

A Catalyst for Engaging Community College Students in Global Citizenship Initiatives

Final Report

to

Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation

From

**World University Service of Canada
Student Refugee Program**



WUSC  EUMC

Education L'éducation,
Changes the World ça change le monde

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INTRODUCTION

Canadian post-secondary institutions recognize that internationalization plays an increasingly important role within the higher education context. Many universities and colleges have embarked on internationalization strategies to increase the number of international students studying on campus; facilitate research, faculty and student exchanges with non-Canadian institutions; and implement bilateral projects in developing countries. However, as indicated in Bob Rae's 2005 report, "Ontario: A Leader in Learning," Canadian college students have few opportunities to engage with international issues. World University Service of Canada (WUSC) therefore sought to better understand the challenges colleges face in the internationalization of their campuses as well as the barriers to student involvement in global issues.

The goals of the research project were to:

- 1) review and map the current ways in which community college students are engaging in global issues;
- 2) identify the barriers to greater involvement and propose strategies to address them;
- 3) identify colleges with a strong interest in increasing their international engagement; and
- 4) consider how community colleges and college students might better involve the NGO community in achieving their internationalization goals.

Internationalization, as it refers to colleges and universities, has a variety of definitions. While the purpose of this research was not to explore institutions' understanding of the term internationalization, we based our understanding on definitions by Van der Wende¹ (1997) who describes internationalization of higher education as a "systematic, sustained effort aimed at making higher education responsive to the requirements and challenges related to globalization of societies, economy and labour markets."; and Knight (1993) who defines internationalization as "the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institutions"².

METHODOLOGY

This research was made possible by hiring a WDFG-supported intern, Madut Majok. Madut is a former WUSC-sponsored refugee student who arrived in Canada in 2002 and recently completed his Bachelor at Dalhousie University. Madut knows first hand the benefits of engaged, young Canadians who support student refugees in camps. During his studies, he became actively involved with WUSC activities on campus, which soon after lead him to Chair the WUSC Local Committee. Madut led this research under the supervision of Philip Landon our Director of University and College Programming.

WUSC reviewed the methodology with the Gordon Foundation and provided an interim report in December 2006. As a result, the research was conducted using the following process:

1. Literature Review
2. Survey
3. Focused interviews
4. Data analysis
5. Dissemination

¹ Van der Wende, M. (1997) Missing Links: the relationship between national policies for internationalization and those for higher education in general, in T. Källemark & M. van der Wende (eds) *National Policies for the Internationalization of Higher Education in Europe*. Stockholm: National Agency for Higher Education, p.19.

² Knight, J. (1993) Internationalization: management strategies and issues, *International Education Magazine*, 9 p. 21.

Literature Review

WUSC conducted an initial review of existing services and programs for internationalization currently available on Ontario colleges through phone interviews and internet research. We developed a database which included information about campus populations, available programs for students, student groups or clubs on campus, key resources, etc. This database served as a very important tool, providing baseline data on each campus. A sample of a college profile can be found in Appendix A.

A brief review of existing literature was also conducted in order to frame this research. Reference documents such as the Rae Report³ "Ontario: A Leader in Learning, Report and Recommendations" (February 2005) were very useful to identify current challenges and strategies for Ontario colleges. Other research such as "The NGO-ization of Community Colleges: One (More) Manifestation of Globalization (Quint-Rapoport, M, 2006)⁴" and "Internationalization of Higher Education: Towards a conceptual framework (Qiang, Z., 2003)⁵" assisted us in crafting an appropriate and relevant questionnaire for this research.

Survey

The Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario (ACAATO), newly named "Colleges Ontario", provided us with access to their 24-member institutions. Through the assistance of the Chair of Colleges Ontario "Ontario Colleges International Committee" (OCIC), which brings together directors from international departments within colleges in Ontario, a letter of invitation to participate in our research was sent. Out of their 24-member institutions, 13 Ontario colleges responded positively to the invitation, namely Centennial, George Brown, Seneca, Humber, Niagara, Fanshawe, St. Lawrence, Algonquin, Canadore, Confederation, La Cité collégiale, Collège Boréal and Sault. In addition, four Alberta colleges also participated, namely Olds, Red Deer, King's and Grant MacEwan. The majority of respondents worked in the international department of their institution or had interest in internationalization on their campus. A complete list of participating institutions and contact names can be found in Appendix B.

Colleges Ontario⁶ was a key partner in our research. From the onset, they approved the research work plan (Appendix C), they allowed us to seek participants for the research within the Colleges Ontario network and they made it possible for WUSC to disseminate the research findings to Ontario Colleges' Vice-Presidents of Academic. We appreciate having had their support throughout the research.

An online survey entitled "Engaging Community Colleges in Global Citizenship Research" was created to seek qualitative and quantitative input and perspectives from college staff on issues related to internationalization. The survey gathered information ranging from demographics, to identifying internationalization priorities to exploring student opportunities. The 42-question survey was posted online to generate more responses. We had response rate of just over 50 percent of participants (refer to online survey in Appendix D).

³ Rae, B. (2005) Report and Recommendations, *Ontario : A Leader in Learning*.

⁴ Quint-Rapoport, M. Q. (2006) The NGO-ization of Community Colleges: One (More) Manifestation of Globalization. *College Quarterly*, www.collegequarterly.ca.

⁵ Qiang, Z. (2003); Internationalization of Higher Education: towards a conceptual framework; *Policy Futures in Education*, Volume 1, Number 2, p 248-270.

⁶ Ontario Colleges, The Voice of Ontario Colleges, www.collegesontario.org

Focused Interviews

Separate follow-up visits were organized with a few participating college. A focused interview was conducted which allowed us to deepen our knowledge and understanding of each college's unique challenges and opportunities in regards to internationalization. On some occasions, the visits also allowed us to seek broader perspectives from other staff and/or students who did not respond to the online survey. The participants were very candid throughout the interview process outlining challenges that they face and also possible opportunities for the future. These visits were extremely useful for gathering information, meeting individuals and better appreciating the realities of Canadian colleges (Appendix E - schedule for focused interviews).

Data Analysis

The data was collected gathered from the online survey and interviews was compiled and reviewed by WUSC staff and a research intern. The findings of the research are outlined below.

Dissemination

WUSC shared its early findings with Colleges Ontario, and in particular the Ontario Colleges International Council. Research findings were subsequently presented during the Ontario Colleges' Vice-Presidents of Academic meeting at Sheridan College on April 26th, 2007. This level of meeting was deemed necessary to reach a broader audience and the higher-level management who are directly involved in decision making within the colleges. The briefing of the Colleges' Academic Vice Presidents provided an opportunity to start a dialogue that WUSC is pursuing with individual institutions.

As a result of this research, WUSC would like to invite colleague NGOs to a meeting in Toronto to discuss our work to date and see if there is interest in pursuing work with Colleges jointly. Furthermore, Ontario's Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities have also expressed interest in being briefed on our work and we plan to meet in fall 2007 to share our findings.

The final report will be sent to all members of Colleges Ontario and it will be posted on our website.

KEY FINDINGS

Internationalization is clearly a priority for community colleges. Many colleges are actively implementing programs and partnerships which can help them reach their institutional objectives. However, this research found that few of the programs and initiatives focus on truly engaging students themselves in international issues. The key findings and next steps thus will be addressed as follows:

- 1 - Internationalization as a college priority
- 2 - Barriers to internationalizing colleges
- 3 - Barriers to college students' engagement in international development
- 4 - Opportunities to increase institutional and student engagement in global citizenship

Internationalization as a College Priority

Ninety percent of respondents stated that internationalization was a priority for their institution. Seventy-two percent have articulated this priority in the form of an internationalization strategy. These strategies are currently being implemented in a variety of ways.

Student Recruitment

Attracting more international students to campuses is the overwhelmingly top priority of institutions to meet their internationalization goals. Many colleges perceive international students as a way to diversify ethnicities and cultures on campus while generating income for the college. The percentage of international students attending colleges in Ontario differs considerably, however. Colleges in urban areas tend to have a higher proportion (10%) of international students as part of their student population in comparison with less than 2% of international students in colleges in rural communities. For instance, 1,500 international students study at George Brown College, 2,300 at Seneca College and 800 at Humber College. Colleges in urban areas also tend to have a higher number of recruitment officers with an average of 6 recruiters per college.

International Programming

While international student recruitment remains the top priority in all colleges, faculty exchanges, engagement in international initiatives and exporting college programs overseas also emerged as key components of internationalization on college campuses. Colleges are engaged in a variety of projects, from bilateral agreements between colleges and governments to the management of projects for development agencies. Fifty-four percent (54%) of the colleges surveyed manage projects overseas. Seneca and Algonquin Colleges for example are working on Stephen Lewis's HIV/AIDS project in Africa.

Student Engagement

Of the options presented in the survey, the areas where least activity was taking place in internationalization was in engaging students in international issues and creating opportunities for them to gain international work and education experience overseas. For instance, very few student clubs or associations are organized with the goal to increase awareness on global and local issues.

In general, most of the strategies used by colleges to internationalize their campus focused on attracting international students and developing overseas campuses. Many barriers still exist which deter colleges from globalizing their campus in a variety of other ways.

Barriers to Internationalizing Colleges

While colleges have had varying degrees of success attracting international students or engaging in a variety of overseas projects, reluctance remains within many institutions to truly implement their strategy across all spheres of the institution.

Firstly, colleges have varying degrees of resources to support their internationalization strategies. For instance, human resources committed to supporting internationalization initiatives can range from no appointed staff person (only a few on a part-time basis) on some campuses to an international department with a staff of 35. Sixty-six percent (66%) have employed at least one program developer for international initiatives while only 16.7% have employed two or more. Respondents noted that the resources made available by the institution are instrumental in implementing the strategy and priorities to internationalize.

Secondly, peoples' attitudes towards internationalization seem to diverge within the colleges. Some college staff are of the opinion that community colleges should program solely for the communities in which they operate, while other staff believe that community colleges should better reflect the needs of the global market. As one respondent said, "[At my college] there is a small core of people very supportive of the initiative [referring to internationalization], but the general population has not embraced the effort and a few are hostile to it."

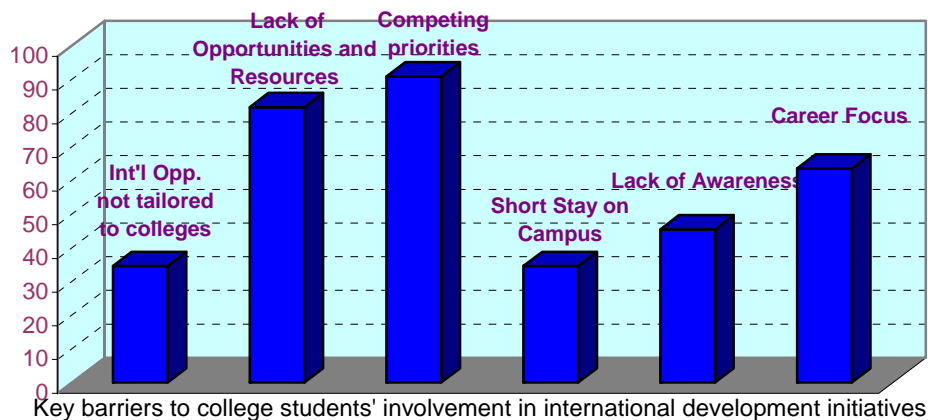
Thirdly, very little is being done to expose college students to global issues and inspire them to take action in the classroom, on campus and in their own community. Youth are great catalysts for change. The college can be a unique platform to inform and engage young Canadians to be more active citizens. By emphasizing skills development and improved awareness of cultural differences and needs, youth can become important advocates for more understanding attitudes and behaviors.

Most of the strategies to internationalize college campuses are focused on attracting international students and developing overseas campuses while less is done to deepen the understanding and knowledge of young Canadian students and providing them with tangible experiences. The next section will look at the barriers colleges face in engaging students in international issues.

Barriers to College Students' Engagement in International Development

The assumptions going into this research project were that college students were less likely to become involved in international issues because they tended to be older, part-time students who had a shorter stay on campus than their university counterparts. The findings were telling.

The top barriers to student engagement in global issues were 1) competing priorities, 2) lack of opportunities and resources, 3) career focus and 4) lack of awareness about global issues.



Consistent with our assumptions, college students tend to be less involved in international development issues due to competing priorities such as additional family and work commitments.

However, the fact that students have shorter stays on campus seemed to have little impact on student participation and does not seem to be a deterrent to possible engagement. Similarly, the average age of college students from the participating colleges as well as the students' part or full time status, did not seem to have any bearing on students' participation in international issues.

The lack of opportunities, resources and awareness about global issues seem to be the main barriers to students' engagement. Although many respondents indicated that their institution offers students some exposure to international development either through course work, overseas internships or co-op placements, there is need for more. Students' interest in overseas opportunities is perceived as high and rising, as students wish to gain wider experience, augment their studies for personal development, increase their knowledge about global issues, learn a language and experience a different culture. "We have more students interested in overseas internships than we have funded placements," said one respondent. Even when colleges are willing to send students overseas, the issue of insufficient travel bursaries limits the college's capacity to send more students abroad. Apart from meeting students' demand for overseas opportunities, respondents also seemed keen on providing such opportunities to their students because sending students overseas appears to enhance their domestic recruitment in Canada.

Many respondents also indicated that there was minimal or lack of student involvement in on-campus activities whether through student clubs or associations. The college students who are currently active tend to be mostly involved in athletic/recreational clubs (90.9%). A lower percentage of students are active in social issues club (45.5%), cultural clubs (36.4%), academic clubs (27.3%), religious clubs (18.2%), or other (9.1%). Most of the social clubs or associations on campus were cultural or religious in orientation, such as the Muslim Student Association, Chinese Students Association, International Students Club, Multicultural Buddy Network or the Black Students Association. These clubs/associations do not seem to widely engage college students in activities related to global citizenship. There seems to be a greater need to actively involve and engage students on-campus and in their community on issues relating to international development.

It also appears that international experiences for students could be better tailored to the college setting. More opportunities and resources are needed to cater to rising student interest in international development by providing them with a variety of opportunities. More internationally knowledgeable and inter-culturally skilled students can ultimately lead to more understanding, informed and compassionate global citizens. This is the area where increased coordination with NGOs working in international development could be key to meeting colleges' internationalization goals.

Opportunities to Increase Institutional and Student Engagement in Global Citizenship

Throughout this research, it became evident that organizations such as WUSC could assist colleges in meeting their internationalization objectives. A variety of programs and initiatives can help to increase opportunities for students and colleges.

Increasing Partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as WUSC can provide concrete ways in which college students can increase their involvement in global issues, through advocating on global issues, raising awareness and funds for a concrete goal, or volunteering and learning overseas.

First, developing partnerships with NGOs could provide opportunities for college students to educate and engage in international development issues. Feedback from this research demonstrates that very few opportunities exist for college students to get involved in international issues on their campus by educating and engaging students through advocacy and fund raising initiatives. There are a number of campus-based internationally focused NGOs that can provide such opportunities. For instance, WUSC supports a network of over 60 Local Committees on campuses across Canada, comprised of students, faculty and staff who play an important role in increasing awareness and understanding of international

development issues within their campus community. Journalists for Human Rights⁷ also have chapters in various campuses across the country and involve students who “recognize the power of the media to effect positive change and increase knowledge about human rights in their communities”. Through advocacy campaigns related to global citizenship, college students learn concrete skills while increasing their knowledge of local and global issues. As such, students can be involved in a variety of campaigns in support of the Millennium Development Goals by being part of coalitions with a variety of like-minded NGOs such as Engineers without Borders, OXFAM, and Rights and Democracy. Students can also help raise funds in support of those in need in developing countries. By educating and engaging students through awareness and fund raising in support of international development, students become global advocates, leaders and agents of change.

Second, NGOs can also assist students to take concrete action on their campus. For instance, WUSC’s Student Refugee Program (SRP) is a way for students to be involved in a tangible project that affects the lives of refugee students and Canadian students alike. The SRP facilitates student refugees’ access to post-secondary education by engaging Canadian students, staff and institutions who raise funds and help with their adjustment to campus and community life. Canadian students can gain a better understanding of the plights refugees’ face every day while helping a refugee pursue their education which was interrupted by war or political repression. College institutions could also play an important role and express their solidarity to academic freedom by providing increased opportunities for refugees to access post-secondary education. By increasing sponsorships within colleges, it not only provides more opportunities for refugees but greater possibilities for women to access post-secondary education. Too often, refugee women are at a disadvantage when applying to the SRP because of their limited access to equal opportunities in the refugee camps and the high academic requirements from Canadian universities. Currently, only thirty (30) percent of SRP sponsored students are women. With lower tuition fees, strong linkages to the job market and a focus on practical skills, colleges offer numerous advantages that could provide more women with an opportunity to pursue post-secondary education.

Thirdly, by partnering with NGOs college students could increase opportunities to volunteer and learn overseas. By taking part in projects such as youth exchanges, international seminars, service learning, coop placements, internships and other volunteer sending opportunities, students learn hands-on about development issues. They gain an understanding of global perspectives, an appreciation of diversity, an increased cultural sensitivity, a willingness to accept new challenges, and a realization that all individuals can effect change. These are abilities that are extremely valued in the workplace.

Finally, NGOs can provide expertise and experience to help colleges create and access relevant curricula for their students. Colleges such as Centennial could benefit from this type of course curriculum. Through the research, Centennial expressed interest in providing an entry-level course on globalization to all first year college students. However, they lack the knowledge and expertise to develop relevant and meaningful curricula. NGOs often conduct research that can be used as case studies in international development and globalization courses. WUSC has recently initiated a curriculum enrichment program with the support of the International Development Research Center (IDRC) to provide Canadian universities and colleges with access to real-life development issues. Colleges can garner support and guidance by partnering with NGOs by adding or adapting material used in courses. By improving and increasing the knowledge of international development in the classroom, students can be better informed on global issues.

⁷ Journalists for Human Rights – www.jhr.ca

Increasing Faculty Involvement

Several opportunities also exist for increased faculty and staff participation in internationalization. For instance, NGOs can provide a platform for faculty and staff to advise student groups on a variety of advocacy and fundraising initiatives, liaise with their institution's administration in support of the Student Refugee Program and support students who want to learn overseas. NGOs can also help faculty be involved in collaborative research projects with overseas partners. In addition, faculty and staff can assist in overseas development projects by undertaking short-term consultancies; delivering short-term training programs; partnering in the development of overseas programming; and providing technical expertise on development projects.

Increasing College Engagement

Institutions can be involved in a variety of other ways to support their internationalization priorities.

First, by offering for-credit overseas learning opportunities, college institutions can provide students with a concrete experience which bridges theoretical concepts with practical experiences. Learning overseas can allow students to acquire skills and make links to professional practices in their field of study.

Secondly, colleges can support student-led initiatives by providing in-kind donations for their involvement. For instance, colleges can provide tuition or residence waivers to refugee students who want to pursue their post-secondary education in Canada. On one hand, the students help the refugee student integrate the campus and community while getting financial support from the institution. By doing so, colleges can provide valuable support to students who want to make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate.

Thirdly, colleges can encourage faculty and/or staff to support student activities. Staff, who are interested in guiding student initiatives can be given the time required by the institution to support the students. Staff, then feel encouraged and supported and acquire intercultural skills and experience themselves.

Fourthly, organizations such as WUSC and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) can also provide a unique opportunity to senior institutional representatives who are interested in exploring partnerships with NGOs overseas through annual missions and bilateral meetings. WUSC, for example, has fielded a University and College Mission for the past three years, first to Sri Lanka, then to Vietnam and in 2007 to Botswana. As a result of the missions, universities and colleges alike have benefited from WUSC's longstanding network with overseas partners to increase student mobility and exchanges, facilitate faculty exchanges and foster curriculum enrichment initiatives.

Therefore, various opportunities do exist to increase institutions and students participation in internationalization. By partnering with NGOs, by involving staff and institutional organizations such as WUSC could assist colleges in meeting their internationalization objectives. A variety of programs and initiatives can help to increase opportunities for students and colleges.

LESSONS LEARNED

Some lessons learned from the research:

Individual visits provided a more in-depth understanding of the realities facing colleges in regards to internationalization. We believe that the individual meetings were more insightful and reached a broader range of faculty and college representatives than the proposed focus group during *Colleges Ontario's* annual conference.

Fifty percent of colleges within the *Colleges Ontario* network responded to our invitation to take part in the research with an additional four colleges from Alberta. The sample *did include a variety of campus sizes from both urban and rural communities*. It was important to have a good representation of colleges as part of the research.

More student input in the research would have been useful to assess in more detail their levels of and barriers to engagement in international issues. The on-line evaluation was mostly targeted at institutional faculty and staff with a follow-up visit which may have included college students. A more in-depth assessment of students' barriers to engagement in internationalization may have provided a more accurate understanding in their interests in, motivations towards, and barriers from engaging in development issues.

CONCLUSION

This study has underscored to WUSC the significant potential for programming with Colleges. While colleges have had varying degrees of success internationalizing their campus, the findings demonstrate that a range of other strategies can be implemented across all spheres of the institution.

It has also revealed that some of the barriers to greater college student engagement are unfounded, and those that do exist can be addressed by sustained commitment and attention to this growing and important segment of Canada's student population.

Colleges interested in finding ways to achieving their internationalization goals and expand opportunities for their students, staff and institutions can partner with a variety of development organizations and campus-based NGOS. Valuable expertise and resources exist within these organizations that could be of benefit to colleges. Equally as important is the need for NGOs to adjust current programs to better meet the needs of college settings.

By incorporating a holistic approach within the higher education system, students, staff and administrators can acquire the necessary inter-cultural knowledge and skills that lead to more understanding, informed and compassionate global citizens. Thus, colleges play an extremely important role in creating a platform for better citizens.

Should you require any additional information on the content of this report, please feel free to contact me directly or alternatively, Philip Landon, Director of University and College Programming by phone at 613-761-3695 or by e-mail at philip@wusc.ca.

We thank the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation for their on-going support and look forward to a continued commitment to engaging colleges in international issues.

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