

Priorities for North American Higher Education Collaboration

Background

Canada, Mexico, and the United States share a wealth of historical, cultural, and linguistic bonds – and with the signing of NAFTA in 1994, our countries have become inextricably linked by growing economic ties, as well. The leaders of these three countries know that North America's future prosperity depends on the global competencies of tomorrow's professionals – who are today's students. Given that fact, higher education institutions in North America must take a more aggressive role in offering students opportunities to gain international expertise, particularly in our region.

Three landmark meetings have helped steer the direction of North American higher education collaboration. In September 1992, leaders from Mexico, Canada and the United States convened at the Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin, to develop a course of action for higher education collaboration in North America, resulting in the "Wingspread Statement." As a follow-up, in 1993, a larger group of higher education leaders met in Vancouver to create an agenda to increase regional collaboration in higher education, research, and training, resulting in the

"Vancouver Communiqué." The third meeting was held in Guadalajara in 1996.

Today, a decade after Wingspread and Vancouver – CONAHEC (the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration) and its members recognize that the need for North American higher education collaboration is greater than ever. Recent events have served to underline the great importance of collaboration to the future of our region.

The Process

In conjunction with its 8th North American Higher Education Conference held in Calgary, Alberta, Canada from October 17-19, 2002, CONAHEC and its host institution, Mount Royal College, convened a North American Higher Education Priorities Committee.

Committee members studied the trends in North American higher education collaboration since the movement began in 1992. Members drafted a series of recommendations based on their findings. The recommendations were then presented to the conference participants who ranked them according to importance, and suggested additional strategies.



Calgary 2002

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Priorities Committee Members

CANADA:

- Roderick Fraser, president, and Brian Stevenson, associate vice president, University of Alberta.
- François Tavenas, rector emeritus, and Daniel Guay, senior adviser, Bureau International Development Sector, Université Laval.
- Thomas Wood, president (committee chair), and Lorna Smith, director of international education, Mount Royal College.

MEXICO:

- Rafael Rangel, rector, and Enrique Zepeda, vice rector of internationalization, Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (Sistema ITESM).
- José Trinidad Padilla, rector general, and Jocelyne Gacel, coordinadora of academic cooperation, Universidad de Guadalajara.

UNITED STATES:

- Augustine Gallego, chancellor, San Diego Community College District, and Kenneth Fawson, assistant chancellor, instructional services, San Diego Community College District.
- David Longanecker, executive director, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE).

CONAHEC: Francisco Marmolejo, executive director, and Margo Stephenson, associate director.

The Calgary Recommendations



1. Propose to the three federal governments (Mexico, Canada, and the United States) that they establish a permanent **North American Higher Education Trilateral Commission** to provide sustaining infrastructure, strategic direction, and funding for a variety of programmatic initiatives that foster North American higher education collaboration.
2. Further develop the existing trinationally and federally funded **Program for North American Mobility in Higher Education** to facilitate and fund student and faculty movement at much higher levels and with greater flexibility.
3. Develop a mechanism that promotes **quality assurance and the recognition of course and program equivalencies** while recognizing the diversity of our educational systems and institutions.
4. Create an incentive fund or collaborative financial mechanisms to encourage and support **collaborative research in North America**.
5. Develop guidelines and infrastructure to strengthen and expand collaboration and **partnerships between colleges and universities and the business sector**.
6. Reinforce the importance of **acquiring a second and third language** for all students in North America.
7. Develop a mechanism for promoting quality assurance and recognition of **certification of skills for the professions and technical occupations** in support of North American professional mobility.
8. Review post-September 11th **immigration regulations** in the three countries and determine the impact on the future of North American mobility for faculty and students.
9. Develop a trilateral proposal for the establishment and growth of **centers for North American studies** to advance scholarship and research on relations between Canada, Mexico, and the United States.
10. Find high levels of financial support to enable CONAHEC to sustain and expand its **electronic information base and clearinghouse**.

CONAHEC: A Forum for Interaction in North American Higher Education

CONAHEC, the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration, advises and connects institutions interested in establishing or strengthening academic collaborative programs in the North American region. Our programs include:

- A North American student exchange program.
- Conferences convening higher education leaders and practitioners.
- A North American higher education "portal" on the Internet.
- A U.S.-Mexico borderlands network of higher education institutions.
- Comparative research on education policy issues.
- The Student Organization of North America (SONA).
- Professional development opportunities for campus administrators and faculty.

For complete information call us at (520) 621-7761 or visit our portal at:

<http://conahec.org>

