany, the US, and Mexico. This approach aims at concentrating efforts and resources on these countries or regions and aligning the efforts of central administration and Faculties. The University wishes to encourage a considerable breadth of interaction and collaboration for each of the priority countries. At the same time, some very significant projects that highlight the University’s presence and active role in a given country should also be developed in each of the countries.

In addition to the top-level priority countries, the University has indentified a range of other countries as of second and third tier interest. The overall range of countries is currently:

**Tier I:** USA, Mexico, China, India, Germany, Brazil—comprehensively engaging all areas of the international agenda; key role for senior administrators, flagship activities

**Tier II:** Korea, Japan, Singapore, France—focus in two or more areas, e.g. research and recruitment; limited role for senior administrators

**Tier III:** Vietnam, Malaysia, Gulf States, Egypt, Turkey, Iran, Chile, East Africa, Nigeria—priority on recruitment; some additional activity but mainly in support of recruitment; occasional role for senior administrators

This institution-wide, regionally-focussed strategy does not preclude activities undertaken by individual Departments, Faculties, and other units with regard to any other part of the world. From a central institutional point of view, the priority country approach does not entail that efforts and resources are dedicated exclusively to priority countries. For specialised areas of activities, such as international recruitment and education abroad, some additional target countries have been identified. In any event, the University should be open to constructive opportunities wherever and whenever they arise.

The priority country approach has been followed for about 1.5 years and has so far proven to be productive. It should thus continue. Individual aspects of its implementation (e.g. the composition and role of the Regional Councils and the International Coordinating Council) should be kept under review. The choice of the five countries should be open to reassessment, particularly with regard to the future role of Brazil and the Middle East.
7. **Global Citizenship**

The University recognises the importance of working with underprivileged communities and with low income countries and regions in the world. Many members of the University engage in initiatives and projects aimed at enhancing the quality of life for these communities. The University should investigate innovative approaches to working with these communities and create a forum where perspectives and possibilities for such strategies could be discussed.

8. **Student Focus**

As the University is increasingly aware of the need to improve student engagement, we notice that, so far, students have been more likely to be the objects of our internationalisation efforts rather than actively participating in these efforts. The University has not yet sufficiently recognised students’ ability to be a driving force of internationalisation. The design of international programs and initiatives should systematically take into account the needs, expectations, and experiences of students. Consistently with University policies and procedures, students should also be empowered to take the planning and management of international activities into their own hands. Existing student projects and organisations (such as international student groups, AIESEC, IAESTE, SIHA, Engineers without Borders and Davis Projects for Peace) should be supported and assisted in their efforts to gain better visibility and reach. Students engaging in international activities should be provided with leadership training.

9. **Provincial and national agendas for the internationalisation of research and teaching**

The University sees its own internationalisation agenda as part of the broader efforts to internationalise postsecondary education and research within the Province of Alberta and Canada. The University is committed to working with other institutions of postsecondary education and research, as well as with the Provincial and Federal Governments, to enhance the standing of Canadian university education and research in the world. The University will seek out collaborative opportunities within the province and the country more broadly to foster our own programming and expand the reach of our internationalisation efforts.

10. **Internationalisation and Globalisation**

Internationalisation plays out differently depending on which aspect of the University is affected. Research and graduate studies are indeed operating more and more in a “denationalised” environment where the national framework is gradually loosing relevance and a broader global environment is setting the standards and providing the parameters. Research and graduate studies are thus experiencing “globalisation.” In contrast, undergraduate learning is still primarily determined by national or provincial perspectives. Internationalisation, as interaction between clearly defined national environments, is therefore the dominant paradigm for undergraduate teaching and learning for any foreseeable future.
E. Areas of Internationalisation

The following section identifies five key areas of international engagement for the University. For each area, this document will: describe the current level of development as a starting point, map out a general strategic direction, and then propose a number of specific steps to reach significant and measurable progress.

1. Research

1.1. Starting Point

The University of Alberta is a leading research university, both nationally and globally. It has internationalised its research agenda to a level where now many researchers have international backgrounds, many research programs deal with international issues, and many researchers engage in international collaborations. Further internationalising its research efforts is a necessary condition to maintain and enhance the University’s position and a key element of the strategy for achieving future success.

1.2. Direction

The University should commit to supporting a broad and diverse array of international research activities, while focussing some resources on establishing a select number of large and highly visible international research projects at the same time. The Helmholtz Alberta Project on Energy and Environment with German partners and the Li-Ka Shing Project on Virology with partners in China are setting the stage for such profile, defining efforts to project the University’s research capabilities onto a global platform.

The University is dedicated to improving the human condition in Alberta, Canada, and around the world by way of fostering excellent research that addresses key challenges of the future development of our societies.

Enhanced international connections enable more members of the University to engage with international scholarly networks, co-publish with international colleagues, and gain access for their publications to globally ranked top journals.

1.3. Steps

The University should further internationalise its research efforts by:

1.3.1. Encouraging and supporting the development and expansion of a select number of major research initiatives. In addition to the existing projects with Germany and China, similar projects should be created in the other key partner countries, notably in India and the US.

1.3.2. Continuing to work with international networks on consortia, notably the World University Network (WUN), to foster international research
cooperation in some select areas and expand such collaboration where appropriate.

1.3.3. Encouraging regional studies programs, centres, and institutes to guide and support the development of collaborative and interdisciplinary research projects relating to their regions of expertise.

1.3.4. Improving the support for researchers to gain access to international funding opportunities by collecting information on funding sources and providing assistance with grant applications to funding sources outside of Canada.

1.3.5. Providing the best possible support and assistance to internationally-renowned researchers and teachers from around the world who are attracted to the University, ensuring their effective integration into the academic and social environment of the University, the city, and the province. At the same time, the University should make the best use of their specific regional expertise and international experience. Special programming should be created where researchers and professors with an international background play a lead role, e.g. research internships offered by these researchers and professors for students from international partner institutions.

1.3.6. Considering an international visitors centre that will provide accommodation and a social space for temporary international visitors (such as postdoctoral fellows, guest professors and visiting researchers on sabbatical), as well as offer advice and administrative support for these visitors.

1.3.7. Organizing a forum at the University to discuss opportunities and limitations of engagement with low income countries, based on the results of the discussions in the SACIE working group on engagement with low income countries and regions. Such a forum would take stock of current practices, propose some new initiatives, provide Canada-wide guidance and inspiration on this topic, and also draw on experiences and ideas from abroad.

2. Graduate Studies and Research

2.1. Starting Point
Graduate Studies and Research are operating increasingly in a globalised environment. Standards, methods, and contents are determined increasingly by international best practice. Universities are actively seeking to use the global market place to attract highly talented students. Outstanding applicants are exploring opportunities around the world. In recent years, the University of Alberta has been highly successful in attracting rapidly growing numbers of international applicants for graduate education. Academic units have begun to develop new formats of graduate programs that are international in content and/or mode of delivery. Close cooperation with key partner institutions abroad, both at the level of individual institutions and at the level of relevant national organisations, is critically important to advancing these processes.
2.2. Direction
The University should enhance its efforts to attract top talent from abroad into its graduate programs. Building widely visible projects of major international research collaboration will be a key factor in increasing the attractiveness of the University for highly-achieving international graduate students. Such international research projects will integrate opportunities for graduate student research. The projects will also be likely to offer additional funding possibilities for graduate students. The University should therefore encourage the development of graduate programs that address the needs of graduate students to acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will enable them to operate successfully in a global work environment, whether as academics or professionals. Given the increasing role of international standards and international competition, our quality control mechanisms and standards are increasingly important to convey a credible message about the high level of performance in graduate studies and research at the University.

2.3. Steps
The University should further internationalise graduate education by:

2.3.1. Improving communication mechanisms with potential applicants.
2.3.2. Making existing funding mechanisms easier to understand for international students and will ensure that funding opportunities become a more effective element of the University’s and Departments’ graduate recruitment strategies.
2.3.3. Supporting the development of an international dimension for a broad variety of graduate programs, such as collaboratively delivered graduate programs (with or without joint and dual degrees), and summer/winter programs for graduate students planned and delivered jointly with international partners.
2.3.4. Exploring the scope for international Masters’ programs, notably course based Masters’ programs which are likely to enhance students’ career prospects. Course-based Master’s programs that focus on professionally relevant specialisations are also highly attractive for international students and opportunities should be evaluated in the Faculties.

3. Student Learning

3.1. Starting Point
Students increasingly expect a meaningful international dimension in their learning experience. International education experience is necessary to equip students to act responsibly as global citizens, to benefit from opportunities for personal growth and intellectual enrichment, and to successfully make use of career opportunities in a globalised labour market. Students increasingly seek out attractive international
options, which play an important role in the process of selecting future places of study. Education abroad opportunities are becoming a key part of every institution’s recruitment messaging. This statement applies particularly to highly able and motivated students who are willing and able to consider a broad range of possible choices for their future university education. The University has built a diverse range of curricular and extracurricular programs and initiatives to introduce an international dimension into our students’ learning experience, including, but not limited to, a variety of education abroad programs. In terms of diversity and quantity of education abroad opportunities, the University has not yet reached the level of achievement of comparable peer institutions in Canada, even less so with regard to peer institutions in the United States.

3.2. Direction
The University of Alberta will need to give clear evidence of its awareness of the importance of internationalising the students’ experience. It will need to show its commitment to providing opportunities for an international dimension to every student. In order to foster the international dimension of students’ learning experiences, the University of Alberta should strengthen curricular and extracurricular international learning opportunities. For education abroad, more particularly, opportunities should be improved and expanded.

Funding models play a significant role in enhancing participation in education abroad. It is unrealistic, as well as inappropriate, however, to assume that education abroad will only be viable if major scholarship support is made available. Students have an intrinsic interest in fostering their international credentials should consider education abroad a worthwhile investment of their own resources. It is the University’s responsibility, however, to target some funding to ensure fair and equal access to education abroad opportunities for students from all social backgrounds.

3.3. Steps
The University should further internationalise student learning by:

3.3.1. Introducing an “International Certificate Program.” The program will document students’ successful commitment to acquiring knowledge and understanding of other parts of the world, including the global challenges and social, economic and cultural developments that affect the future prosperity, as well as the well-being and safety of people across the world. Students will also develop the ability to interact successfully with people of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

3.3.2. Encouraging Faculty members to introduce an international dimension into their teaching, whether in terms of content or delivery. Stronger collaboration for programs/units dealing with regional studies will be sought.

3.3.3. Significantly enhancing its commitment to fostering education abroad by increasing the percentage of the student cohort who participates in an
education abroad program offered by the University from approximately 6% at the moment to 15% by the end of the academic year 2015/16.

3.3.4. Improving mechanisms and results for assessing and awarding academic credit for learning experiences undertaken abroad.

3.3.5. Creating financial models that are likely to drive a rapid expansion of education abroad.

3.3.6. Considering introducing recruitment scholarships that will offer prospective students a financial contribution towards one of the University’s education abroad programs.

3.3.7. Working with Faculties and Departments to determine the academic and practical feasibility of integrating education abroad with particular courses and programs.

3.3.8. UAI offering administrative support, such as travel arrangements, accommodation, hiring of support staff abroad etc., to Faculty members who develop education abroad programs.

3.3.9. Paying special attention to experiential learning opportunities abroad and making international internships, including research internships and volunteering abroad, part of the hallmark of its education abroad program. UAI has recently set up a special unit to deal with international internship programs. By the end of the academic year 2015/16, at least 250 international internship placements will be achieved annually. University alumni abroad will be encouraged to assist with international experiential learning opportunities.

3.3.10. Developing a comprehensive set of risk management processes and standards, as risk management is a key consideration for education abroad. In particular, a university-wide student tracking system for education abroad will need to be implemented as soon as possible.

4. International Student Recruitment

4.1. Starting Point
The University has successfully increased its international student numbers significantly over the past years. In terms of our international undergraduate student population, we have reached the level of some of the academically prestigious Canadian peer institutions such as the University of Toronto, the University of Waterloo, and the University of Western Ontario. We have not caught up with the two most successful Canadian universities in international student recruitment, i.e. University of British Columbia and McGill University. The University streamlined its recruitment operations so that specific recruitment efforts can now be linked to specific outcomes more clearly. A country-focused approach and—in some select countries—a ‘feeder school’ approach have contributed to our achievements. We have also benefited from a new emphasis on articulation programs and an improved web presence. The sponsored student unit is now
operating effectively and we have been able to significantly increase the number of sponsored students at the University. In collaboration with the Registrar’s Office, UAI has assisted with developing more effective processing of international applications and with designing and implementing new models to offer scholarships as a recruitment incentive for international students.

4.2. Direction
The University has set ambitious targets for recruiting international students: 15% of the undergraduate population and 30% of its graduate population. The undergraduate target is proving to be highly ambitious for a university that does not have a strong tradition of an international student presence and that does not have the benefit of offering a location that has a compelling appeal for international applicants in itself. We have been able to make gradual improvements in our international undergraduate recruitment but it is becoming increasingly clear that our recruitment efforts will not yield the growth rates necessary to produce a 15% international share in the undergraduate population. Options to redress this situation would be to significantly increase the resources for international recruitment and/or to use recruitment agents and/or work with pathway program providers. The University should evaluate these options or revisit its targets.

Whilst the undergraduate target is a challenge, the quantitative target for the graduate sector is much more likely to be met and possibly even outperformed. The challenge for the graduate sector, however, will be to compete successfully for the highest possible quality of students. This is as much a challenge for our recruitment efforts as it is a challenge for the nature of our graduate programming and the availability of effectively communicated funding formulas that appeal to international students.

The recruitment efforts at the University should focus particularly, although not exclusively, on structured approaches to address cohorts of students rather than pursuing a more random approach to recruit individual students. Articulation programs and sponsored student arrangements are key strategies in this context. Such strategies should—where possible—integrate a number of Faculties to build more comprehensive programming.

4.3. Steps
The University should enhance its international student recruitment efforts by:

4.3.1. Continuing to work on the strategies that have been adopted to enhance undergraduate recruitment results.
4.3.2. Enhancing Faculty recruitment efforts, both individually and in collaboration with each other, as well as with UAI. Articulation programs and sponsored
student activities should be strengthened at the level of individual Faculties (in some cases even Departments) or consortia of Faculties (or Departments).

4.3.3. Assessing and amending applications and admissions processes and criteria to eliminate avoidable obstacles to international students.

4.3.4. Evaluating the acceptability of the use of agents and pathway programs models.

4.3.5. More actively pursuing the acquisition of sponsored students to the University, both in cooperation with other Canadian universities and from a Campus Alberta perspective.

4.3.6. Actively seeking to bring cohorts of international students on campus that would come for shorter periods of time and would not seek a full University of Alberta degree. Provided that such students will come either fully funded or with significant external funding support, these students can be counted towards the international student targets. Such cohort groups—on an undergraduate or graduate level—will also likely have a significant impact on graduate recruitment results, scope for research collaboration, and general visibility and reputation building for the University. UAI has already created a special sub-unit to offer administrative support for such initiatives.

4.3.7. Continuing to encourage national and provincial level strategies for internationalisation.

4.3.8. Establishing an international presence for the University in a few select locations, either individually or in collaboration with other partners. Such presences can significantly enhance the effectiveness of our recruitment and also serve other purposes, e.g. education abroad programming or alumni network building.

5. Supporting and Engaging the International Student Community on Campus

5.1. Starting Point

The presence of international students is a measure of the worldwide academic attractiveness of the University. More and more talented students from around the world are selecting the University of Alberta as their university—a choice that they see as one that will advance their professional and personal goals. International students thus expect a clear path for achieving academic success and becoming active members of the University community. Respect and appreciation for the perspectives and knowledge that they bring to learning on campus and the diversity they create for the entire academic community will ensure that international students will build a lifelong bond with the University of Alberta and become its most effective global ambassadors.

Statistical evidence gained from national surveys indicates that the international student services at the University are particularly effective. They are widely known in the international student population and their broad range of program offerings
enjoys a high participation rate. These services, however, are available only for visa students and do not deal with the special needs of students who have come to the University as permanent residents. Further, the institution-wide international student services are currently limited to non-academic issues. Students, faculty members, and staff have concerns with the effectiveness of the academic integration of international students. There exists an interest in many sectors of the University to address this challenge.

5.2. Direction

The needs of the international student population—beyond the limits of the visa students—must be better understood. More specifically, we should analyse retention and academic integration as well as academic success or failure of international students. We can do more to celebrate the presence of international students and scholars on campus. We should use their special expertise and their diverse perspectives to shape the overall student experience. We should encourage their active participation to inform our international engagement and broader participation in our international programs and initiatives. The University’s objective should be to build a reputation as an institution that understands the needs and perspectives of international students and scholars and builds an institutional culture in which their presence is a key element of our institutional profile. In this way, the University will be a truly global learning community.

5.3. Steps

The University should further support and engage the international student community on campus by:

5.3.1. Investigating academic challenges for international students, particularly in their first year at the University, and explore comprehensive models to alleviate existing problems.

5.3.2. Celebrating and acknowledging the international students who are in the top peer group of academically successful students.

5.3.3. Investigating foundation year programming, on and off campus, as a means to ease the academic and social integration of international students.

5.3.4. Improving existing social and counselling support for international students.

5.3.5. More actively engaging international students groups and groups of international scholars on campus.

5.3.6. Facilitating the integration of international students into the Canadian student community. Significant intercultural and linguistic learning happens in such situations.

5.3.7. Facilitating leadership development for international students.

5.3.8. Enhancing the capacity and skills of faculty and staff to engage students from an international background.