Canada-China Academic Forum
Conclusions, Recommendations, and Next Steps

The Canada-China Academic Forum: Quality and Relevance in Graduate Studies, organized jointly by the China Scholarship Council and the University of Alberta, was held at the University of Alberta from August 25 to 27, 2010. The Forum brought representatives of 29 research intensive universities in Canada and China together, along with government ministers and representatives, consular officials, and national funding agencies in both countries. (Please see the Forum program for a list of organizations represented.)

Over the course of three days, Forum participants took part in panel presentations, interactive breakout sessions, a university presidents’ forum, and question and answer periods that addressed three topics related to the overall theme of the Forum: The Graduate Student of the Future; Quality and Standards of Graduate Education; and International Dimensions of Graduate Education.

As a result of their deliberations and discussions, Forum participants reached the following conclusions and made the recommendations noted below.

Conclusions

- Canada and China have good reasons to celebrate 40 years of diplomatic relationships. We have come a long way. We are partners and friends. The closer together we become, the more we understand the vast untapped potential for mutually beneficial collaboration.

- We discovered a great deal of common ground during the conference. The active participation from so many top universities on both sides highlighted the interest in expanding and deepening cooperation in graduate education on both sides.

- Chinese and Canadian universities should work together, combine our characteristics, remove obstacles, and plan strategically to explore various forms of post-graduate training mechanisms and models, such as the interdisciplinary orientated research projects involving PhD students, the "sandwich" training mode, dual-degree as well as joint degree programs, and so on. Nowadays, more and more colleges and universities require their graduate-level students to have an international experience. It is important that we work out a system to mutually recognize credit transfer.

- We are aware of the need for a more reciprocal relationship between Canada and China, for interaction on graduate education and in higher education and research more broadly. Canadian post-secondary institutions need to raise interest in studying in China amongst Canadian students and need to interact with Chinese students in ongoing and sustainable channels of cooperation and exchange.
Recommendations

What are potential programs and initiatives that can improve our relationship?

- Offering support towards the development of joint and dual degree programs, and jointly supervised degrees;
- Focusing on a limited number of research areas that could help build substantial and relevant interaction, for example, identifying and developing key research clusters, such as energy, water, virology, and political and societal responses to globalisation;
- Having more and better information available for Chinese students on graduate opportunities in Canada and vice versa;
- Improving student services and support for academic and linguistic integration for Chinese students in Canada, with standards of best practice to be set;
- Encouraging the linking of teams of research students on both sides that will work on one area under joint supervision by Chinese and Canadian professors;
- Developing summer or winter schools that bring Chinese and Canadian graduate students together, specifically for education and training in transferrable skills, to enhance information on graduate programs on both sides, and to improve accessibility of programs to students from the other side;
- Canadian universities taking measures to encourage more Canadian students to pursue graduate degree studies in China;
- Chinese universities making full use of their own and government scholarship programs to attract more Canadian students to study in China;
- Chinese universities being willing and open to working with Canadian institutions to design and develop programs in soft skills and training for Chinese graduate students;
- Canadian universities offering short courses to Chinese undergraduate students to familiarise them with the Canadian university environment;
- Holding the forum as an on-going bilateral academic event to be held in Canada and China regularly (with the next forum to be held in China);
- Providing research internship programs for Canadian and Chinese undergrad students in the other country; and
- Initiating reciprocal lecture tours of distinguished professors between Canada and China.

Next Steps

We need mechanisms to champion Canadian-Chinese interaction on graduate education. We need a voice that can raise financial support. We need an operational infrastructure. We are proposing to build a Canada-China Consortium for Graduate Education. As a prelude to building such a consortium, we suggest the creation of a small Ad Hoc Consortium Working Group made up of representatives from universities, government ministries, and funding bodies in Canada and China.

Using the conclusions and recommendations identified in this document, the role of the working group will be to help plan for the next forum and to develop details on the mandate, structure, and operation of the consortium.