



Canadian Post-Secondary Players in India: Obstacles, Issues, Opportunities¹

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2007, the Canadian Bureau of International Education organized, along with the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, a Forum on Canada-India Higher Education Linkages. At that Forum, it became evident that Canadian post-secondary institutions conducting academic business with and in India are facing a number of problems, both operational and policy-related. This paper seeks to identify those common problems, discuss remedies, and suggest the best ideas for moving forward with a view to improving the situation for Canadian institutions that wish to work in and with India. Findings, while drawing on secondary-source readings, are based especially upon 17 interviews, conducted during Spring 2008 with key figures in the field, from professors and post-secondary administrators to promotional agents and political officials. An interesting range of problems emerged, but most striking is the fragmented, scattershot approach to conducting academic business in India, both by the government and academic institutions. This lack of co-ordination is uncharacteristic of countries whose international education portfolios run sleekly and effectively. The federal government's recent changes to visa policy related to international education is a very positive move, however. Our recommendations focus on continuing improvements to visa service and, especially, on addressing the lack of co-ordination in and between governments and post-secondary institutions.

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This paper is organized in three sections: (1) an examination of the problems faced by post-secondary institutions conducting academic business with and in India, from the point of view of the practitioners; (2) an update and assessment of recent federal programs and initiatives related to improving this situation; (3) a summary of the group's best ideas for moving forward in the work of facilitating the success of Canadian post-secondary institutions working in India.

The paper's authors support initiatives that smooth the path for Canadian post-secondary institutions working in India. Why should Canadian institutions care about India? The World Bank estimates international education's value at US\$300 billion per year, most of this divided among a handful of countries: the US (22%); the UK (12%), Germany (10%), France (9%) and Australia (6%). According to a joint British-Australian study, "the global demand for international-student places in English-speaking destination countries will increase by 160% over the next 15 years" (Le-Ba, 2007). In 2007, the OECD singled out New Zealand's growth in international education as the world's most impressive, ranking it (with its 4.5 million people) just behind Canada in terms of market share (O'Malley, 2007). Singapore plans to raise its count of foreign higher-education students to 160,000 by 2012 – a number that would rival Canada's present total (Wells, 2005). Malaysia has increased its number of international tertiary students by 30% in the past six years, and is on track to reach a goal of 100,000 students by 2010 (Chow, 2008).

According to the 2007 OECD report, Canada now ranks eighth as a study destination, though an oft-cited CBIE study relegates Canada to 14th place, having fallen from 5th place, in the 30-nation OECD, "in terms of percentage of foreign students studying at its institutions" (Bond et al., 2007:7). It is wise to be wary of comparative statistics, though, as most countries count only foreign students at post-secondary institutions, while Canada also includes K-12 and language students staying longer than six months. And while its foreign-student enrolment growth rate of 14.8% between 1998 and 2005 is negligible compared to Australia's 169% (Gee, 2007), Canada's international enrolment has been steadily increasing over the past 20 years. Though Canada is off to a very late start, we are not (yet) too far behind to greatly improve our share of an exploding market. At less than 3% market share, Canada really has nowhere to go but up.

Beyond purely financial considerations, with the best of those whom we educate but who then return home, there are the obvious (though obviously unquantifiable) 'Fulbright' benefits to Canada's international standing: if we ensure that students enjoy their time in Canada, and profit from their Canadian education. Those among them who become leaders will prove all the more likely to prioritize Canada in later dealings. The global enhancement of Canada's reputation that foreign-student

returnees can effect should be the third plank – along with the billions of dollars that foreign students contribute, and the skills that graduate-immigrants bring – in any platform pushing for progress with Canada’s international educational effort.

But still, why India? India now ranks second behind China in the number of its degree seekers abroad. This student body already offers an immense recruitment target, and its numbers will soon nearly double (Maslen, 2007). Such projections are based on the massive growth rates of a very young Indian population; a burgeoning middle class; and the slow growth rate of quality Indian post-secondary institutions – partly relative to India’s exploding demographics, but also due to chronic under-investment in higher-education by the Indian government. While India’s globalized students trail China’s in terms of market-size by more than half, China’s population of 15-to-19 year-olds is expected to plummet between 2005 and 2020, while the same age group in India is set to soar (Maslen, 2007). If China’s youth are the near future’s prize, India may well be the place for the long money; indeed, post-secondary recruiters around the world speak of the two giant countries in one breath: *Chindia*.

Canada’s share of the Indian degree-student market is much smaller than it could and should be. The top five destinations are the US (80,000-plus), Australia (40,000-plus), the UK (well over 25,000), Germany (around 4,000), and New Zealand (close to 4,000). Canada annually issues approximately 2,500 student visas to Indians. We have been boosting our numbers – from around 400 a year ten years ago. India rose from 17th-place in 1996 to the 7th-leading source country in 2005 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2006). But throughout this period, our share of the overall market has been declining. Our competitors have all seen much more rapid increases in growth, in all cases tied to strong government backing.

Perhaps demographics provide the best argument for federal investment in India within an international education context. Consider this: India is a country of 1.2 billion people, 35% of whom are under 14 years of age. And the current 11 million students already strain a system of approximately 18,000 institutions. Add to those statistics the fact that the quality of these institutions is not stellar. According to India’s own National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), only 28% of the institutions are graded above average, while 47% are graded below average (Mukherjee, 2008). It is difficult to believe that there is no market opportunity for Canadian post-secondary institutions in India. What do we need to do in order to create attractive, sustainable opportunities for them?

1. KEY PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED BY THE PLAYERS

The federal/provincial schism: Among interviewees there was a clear consensus that the chief barrier to advancing Canada's post-secondary internationalization lies in not having the organized and government-funded and co-ordinated national-promotion campaigns that all of our competitors have mounted so successfully, and that 'Brand Canada' will hopefully begin to approximate. This obstacle is chiefly attributable to the political fragmentation of Canadian education, unique within the OECD, whereby provinces and territories have jurisdiction over most educational issues, whereas the federal government is responsible for certain broader research matters and international trade. One result of this schism is that some provinces have forged ahead on their own with the international promotion of their own academies. Quebec, for obvious reasons, tends to work on its own. Tachdjian, (DFAIT) spoke of 'Brand Canada' difficulties: "The province of Quebec was one that was most vehement in terms of making sure that we didn't tread on their jurisdiction." Martin (BCCIE) was even more forthright: "The issue of national consensus and icons has stymied much in the process. The rest of Canada needs the maple leaf and will use it. Quebec doesn't need it and won't use it." And even our pre-eminent centres of excellence, whether cities or universities, get lost in the din. Sheila Embleton, Vice-President Academic at York: "How can York advertise itself to a billion people?"

That the provincial/federal schism trammels promotion was made clear in a tale related by Mathai (CECN): "About 18 months ago, Ontario came through with a huge delegation. The newspaper campaign highlighted the province and advertisements in Indian newspapers carried images of the Ontario flag -- not the Canadian one. The Ontario flag bears a strong similarity to the British flag, so potential students and their parents came expecting to hear about the UK." An amusing anecdote, but Canadian governmental fragmentation is not merely funny. Martin (BCCIE) suggested, "The reality of our provincial-federal divide probably dilutes the amount of money available." And it contributes to 'mission fatigue' on the part of targeted Indian institutions. Martin related:

A year-and-a-half ago, I was waiting in the reception room of the Rector of the IIT in Chennai. I followed the Italian delegation, and the German delegation was waiting in the office after me. ... I don't know how we can better co-ordinate with our potential partners, or back here in Canada on a national level. It is difficult to better co-ordinate things even at a provincial level. We had our Premiers' mission in December of 2007, and one month later, unbeknownst to us, we had another delegation from Surrey with one of our local MLAs."

Kathleen Massey, Executive Director of Enrolment and Registrar at McGill, speaks for many Canadian post-secondary institutions active in India: "If only there were a nationally-coordinated approach where the federal and provincial governments put their money into one pot" (April 15).

We suggest that this fragmentation of approach is a very basic problem in the context of doing academic business in India -- there is no national strategy or infrastructure off which to leverage your initiatives. As Glen Jones, Ontario Research

Chair on Post-secondary Education Policy, observes: "The reality and rhetoric of globalization are unsettling the relatively stable and fragmented Canadian 'system,' and bringing forth new pressures for action at a range of inter-linked scales" (Jones, 2008). Without suggesting that Canada's federal/provincial division in educational policy will ever disappear, DFAIT's Tachdjian is hopeful that the forging of 'Brand Canada' will prove a crucible for more cohesive political relations: "Now that we have a brand, we also have a relationship between the federal government and the provincial governments. At one point, we weren't even speaking to one another."

Visa difficulties: Contrary to popular mythology, few respondents insisted that extremely high refusal rates were a major factor in Canada's poor student-recruitment showing. There was more agreement that visa-approval processing times were too long. As well as the duration for visa approvals, lack of transparency is cited as a problem, most vividly by DFAIT's Tachdjian: "In the old days, the visa officer was the bouncer at a club. He'd stand at the door -- 'You can come in, you, you can't.' Why? We don't know. We didn't understand why people got rejected." We also find also wide recognition of problems with bogus Indian applications. Adrian Fiech (Memorial U):

If a student can verify that they have funding available, and there's no history of family members entering Canada and disappearing, students are getting visas quickly. The fact is, that a lot of students who apply for a visa and are refused, the documentation they provide is, suddenly, \$20,000 appearing in their bank account, three or four days before submitting their application. This money enters their account, and then after the application is submitted, very quickly disappears.

Some interviewees addressed 'visa difficulties' at the broadest levels of government policy-shaping. Martin suggested that the Australians might have the appearance of sounder policies not only because their rules are more open than Canada's, but also because they are balanced with toughness: "A big difference ... is that ... if a student messes up or goes AWOL in Australia, he may be on the next boat or plane out of there. If he had entered Canada, that student might already be in California or filing for papers with his lawyer." Hepburn (UBC) touched on this issue, contrasting (somewhat 'pre-9/11') America and Canada:

The American immigration policy has always been more focused on talent recruitment, rather than humanitarian considerations. I mean, that's good for Canada, that we're concerned about humanitarian things. But the Americans ... they're far more pragmatic. They just want people to come, to make the United States richer. And so if they can get students from IIT to come and study at Stanford, and then stay on to establish high-tech companies, that's a good outcome. Whereas I'm not so sure that our immigration department would regard that as a good outcome.

Visas for Indian students, because the process is long, opaque, and embedded within other aspects of immigration policy, was identified as a problem for Canadian post-secondary institutions active in India.

Post-secondary fragmentation: Canadian post-secondary institutions, however, also create some operational problems for themselves. There was near-unanimity that our higher education institutions' lack of cohesion and mutual interest rivalled Canada's federal/provincial jurisdictional quandaries as the chief obstacle to progress.

Interviewees offered a wide range of opinion as to whether Canadian post-secondary institutions should or could act more collaboratively – for example, with programs, database-construction or lobbying campaigns. Mathai (CECN) urged “universal acceptance among Canadian post secondary institutions that they have to lay off ... their not working together. [They] appear to be scrabbling and quibbling ... so that no clear message gets through to India and potential students.” Embleton spoke similarly, at least when it comes to *universities*, while emphasizing that schools would always compete: “We can still, in a way, compete, but also co-operate. The idea, for example, of Canadian education being known as a good brand, is going to help everybody. ... And then we can still compete, within that better-known brand.” But asked as to the possibility of even such relative unity, Crago (U Montreal) responded: “Universities and colleges will find it hard ... We're all after the same students.” Asked if she even agreed that this was an obstacle: “No. I think it's necessary for all post-secondary institutions to be represented ... and to be able to explain them in India ... but I think that it doesn't have to be highly collaborative.”

Some interviewees expressed faith in future cohesion. Chima (SFU) theorized:

Everybody is so new at this, that nobody knows what is the best way to do this. Everybody's going out right now, doing very diverse things, to see what sticks and what is working really well. I think once a little time has passed, we'll all be feeling more comfortable with our individual India strategies. That'll be the point where we all can come together and say, 'I like a piece of what you did, and what you did, and you did. Let's build that up together.

But his closing thoughts for our interview hedged a tad: “It's going to be different for us to do any consistent collaboration on anything. So I think whatever comes out as a policy has to be quite nimble, that will allow every institution to keep its own identity.” Interviewees from some of the largest universities were very doubtful that they could work with colleges, on 'Brand Canada' or anything else.

We believe that in order for Canadian post-secondary institutions to be as effective as possible in their Indian operations, they must show strength in numbers and must communicate a cohesive message. No false unanimity need be forced—different groups of post-secondary institutions will require different specifics, which is fine. The different groups of post-secondary institutions can be thought of as different options on a Canadian international education menu.

The Three-Year Indian Baccalaureates: Very few Canadian post-secondary institutions officially accept Indian baccalaureates. This is a matter of 'common practice' agreed upon, if without much reflection, at individual institutional levels.

Sheila Embleton at York, who closely studies the matter, has been especially involved in urging greater recognition of Indian undergraduate credentials. In our interview, her chief argument lay in the fact that proper Indian baccalaureates in non-humanities degrees do not have 'general education' liberal-arts components: "So they already have *more* in the actual subject matter than your Canadian undergrad." For Embleton, the issue has not so much to do with student recruitment targets: "We could get enough international students ... by insisting on a four-year degree.... So it's not really about numbers. It's just the right thing to do." Many interviewees strongly agreed. Others were less concerned, or less convinced. Hepburn (UBC) concurred, though adding: "I think more of an issue, for me, would be that we don't take students with an Indian Master's degree directly into our Ph.D. programs." Only one interviewee, BCCIE's Martin, disagreed outright: "The three-year degree issue needs some nuanced discussion, if we are looking at part of an Indian three-year degree for entry into a four-year undergraduate program in Canada. Frankly, if the students want the quality of a Canadian degree, they will realize they have to do an extra year, to get a four-year degree that's going to carry some weight. If a three-year degree is being assessed for entrance into a graduate program in Canada, admission decisions will need to be made at that level."

It seems reasonable that very good three-year Indian baccalaureates should be recognized. But a recent AUCC report asks, without answering: "Will Canadian students still be required to have a four-year degree for admission into graduate study?" (AUCC, 2008a: 14). The question needs a considered response, which could be fruitfully addressed by further discussion among the players.

Difficulty of market insertion in India: According to Rohan Mukherjee (2008), there has appeared in India "a relatively new phenomenon – public debate" about privatization and even "foreign investment in higher education, [subjects] long considered taboo in a country that has vigorously upheld the ostensibly charitable ... nature of education." In his informative rendering of the Indian higher-educational terrain, the dominant government voices officially oppose education privatization, private or foreign. So they refuse to treat reasonably with legitimate providers, instead subjecting them to astronomical set-up costs and no end of bureaucratic interference. Meanwhile, they have withdrawn higher-education funding, at a time when demand is exploding. This has in turn led them to turn a blind eye toward a proliferation of dubious quasi-institutions, domestic and foreign, that are willing to pay huge fees and endure opaque regulation because they exploit students by maximizing profits while minimizing quality, which loops back into exacerbated political and public distrust of privatization, domestic or foreign. It is an inauspicious environment for those interested in the quality assurance of program regulation and funding.

What interviewee Fiech (Memorial) referred to as this "mushroom growth" of India's private post-secondary institutions was a major focal point in interviews. Generally, it was agreed that only Canada's uppermost few universities have any chance of establishing meaningful partnerships with India's top post-secondary

institutions, so that a major challenge lay in mapping the Indian terrain for partner schools that might not be at the pinnacle in terms of name recognition, but that were still excellent, or at least serious enough to be worth helping to build research and teaching capacity. In Evans' (APF) words, "the uneven quality of Indian research operations is the enormous challenge facing all Canadian post-secondary institutions looking for partners. Some are excellent and others are not functioning anywhere close to international standards. This makes choosing the right institution, and the right people within it, both tantalizing and difficult." Hepburn (UBC) is doubtful about the prospects of locating even worthy aspiring-quality institutions, given that the lack of Indian government funding makes it nigh-impossible for private post-secondary institutions to be anything other than "minimal investment, mass education machines designed to make money ... They could just as easily be making sausages." For Hepburn, the major partnering value these outfits could provide to Canadian institutions is recruiting Indian undergraduate students to Canada through two-plus-two degrees.

According to Mukherjee, such "twinning and program-based collaborations corroborate the low-investment, high-return model of foreign provision" that contribute to Indian suspicions of educational globalization. However, by Mukherjee's measure, the internal strains of India's post-secondary system have become such that it is now "constantly shifting and changing, driven every which way by a divergent set of ideologies." Mukherjee's chief advice for Canadian post-secondary institutions is that they leverage their interests within this "increased noise." Relationships should be cultivated "across a spectrum of policymakers, academics, administrators and even students," not only those sympathetic to foreign involvement, but also those 'establishment' voices presently opposed. Among our interviewees, Smith (U Windsor) related that his recruitment visits are often met with hard questions from a media suspicious of brain drain. Faisal Beg at Delhi's Canadian High Commission spoke of Indian PR outreach, relating how he has begun touring Indian journalists and educational consultants through Canada, "working to build a constituency in India that is favourable to Canada being the destination for students going abroad for education" (Interview, April 4). We feel that Mukherjee's point is most crucial: he pins successful lobbying efforts upon a genuine desire to improve the situation *in India*, specifically by looking beyond "low-investment high-return" aims of student recruitment, toward the long-term payoffs offered by more 'substantive' partnerships, especially with "second-tier" but aspiring-quality Indian institutions: "There is little to be gained from a short-term perspective on the Indian education market. The opportunities that exist in the present regulatory framework are limited and limiting" (2008).

Establishing offshore campuses/ research centres: According to Mukherjee, the key to success in India lies in preparing "for involvement based on stand-alone commercial presence ... which will in all likelihood be enabled in the near future as India is further integrated into the global economy." The chief reason Mukherjee gives is that such weighty investments as offshore campuses and research centres,

whether erected in partnership with Indian institutions or as stand-alone bases, will prove dedication to the long haul of Indian progress, and therefore help to erode ideological opposition to foreign involvement in domestic education. DFAIT's Tachdjian came the closest among our interviewees to Mukherjee's recognition of the 'visionary' potential to offshore campuses. He berated governments and universities alike for myopia and timidity:

There are tremendous opportunities for ... offshore campuses ... The Americans knew about this long ago, with the establishment of the American Universities of Cairo, Beirut and Paris. ... That as a government, we need to encourage this, because this is a wonderful way to do public diplomacy. A way of projecting your influence around the world.

None of our other interviewees seized on this particular advantage to 'offshore' sites, and they were in fact divided on the desirability and feasibility of branch campuses. The main attraction offered was that, as with online delivery, 'offshore' education is cheaper for Indian students, and similarly assures more 'quality control.' Longer-term benefits were occasionally mentioned, such as that these outposts can function as research sites (and housing) for Canadian faculty and students. John Hepburn (UBC) was concerned with maintaining excellence at an oceanic remove: "Offshore campuses are a bad idea. ... It's a diversion, very difficult to maintain the same quality, and misleading. To establish UBC Delhi, it wouldn't be UBC."

Some interviewees were enthusiastic about 'offshore' possibilities, but emphasized the difficulties. Our richest mine of such information was Adrian Fiech, who was central in Laurentian University's attempts to establish a Bachelor of Computer Science program in Chandigarh, in partnership with Georgian College and an Indo-Canadian immigration consultancy. The program started in 2003 but was prematurely terminated in 2005. Most of the problems in this case demonstrated the dangers of partnering with institutions – an immigration consultancy and a college – whose academic standards were not as rigorous as Laurentian's, but whose desire for profit was more intense. Laurentian relied on their partners' estimates as to how many students would register and complete the program, and these numbers were very wrong: "It would have been probably helpful to do due diligence independently." A second problem is that many students were "quite dissatisfied, based on inflated expectations." Marketing was originally left to the consultancy, which strategized an "over-enthusiastic delivery of facts." Laurentian eventually had to insist on vetting all advertising. The campus was never fully constructed, because of a drawn-out dispute with the local government over land acquisition, one which generated "a lot of negative press in Chandigarh," and somehow involved protected forests and the partners' desire for a golf course beside campus.

These challenges are such that Mukherjee argues that while Canada trails competitors in terms of student recruitment, 'stand-alone' presence is enough of a new frontier that Canada here can "leapfrog the competition with the right mix of vision and strategy." Of particular import to foreign institutions is the contended

passage of an Indian 'Foreign Education Bill,' pending in Parliament now for two years. If passed, it will greatly ease foreign direct involvement. Many are already angling themselves in anticipation of this deregulation. Bigger universities than UBC, from the US and the U.K., seem less concerned about expatriate degradation. And the list of potential Canadian participants is already long, ranging from SFU to Toronto's Seneca School of Aviation and Flight Technology (Umarji & Unnithan, 2008).

2. RECENT FEDERAL PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES THAT AID THE SITUATION

'Brand Canada': In order to partly calm the raging schism created by the provincial mandate in higher education and the federal mandate in marketing Canadian post-secondary institutions abroad, DFAIT's Edu-Canada Division has developed a 'Brand Canada' educational marketing effort slated for rollout in Fall 2008. The 2007 federal budget earmarked \$2 million over two years for this project, which has been a lengthy undertaking involving protracted negotiations among federal, provincial and institutional stakeholders. \$1 million was spent in brand development, and the other \$1 million is earmarked for marketing the brand. According to Jean-Philippe Tachdjian, Deputy Director of Edu-Canada at DFAIT, the main challenges for Brand Canada have been provincial/federal jurisdictional issues and, very much related to this operational decentralization, "not having that big a budget" (Interview, June 27). Other interviewees called the funding 'minuscule' or 'insignificant,' though most expressed varying degrees of confidence that Brand Canada augurs a governmental awakening. At least one interviewee, UBC's Hepburn, opined that Canada's top universities could and should promote themselves. But most interviewees would agree with Mathai (CECN) that until Brand Canada finally launches, "There is ... nothing identifiable about Canadian education" (Interview, April 1). Nav Chima, Manager of SFU's India Country Strategy, observed that Canadian post-secondary institutions might hope for pleasant associations with trees and snow – but only among educated Indians, and perhaps only those with Canadian relatives. Pointing out that provincial distinctions will never come across in India, many interviewees emphasized that any national-branding campaign had to be pan-Canadian in scope. Martin emphasized that "the single most iconic symbol this country has is the maple leaf," arguing that this image needed to be emblazoned in Indian minds as "the red seal of Canadian quality." The Quebec question arose. Crago (U Montreal) argued that opportunities opened by studying in French need due emphasis: "We need to explain to people why it would be as interesting to study in French as it is to study in English and that at the graduate level students can write theses and interact with their professors and peers in English at the francophone universities." Yet according to Martin, "The brand that was being floated in early discussions was a maple leaf diluted beyond recognition by bilingual signage; this may be less than helpful when such a majority of the world's mobile students are voting with their feet for an education in an English-speaking environment." Asked if the marketing campaign

would need to be bilingual, Crago replied: “Yes. I think that would be important.” But pressed (gently) as to whether this might constitute a ‘major hassle,’ she indicated that there is some debate within Quebec-educational circles: “Do you think we would actually put people off if we advertise in French and English? Does it make sense for a country with two official languages to use English only? Our bilingual nature is part of why Canada is an important beacon for respecting diversity in the world. We should be proud to advertise that part of our heritage and present our daily reality. It is, in fact, an essential part of the Canadian image and hence should be part of the ‘brand,’ of being Canada.”

The brand itself is a logo comprising a red, very stylized maple leaf, with the word “imagine” in uppercase, underneath and to the right of the leaf. The tagline, under the image, reads “education au/in Canada.” In their Fact Sheet, Edu-Canada notes that there has been a call to create a brand from many quarters, and posits that “a concerted, country-wide effort could produce enhanced results.” The brand may be used only by the provincial and territorial governments, CMEC, and the federal government until guidelines are developed for authorized users, such as post-secondary institutions, alongside whose own brands this one is to be complementary. But it is truly hard to see how this logo “conveys to foreign students that the quality of a Canadian education will provide them with the tools they need to develop the full potential of their human capacities,” even with a stylized maple leaf.

While our respondents seem under-awed of the logo, they do have clear ideas about what needs to be branded about the Canadian education experience. There was wide agreement, for example, that the excellence of Canadian institutions needs sharp emphasis in Asia, where “in general, people are very rankings-conscious” (Embleton, York). Here attention was drawn to Canada’s strong standing in international rankings, especially when considered in a per capita light: “If you figure the population of the country, we actually out-perform the US and Britain and others. But how do you get that across?” (Embleton, York). And the consistent quality across all Canadian universities was repeatedly emphasized. Martin (BCCIE) pointed out that Indian students, and their parents, have a variety of interests: “It depends what they want for their children, whether it’s going to be U of T or Mount Allison, in terms of the student experience, and what they will want to study. It’s not that one is necessarily better, just that one is different. It may be harder for the big universities to concede that point, but in Canada we have nobody who’s number one in everything.”

So, somehow, ‘Brand Canada’ needs to include greater and lesser academies, as well as those more concerned with research connections, and those more concentrated on student recruitment. Basically, it has to operate simultaneously on separate levels, between which reception modulates back and forth. Indeed, as McGill’s Matyas described it, this is precisely how ‘Brand Australia’ works. Once potential recruits are suitably dazzled by the “glamour” and “allure” of Australia, “the flyers, they’ll give you a menu of different options depending on your needs. It’s very

personalized, in that way. That you could actually explain to the representative what you're looking for, and then they have a whole menu of options to give you."

And above all, our overall message needs to be tailored to the sensitivities of intended markets. Canadians are justifiably attached to Canada's natural splendour; but Asians are as attracted to urban *human* nature, and its artistic and technological accomplishments. We are justifiably proud of Canadian multiculturalism, but we might even have to be careful about over-trumpeting this. Smith (U Windsor) pointed out: "For the mom or dad from India, who are not used to associating with other cultures ... one of the biggest concerns ... is, 'Will my kid be able to navigate that multicultural environment? And what are you going to do to help?'" Pratap Mehta (President, Centre for Policy Research) urges Canadians to remember that "it is important to understand what Indian needs and trends are, rather than assuming that the rise of India means it will be using [western] models"(Presentation, April 3, 2008). If Canadian post-secondary institutions want to be successful in their Indian ventures, they must remember that their work must accommodate the very different Indian context (and market, and marketing practices). And we need any national brand to do the same.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada: visas, enrolment management and labour-force supply: Concerns about visas and related issues form one of the key problems for Canadian post-secondary institutions conducting academic business in India, a huge segment of which is Indian student recruitment. In fact, such concerns have galvanized the surest government response yet to the need for international-student recruitment. CIC is well aware of the issues. As of 21 April 2008, the Post-Graduate Work Permit Program allows international students from eligible programs at certain Canadian post-secondary institutions to obtain an open work permit without a guaranteed job within 90 days of successfully fulfilling their program requirements, whereas before such graduates had to find work within 90 days or return home (CIC, 2008). Furthermore, these graduates can now work for three years anywhere in Canada; previously, they could only stay for two, unless they wanted to work in Vancouver, Montreal or Toronto, in which case they could stay one year. Another important development has been the formation of the 'Canadian Experience Class' amongst permanent-residency applicants, scheduled for Fall 2008. Certain categories of applicants will be effectively fast-tracked, including "international students with at least two years of Canadian post-secondary education and who have attained one year of recent (i.e. within two years preceding the application) full-time Canadian skilled work experience (www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/cec.asp). Crucially, such applications no longer have to be made outside Canada. Previously, an Indian graduated student had to return home, where processing takes three to four years: "Meanwhile they've gotten another job ... and they're, 'You know what? Forget about Canada'" (Tachdjian, DFAIT). Our respondents were unanimous in their support for these programs.

The Vaniers. In the 2008 budget, \$100 million was pledged over five years for the ‘Vanier Scholarships’ – \$50,000 awarded annually for up to three years to 500 top Canadian and foreign Ph.D. students. Commentators such as the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE) do consider the Vaniers to be “a big step in the right direction” (2008). Yet most observers assert that government-funded international scholarships need to be greater in both number and magnitude, if Canada is to *begin* matching any of our rivals. The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) pressed for the 2008 budget to include 2,500 scholarships specifically for international graduate students, reaching \$70 million annually by full subscription in the third year (2007). With one or two exceptions, interviewees agreed that there must be specific Indian scholarships – such as those offered by most of our competitors. The numbers varied, but Maria Mathai at the Canadian Education Centre Network (CECN) in Delhi suggested: “10 scholarships restricted to Indian students, of say the \$25,000 that it costs a student per year” (Interview, April 1).

3. BEST IDEAS MOVING FORWARD

The group of players interviewed have identified the following issues as requiring attention with a view to removing obstacles and capturing opportunities for Canadian institutions conducting academic business with and in India:

- Find a way through the federal/provincial mandates around international education so that Canadian post-secondary institutions can build their programs on a reliable and sustainable foundation;
- Build on the success of recent CIC international education initiatives by continuing to improve visa services and process;
- Encourage Canadian post-secondary institutions with an interest in India to develop a clear Indian vision and business plan, to share services and information, to lobby with one strong voice on issues of mutual interest, and to work together to address operative and policy obstacles, and through collaborative action, increase market penetration in India.

Those with an interest in Canadian post-secondary international education in India should convene to address these three go-forward ideas. What kind of co-ordinated federal/provincial foundation would be both useful and realistic, and how can we help build it? Which visa difficulties remain, and how can we act to bring about positive change?

But by far the most potentially effective and certainly the most interesting go-forward idea is the one around the post-secondary institutions themselves. What would collaborative action look like? Our respondents have some ideas. An idea raised during this study’s preliminary work was ‘Campus Canada,’ an umbrella-like

organizational unit for those post-secondary institutions operating in India. There are innumerable ways to imagine such an entity. Especially given the fact that all competitor nations have organizations promoting higher education abroad – governmental and/or inter-institutional, and usually on-the-ground in market nations – there was broad agreement that Canadian higher education needs some manner of organizational nexus focused on India. However, interviewees varied widely as to whether this need be ‘bricks and mortar’ (and if so, newly constructed or built into an existing organization) or ‘virtual,’ even simply a matter of increased collaboration among post-secondary institutions. Interviewees wondered about the agency and source of authority of such an organization. It is possible, for example, to imagine a merging or re-mandating of existing organizations to operate as a collaborative hub for Canadian post-secondary institutions operating in India. Noting CECN’s focus on promoting recruitment at the expense of higher-level academic linkages, DAIT’s Tachdjian considers the idea of CECN possibly partnering with (or merging into) the more research-oriented CBIE to be “a good idea. This kind of breadth, an organizational representation of *all* post-secondary interests, would, I believe, be a pre-requisite for the federal government to consider revisiting the idea of funding.” Other interviewees were less specific about particulars, but still inclined to view the federal government as the possible driver. Mendelson (McGill): “It really might best be done through the High Commissioner, and Consular Offices.” Some interviewees were not so specific about the degree of organizational attachment ‘Campus Canada’ might have to government structures, while still insisting on strong linkages—specially those involving funds and co-ordination. (Chima, SFU):

Well, I like the idea of having a national body, whatever that might look like, to facilitate this process ... if that body is going to be really partnering with the federal government. If it provides a body for information that has to do with national or international grants that we can disseminate down to our own people. ... If there was a place where there are annual forums or meetings.

But other interviewees emphasized the need for distance, if not *autonomy*, from government. According to Martin (BCCIE):

It would have to be an industry association, not unlike BCCIE for example, it would have to be arm’s length from government. ... If they try to house it within government, it’s not going to fly. ... An identical initiative coming from within government or coming from within the sector would be met with differing responses.

As well as establishing agency, another issue a forum needs to address is how any form of ‘Campus Canada’ must avoid duplicating efforts in an already crowded organizational field. In fact, some interviewees were sceptical that a new ‘bricks-and-mortar’ organization was the key to improving matters. Some, such as Mendelson (McGill) and Mitchell (U Calgary), suggested that a web-portal might obviate the need for any new organization. Martin (BCCIE) said:

We need to be suspicious of the need for new organizations. What are our present organizations doing? What do we want a new organization to do? What are its deliverables? Let's move backwards from that; maybe what we need is a new *function* instead of a new organization. ...You might need a real person, based somewhere, to oversee communications. But at present I would be leaning towards a virtual rather than new and real organization.

In the interviews, much discussion around duplication involved the roles that Canada's longest-standing postsecondary promotional institutions – Shastri and CECN – might play vis-à-vis the idea of 'Campus Canada.' There was a general consensus that Shastri once served mostly as a cliquey platform for rarefied intellectual exchanges, but that of late it has been showing signs of proving more useful in facilitating the pragmatic administrative and business aspects of institutional linkages. There is little doubt that Shastri could be much more effective than it is, and interviewees applauded and encouraged a new direction. Much discussion of CECN focused on whether or not its mandate to promote all kinds of Canadian educational institutions, and the fact that it is focused on the short-term remunerative goal of student recruitment, limits its efficacy for universities, or even 'waters down' their reputation.

And finally, our discussion of a collaborative action entity, as well as determining agency and contextual positioning, must consider what functions such an entity could provide. Certainly, 'Campus Canada' could provide a very welcome forum in which players could discuss issues such as the federal/provincial schism, visa difficulties, three-year baccalaureates, the difficulty of market penetration, and problems and opportunities with off-shore campuses and research centres. 'Campus Canada' could also conceivably supply some services, or consolidate the offering of certain services. Some interviewees were very keen on the building and updating of an information database. Ryan Touhey (APF) is emphatic: "We need a mapping study of just who is doing what where, and what is working. An evaluative inventory" (Touhey, 2008). Interviewee Faisal Beg, Trade Commissioner at Delhi's CHC, singled out the same need, prioritizing the provision to his office of "consolidated information about which post-secondary institutions are doing what in India, who wants to do what, and what opportunities there are at the institutions for Indian students." Other technological services could be combined with the database, such as hosting an interactive, collaborative web-portal to help overcome the obstacle of unfamiliarity with India's post-secondary sector, to post funding information, to share best practices, to find partners, and to provide a service to potential Indian students, employers, and agents. If desirable, 'Campus Canada' might provide a venue for on-line education information. Facilitating student exchanges could be another service offered. Many interviewees drew attention to the importance and challenge of placing Canadian students for short-term studies in India – which ranks very low among preferred destinations. Martin (BCCIE) listed 'getting Canadian students to India' as his second strategic priority because this would be integral to developing long-term

relationships with India: “Frankly, if you put four good Canadian interns on a project in India, you’d wow them.” He expanded on this:

One of the fundamental issues about ... the Indian education system, is that, while they have more brain power than we can ever harness ... one thing that the Indian education system doesn’t foster, is innovation. And that’s what our students can bring in spades. They might not get the same math and physics scores as the Indian students, but ... they can think outside the box. ... I’m convinced you still don’t have that in India. That’s the edge that our students have.

He also pointed out that student placements in India might not all be so rough-going, vividly describing the hotel-like TATA executive training facility surrounded by palm trees in Trivandrum that was to host B.C. students as an example. Faculty exchanges could also be facilitated, frequently referenced during our interviews as being of central importance. Fiech (U Memorial) insisted that faculty exchanges and other research-collaborative engagements provided the surest conduit for increasing recruitment numbers, over the long term. Chima (SFU) agreed emphatically:

Imagine if a Canadian faculty member had a friend, or a contact, with an Indian post-secondary ... well-recognized in India. They’ve started some kind of collaboration, a research project or whatever From that alone, there is now a relationship between that Canadian entity and that Indian entity. That will now allow a movement of students. If the relationship is nurtured, your student recruitment needs, your co-ops, your exchanges, your field schools, whatever your Canadian institution is having issues with. And this recruitment will flow out to their friends and families and classmates and colleagues. We’ve gone the other way, the hard way of doing it, which is going out there, getting agents, going to delegation meetings, making phone calls, trying to promote and brand our institutions by ourselves. We’ve gone such a difficult route of doing it, rather than working on the strength of face-to-face connections between our institutions. And this can start off on such a rudimentary level, just as a field school for example. And it will start to trigger off something. Something will move, something will shift, something will connect, and a relationship will start to formulate.

According to Paul Evans (formerly Co-CEO, Asia-Pacific Foundation), the potential of faculty exchanges remains frustratingly untapped:

It is important to keep in mind that for our universities and colleges, the most important instruments for making things happen are their faculty members. They can find the right counterparts and make the right connections. Our specialists on India and other faculty members are in regular contact with Indian colleagues. Not enough are we coming back from visits having encouraged four or five top students to apply to our institutions for degree study or lining up co-op opportunities and helping them in the application process. Getting the message

out to the professors and mobilizing them to be intermediaries is essential. (Interview, April 21).

'Campus Canada' might also be useful as a proactive base for fostering higher-level linkages, part of a general call to turn from a narrow student-recruitment focus, towards fostering institutional connections – capacity-building, joint degrees, research collaborations.

Memorial's Fiech insisted that while faculty tended to have interests other than student recruitment, their inter-institutional relationships, research-based or otherwise, were the chief channel through which significant recruitment would flow, even if fortuitously. Chima (SFU) expressed the same opinion, and they agreed that the majority of Canadian academies had no chance at striking up meaningful relationships with India's IIMs or IITs, but should rather seek out aspiring-quality institutes, to help them build capacity:

Identify good institutions, with visionary leadership, with top-notch students, which might not be, research-wise, very strong, but institutions where you can help them to develop, to train their faculty members, to modernize the curriculum. ... You might not see the fruit of it immediately. But in the medium and long term ... you will be a partner for years to come. You will be the first choice for this university when it comes to sending students abroad (Fiech, Memorial).

And Hepburn (UBC) offered the important reminder that Canada-India research collaborations are often valuable in and of themselves:

Partly, in some areas, it's 'India as a laboratory,' as with the AIDS research in rural India. Partly, in some areas of scholarship, the Indian scholars are every bit as good as anybody is. For instance, in more mathematical or theoretical sciences, where the infrastructure doesn't matter so much.

And of course, players in a potential 'Campus Canada' will want to discuss how they could use the body as a lobby group for their shared interests in India.

So we require a forum to discuss federal/provincial government policies and mandates, visa difficulties, and the agency, form, and services that some type of collaborative action group might provide. We need a place to debate priorities, and we need to formulate a go-forward plan. To this end, Kathleen Scherf (TRU) is working with Paul Evans (APF) and Sheila Embleton (York) on developing the program for an invited workshop (funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada) of about 30 participants from Canadian post-secondary institutions, federal and provincial governments, and relevant agencies and foundations in February 2009. We will keep you posted.

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¹ The idea for this paper emerged in Ottawa in November 2007, at the Canadian Bureau of International Education/Shastri Institute Forum on Canada-India Higher Education Linkages. Kathleen Scherf, then dean of Communication and Culture at the University of Calgary, presented a paper on the obstacles involved in conducting academic business in India from the perspective of those working on the ground. She organized a group of post-secondary players across Canada, all of whom were interested in understanding and improving the situation. This group formed a kind of advisory and sounding board on the issue, and this group still exists. Interviews with the members, conducted by UofC cross-cultural communication PhD candidate Iain Macpherson, provided the user-group information for this paper, and the recommendations we make are in large part based on the very frank compendium of experience they have been kind enough to share. Their contribution to this paper cannot be over-emphasized. They are:

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