



CBIE 2009 Conference

**New World:
Internationalizing Graduate
Professional Education in Canada**

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Publication Notes

Release Date: 10 November 2009

Conference Reference: Canadian Bureau of International Education,
43rd Annual Conference
November 8 - 11, 2009, Toronto, Canada
L'Efficacité de l'internationalisation: Stratégies de réussite
Internationalization Effectiveness: Strategies for Success

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FOREWORD

Dear International Educators:

It is a pleasure to present once again at the Canadian Bureau of International Education Annual Conference. There are few who would challenge the assertion that the field continues to prove dynamic and increasingly complex in scope. In particular, year over year, the "international" in International Education deepens as more and more countries become increasingly active and strategic in their engagement.

The theme of this presentation is International Graduate Student Recruitment, focussing on short-term challenges, and long-term opportunities. Growing literature indicates that the high-intensity competitive framework within which such recruitment is transpiring is continuing unabated. There is a significant shift that is taking place, in which no longer does it mainly fall within the narrow purview of individual institutions and their components. Rather, the arena very much now attracts the policy attention of national government and non-governmental policy makers, as well as sector-specific industry proponents.

This paper puts both the challenges and the opportunities within a wider global context. It offers at least one of many ways forward for Canada - whether with or without concerted national direction - for its constituent academic stakeholders to play a more prominent role on the international plane.

Oh, Canada

In the world of international graduate student recruitment, Canada slept at least as long as Rip Van Winkle. And although we have finally awakened to a whole new world that passed us by while we dozed, as other nations ramp rapidly up to the realities of the 21st century, we are still stretching lazily and wiping the sleep from our eyes. To other nations competing for the best and brightest international minds, Canada's historically strong research universities give it a powerful potential to attract graduate students that is the envy of most countries seeking to be significant players in this arena. In terms of that potential marketability, Canada can be listed legitimately in league with countries with substantially greater populations (such as France, Italy, Germany, Russia, Japan, Brazil). From the present vantage point of graduate student recruitment possibilities, only the U.S.A. and the U.K. and in the medium horizon, India and China, are likely to have a research breadth and depth that will far outpace that of Canada and confer upon them an even greater recruitment advantage. Canada has yet to live up its potential to compete broadly and effectively.

To be sure, Canadian policy stakeholders have identified the need to improve Canada's competitive position.¹ Initiatives are in place federally, provincially, and within individual institutions². For example, considerable recent progress has been made in regards to employment and immigration entitlements favouring international students³. The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada in collaboration with Canada's Education Marketing Board (part of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade) has coalesced pan-Canadian interests through the launch of a new 'Imagine' branding campaign.⁴ Provinces have recognized the potential policy values in one or more of the following benefits international students offer, e.g., more people, more highly-trained people, filling local industry needs, helping to seed new commercial endeavours.⁵ There are a number of advances, particularly scholarship initiatives, that Canada is either supporting financially, or facilitating through foreign-funded programs via esteemed umbrella organizations such as the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) or World University Services Canada (WUSC).⁶ The Natural Sciences and Engineering Council of Canada (NSERC) has recognized that competition is particularly fierce in the sciences and engineering⁷, areas in which Canada's future economic competitiveness depends in heavy measure.

But Canada has proven incapable of being self-sufficient as a producer of highly qualified personnel educated at the graduate level. In an exhaustive review of the challenges for Canada, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) report *Momentum* highlights that "As far as the domestic pool, the OECD reports that Canada trails far behind leading nations in the number of doctoral graduates produced ... U.S. universities awarded twice as many master's degrees per capita and 30 percent more doctoral degrees per capita than their Canadian counterparts".⁸ Given the clear and present need for Canada and its universities to attract graduate students from abroad – to convince them to study in Canada rather than elsewhere – what must be done to improve our rate of success? First, we must look at the competition.

Scouting The Competition: International Trends and Strategies

Many countries have strategic plans in place to attract students with potential or proven academic promise.⁹ Indeed, the European Union has introduced substantial new monies to partially or entirely subsidize international students in this regard.¹⁰ According to Beyond 'Fortress America', a January 2009 report from the National Academy of Sciences, universities around the world now have the research equipment and infrastructure to compete with their American counterparts. When the United States puts up barriers, the report said, “foreign universities are well positioned to extend competing offers.”¹¹ Quoted in a New York Times article on this topic, Danielle Guichard-Ashbrook of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology said bluntly: “There are other countries that want these folks. They are the best of the best. They have other options.”¹² But is Canada seen as one of them? Canadian media, with its limited coverage of the field, is reflective of a wider public and official relative disinterest in international student recruitment, while British and Australian media have long been replete with extensive coverage. Media in the United States has been increasingly getting into the fray.¹³

In the United States considerable attention on overseas recruitment has been concentrated on the master level degree, particularly in the sciences.¹⁴ As lucrative as international graduate student recruitment has been to the economies of Australia and the United Kingdom, increasingly, discourse around recruitment of international graduate students is extending to its import for global competitiveness.¹⁵ According to Momentum “Top-flight students are routinely courted by other nations which compete fiercely on the world stage by offering their own international scholarship programs.”¹⁶

In summary, there is little disagreement across the full gamut of stakeholders that Canada’s position vis a vis its primary competitors in the international student recruitment arena remains a challenging one.¹⁷ In a highly competitive worldwide market, we are not competing and succeeding to our academic potential. The problems, however, are fixable, immediately. The key? Professional course-based graduate programs.¹⁸

A New Game Plan

Assume that a university Department or Faculty has decided it wishes to engage the idea of aggressively marketing course-based graduate programs to an international audience. While it may have in the past attracted the semblance of an international audience, it is now considering a strategic initiative in this regard to turn its academic potential into a successful international graduate student enterprise.

Two things are necessary. First, and most obviously, the Department or Faculty has to have a course-based graduate program to market and this is not always the case. Where the research-oriented, thesis-based graduate program is the norm or the only program to market internationally, it is important for Canadian universities to understand that this is not what the marketplace itself is looking for in large numbers. While it is understandable from an academic point of view to stick to what is best known and deemed most appropriate from a scholarly viewpoint, it is also important to recognize that this is unlikely, even with the best of marketing strategies, to yield significant results overall given the demand by international students for a non-thesis based graduate experience. Moreover, this conservative approach restricts such programs to the most competitive of all international arenas: recruiting the research-based student.

The primacy in international recruitment terms of course-based graduate programs does not exclude a similar initiative to recruit international thesis-based students, distinct from, or in tandem with, a course-based initiative. Indeed, many of the same marketing strategies for course-based programs are instructive for thesis-based programs as well. It is also possible to structure a course-based master program so that while it is an end in itself for students, it can also serve as a potential talent pool from which research-based students might be recruited. The point, however? It is the course-based graduate program that can drive international graduate student recruitment success. Without that “product” to offer, the task of larger-scale successful recruitment is much more daunting.

Secondly, while it is easy for a Department or Faculty to say that it is ready for international prime time, it is not always understood going in what this actually requires the Department or Faculty to do. Unless the resources and the will to do what is necessary to compete are there, then the venture bears little likelihood of success.

So what, exactly, is needed once a program is in place to market internationally? What is needed is not just the university's academic culture (its calibre, resources, etc.) as it already exists but the university's international culture that demands service, presence, care, efficient systems, and a globally competitive corporate culture. Every university has an academic compass it uses to chart its direction. Our universities and their constituent Faculties and Departments are rather quite good at this. But all too few have an administrative compass that is valued equally, and whose strategic implementation is critical to international success. The remainder of this paper focusses on this.

Step 1: Defining objectives

As a starting point, objectives must be carefully defined. There are a number of potential objectives any or all of which may obtain in a given initiative: financial returns, academic contributions as research assistants or Faculty, aiding local industry. At the mission definition phase a given faculty will need to define not just academic strengths, but resource strengths in terms of faculty, staff and facilities. Graduate programs must evaluate their competitive strengths, whether reputational or relational, programmatic or

in conjunction with who their Canadian and international competitors might be in overseas markets. With defined objectives there can be evaluation of the progress or lack of progress of the endeavour.

Step 2: Focus On Key Relevant Markets

With market opportunities far outstripping available investment funds for most academic units, it is vital to select target markets wisely. Intelligent targeting leads to deepened branding in select markets of greatest relevance to the program being offered, rather than being the figurative ‘mile wide and inch deep’ around the world.¹⁹ While a website can market the world over, true market penetration will require disproportionate use of resources. For this reason the market focus theme is critical.

There is a great deal of technicality involved in international student recruitment, and devising a strategy is fraught with tremendous scope for error. While there are many resources available that yield data, the data is not always reliable or easily susceptible to transparent evaluation and analysis. And data, in the absence of “ground truth” is often as misleading as it is helpful. In some instances, a given market is popular but there is room to carve out one’s own popularity (e.g., a unique program, superior quality or value proposition, Canadian advantages in employment prospects, particularly in research and development arenas). In other instances, a market has a frightening absence of popularity but represents a good possibility for entry.

It is vital to fashion the brand of the program based on its greatest likelihood for attracting quality students from the market or markets to be targeted. While transnational and transcultural consistency matter to the university, they do not matter to the individual students in specific markets. Therefore, there is considerable importance attached in any strategy to the nation by nation, culture by culture relevance of the brand of the program. If “all politics is local politics”, then all branding is local branding in the world of international student recruitment.

What do potential international students need to know about a program’s brand? What matters to them? They will look for an emphasis on broader themes such as employment market placements (internships, post-graduation), research achievements, and the commercial and research opportunities in the locale of the institution. And, they will look for more narrowly defining features such as connectedness to a niche industry, or even a single company, or a specific area of academic reputation (e.g., through prolific publishing of key articles). They will be taking a value-proposition analysis that will be attracted to medium to long-term career prospects, permanent resident and citizenship status, and personal lifestyle advantages (across a gamut of considerations from gay-friendliness to bicycle-friendliness to religious freedom-friendliness and beyond). Certainly, students will tilt favourably where the university has achieved some local brand recognition, by virtue of past research endeavours or other initiatives that help add perceived value to the university name.

Step 3: Integrate Program-wide, Faculty-wide, University-wide

As aptly put by Professor David A. Shore: "There's enormous homogeneity in the programmes, products and services we [education providers] offer and, moreover, that the marketplace cannot assess the distinctions of those products and programmes, so they use certain proxies and substitutes for quality - and those proxies are all embedded in the concept of the brand."²⁰

A brand is a promise. It tells potential graduate students what the Faculty or Department is offering them. Executing the brand promise in a tightly controlled approach, stands the best chance of reinforcing that promise. Literally everything that the program, Faculty, Department, or University does serves to either enhance or erode that promise in the international marketplace. While an individual program may wish to stand alone as a brand, it is important to recognize that no program or unit is an island entirely of itself within its broader context.

Co-ordination and good-will among sectors of an institution, or an absence of it, can dramatically affect the brand of a program among potential students. Effective interface between the program and University Departments responsible for housing, finance, information technology services, food services, health services, or co-operative work/study offices all are replete with opportunities to advance or deter a winning impression in the minds of graduate student recruits. An onside, coordinated effort advances the prospects for success.

Step 4: Institutionalize and Personalize

To institutionalize and personalize is simple. It is just not easy. To enhance potential long-term affiliation and good-will and brand strength, what is on offer in terms of process, once in place, must be susceptible only to fine-tuning and not to arbitrary erosion due to personnel changes. That said, there is no doubt that potential students will look for a program or institution champion to be their "go-to" person. They will personalize their experience with the face and voice they know. Sometimes this will be a member of the faculty whom they have met during the program's marketing efforts. Often it will be the overseas representative. Sometimes it will be someone in an administrative position, perhaps in a registrarial capacity, who has key responsibility for communication about the status of an application. But in each marketing strategy, someone must emerge who is seen as the "soul" of the program, someone who adds that personal dimension that engenders trust among those thousands of miles away whom the Department or Faculty is trying to convince to leave their families and way of life to travel to new shores. It is people, not programs, that engender trust.

Step 5: Get The Details Right!

Most Faculties or Departments do not appreciate what will be required of them if they enter into a process of international graduate student recruitment. It is not a matter of putting up a website, traveling once a year to an international student fair, and waiting for the students to roll in. A few programs can do this by virtue of unique reputational circumstances. It would be a very bad mistake for anyone to assume that their program was one of these. A good starting point would be to assume that success will come from a lot of hard work and nothing else.

Here are the key elements of how to take care of the details that make all the difference in the international marketplace.

A. Academic Content

Which program or programs would best play in the market places set out for the marketing plan? There is a chicken and egg quality to the interplay between choosing the academic content and program details, and the choosing of the primary target markets. But in the long term there is a primacy to playing to one's academic strengths first rather than trying to prop up academic weakness just to be present in a particular international marketplace. It is conceivable that a Faculty or Department might have only academic strengths that have no international marketing potential whatsoever. If that is true, then that unit should hesitate prior to actively entering the international recruitment arena. More likely? Every unit has something to offer that can be matched to particular international venues. The challenge is finding the fit. Again, simple, but not always easy.

B. Setting Tuition

Strategically choosing primary marketplaces for attention where a good fit between academic strength and potential student demand is anticipated is only part of the challenge. Providers and consumers often have differing ideas of what is both affordable and warranted. Some programs will not have comparables and there will be more freedom to find a free-floating price-point. Other programs will be subjected to significant competitive pressures. Moreover, the precarious uncertainty over relevant currency exchange rates will be as important as comparisons among competitor programs in a given market.²¹ As with so much of recruitment work, there is no substitute for accurate, locally-derived knowledge about what the market will bear in terms of cost and balancing may be required with regards to setting a single price-point across several markets with different levels of cost tolerance.

C. Program Length

A two-year program (say, 4 semesters) may be academically the best way to go, or depending on institutional or provincial parameters, the only way to go. But reference must be made in a particular marketplace to similar products (if any) from competing destinations as well as other competitive attributes.²² A longer program at similar cost may be more appealing than its shorter competitors. Similarly a longer program with paid internships may be more attractive. International students ask questions about all of this. Program design should absolutely countenance Canada's regulatory provisions with regards to off-campus work provisions, post-graduation work provisos, and the potential to crystallize Canadian Experience Class entitlements. Ultimately, the program must have attractive answers within the particular competitive framework of the questioner.

D. Nomenclature and Degree Designation

Institutional or provincial contexts may limit the flexibility to denote degrees with certain nomenclature. But the starting point is to have a better understanding of what degree characterizations are more appealing in the international marketplace. Does it matter in the key market place or market places whether a degree is characterized as Master of Computer Science, Master of Computer Applications, Master of Information Technology, or more specifically where applicable, Master of Gaming Technology or Multi-media Technology? Do "Management" and "Administration" mean the same thing? Is there a perceived hierarchy of status among "Biotechnology", "Biology", and "Biochemistry"? If so, and where there is no fear of loss of academic meaning or rigour, tailoring the program's credential to the expectations of potential students and their career aspirations is a key step to take. Here, too, some compromises may be required in terms of preferring nomenclature that plays to the most important target markets even though this very nomenclature may ill-serve others of lesser import.

E. Admission Eligibility

For any program in any market, it will be important to assess admission eligibility with a more granular understanding of suitable qualifications in that market.²³ Some degree streams may be more or less suitable than might be apparent at first blush either because the actual course content is more or less relevant, or because the stringency of training is more or less appropriate. In some markets there are entire undergraduate degree streams that may well work beautifully as feeders into a course-based master degree stream but these may only reveal themselves upon closer study. Names of programs might be very different than in Canada, for example. In other markets, it is possible that no undergraduate program exists to prepare students adequately for the graduate program being offered, in which case the fit of program to market is not appropriate.

Consideration must also be given to English proficiency thresholds and to whether

admission conditional upon satisfactory completion of English as a Second Language programs will be offered or not, and if so, within what parameters. This is increasingly significant as more countries, including those whose national language is not English, are offering English-language course-based graduate programs. Flexibility in regards to offering a wider ambit of ESL options will expand the reach of a given program.

F. Session Intakes

Based on existing or manageable resource implications, it will be important to consider whether program commencement can be in one instance alone, or two or more throughout the year. Academic years in many parts of the world do not follow the North American Fall/Winter semester structure. Students often graduate from Bachelor's programs at the end of the calendar year, for example. If they have opportunities to move immediately to graduate studies in January or February at a competitor's institution, a Canadian program is unlikely to convince them to wait until the following September, no matter what the academic or other comparables might be. Visa issues also come into play. A more proximate subsequent session intake, rather than the need to wait a whole year, can be a balm to a student whose visa application was not processed in time. The general rule is simple in the international context: the more flexible the program start possibilities, the more likely the success in annual recruitment.

G. Scholarships and Internships

International students are aggressive in their questioning about the availability of scholarships and paid internships. The answers available will affect the overall marketing message. For example, Canadian institutions have not adequately conveyed co-operative work/study or internship schemes as a significant component in the Canadian higher education brand. Moreover, the breadth of Canada's achievement in research and development means our graduate programs can cast a wide and compelling net in terms of underscoring opportunities for program-related applied work experience. If brand is a promise, and if the best promise is a differentiated one, Canada has extraordinary potential to brand its course-based graduate programs in conjunction with the opportunities they offer for high quality work experience part and parcel with the degree program.

A Final Point about Attention to Detail

These seven elements, describing the details that need to be addressed, are not additions to an academic brand. It is not the case that they serve the mission of promoting the academic brand to potential students. They are an integral part of the brand of the program and the program, however strong it might be academically, will be judged in considerable part by the perceptions that students have of the total package on offer, not just the academic content and reputation of the program. Build the brand of the program from all the essential working parts and do not assume that there is an

“administrative part” and an “academic part”. That is a sure way to miss key aspects of what matters to potential graduate students in most key markets. Build things in, not on!

Step 6: Marketing

It is our view that only when the steps above have been taken at home that a program is ready to be marketed abroad. Only when the brand promise is built in an integrated fashion to include everything from courses in the curriculum to application processing to visa procedures is the program ready to be presented to potential students. Once a short list of select markets has been agreed upon, attention shifts to a host of marketing details. Marketing arrows point backwards to the program brand and forwards to the target audiences. Canadian programs in the main will have precious few promotional dollars for the foreseeable future and so much can turn on the choices made here.

A. Budgeting

Establishment of budgeting parameters is a must, ideally over at least a three year period. Marketing budgets, being invariably thin, have to elicit strong cumulative impact in a given marketplace. At the same time there must be provision for expanding these where prospective or actual success warrants. Like small businesses, international program marketing by universities most often fails because of undercapitalization. Simply putting up a website is not enough. The single biggest expenditure will be on the three most important parts of international graduate student recruitment: presence, presence, and presence. If you are not in the market(s), you are invisible for all intents and purposes. Yes, it costs money to be present. But without presence, every other dollar spent is a wasted cost, not an investment. Build a budget that understands the primacy of being there!

B. Promotional Materials

Careful scrutiny of the institution’s own publications and website is important to ensure consistency of branding effect and an absence of offense to local consumers. While publications are a must, questions as to quality and the nature and the extent of the content must be navigated as well as whether to enter into print versions (which engage distribution costs) or only electronic versions. In general, having print material in the international setting complements presence. Costs can be reduced (in some locales) by using local printers. Here, too, trans-national issues arise: does one localize materials, and if so, does one do so, with regard to language(s), or culture(s) or both?

C. Education exhibitions and other foreign forays

There is a primary issue in regards to budget choices from a vast array of options, often costly ones, and often ones in which competitors may well be able to fund. Participating in education or even trade exhibitions presents an opportunity to advance brand image

but also, in poor selection, to detract from it. There are a variety of questions to consider including whom to send on recruiting missions, and in selecting personnel, what qualification benchmarks and training opportunities will be incorporated into the preparation phase.

Participating in national, provincial, university or other missions engage similar issues. There are far more choices than can be reasonably financed. Selection amongst these must be judicious. More money is spent needlessly in the arena of exhibitions, conferences and foreign forays, than in any other.

D. Other Advertising and Promotional Vehicles

Analysis of a gamut of promotional opportunities must be surveyed, assisted by local expertise. The value of local expertise cannot be overestimated. It is another example of the importance of presence in the target markets. If you do not know which local newspapers will provide the best value for the advertising dollar, then you are not yet sufficiently present in that market! These opportunities may be conventional (such as newspapers and magazines) as well as unconventional (shopping malls, radio, movie theatres).

E. The Application Process

(1) No One Likes to be Put on Hold!

The application process is where the brand promise is often most severely tested and where it so often fails to reinforce the academic quality of the program being marketed. Efficient, effective, and personal processing of an application builds goodwill and in the longer run inures to the overall brand image.

An effective architecture can actually process significantly greater volumes than is typically the case in Canadian universities at present and can do so at lower cost. But this will almost invariably require a substantial reconfiguration of current standard operating procedures. In particular, traditional ways of handling the flow of enquiries (sifting vexatious from serious), web interface for processing, database management, handling incomplete applications as well as completed ones, all must be up open to change. From generating leads, to contending with them, to tracking applications, institutions can substantially raise their yields of high quality students by directing deepened energies into the most vibrantly interested candidates.

Technology is obviously fundamental as part of the application architecture. Inherent in both a website interface and database management is the premise of labour efficiency. Yet poor design of each, or even of a lack of integration into the entire processing architecture may have the reverse effect: it may elicit far greater volumes of spurious enquiries upon which precious time is wasted.

Remember: Canadian course-based graduate programs are competing in a world where acceptances to universities in other nations are often granted on the spot, thousands of miles from the host institution. No program should compromise its academic integrity. However, to ask a potential course-based graduate student to apply and then wait months for a reply is simply not competitive. Empower those in the field to rapidly advance the process to a final, key point of academic approval. This is part of the brand promise that international students look for and respond to. Its importance cannot be overestimated, however non-academic it might appear to be.

(2) Separate the Wheat from the Chaff Quickly

Institutions unwittingly may well spend tremendous staff time chasing down bad leads. It is important to neither overlook good leads, nor spend inordinate time on vexatious ones. Saving money and spending money must both be executed effectively. Hence, it is worth the investment to develop a systematic approach that swiftly makes good decisions at the first instance. The single most important contributor to this once again derives from local presence. Money “saved” by not being sufficiently present in the local market is almost inevitably wasted later in the process by spending time (and, therefore, money) on ultimately useless activities that should have been avoided much earlier. If a particular prospect is, in the end, not going to work out for the program, then the old adage of “fail early, fail cheap” is highly pertinent. And the only way to ensure that things work this way is to ensure strong local presence that learns to recognize wheat and chaff: wheat and chaff in terms of the individual’s academic merit, financial capacity, personal suitability including motivation, and ultimately, determination to come.

We think this issue is far thornier than meets the eye. One fails to acknowledge this at one’s peril. Many academic assessment issues that are engaged even within the Canadian domain take on a far greater complexity once one tackles the panoply of education systems, and their nuances, abroad. Issues such as concordance of marks, quality and nature of qualifying degree program content, risk of misrepresentation, are all far more daunting once one moves out of the Canadian milieu. Assessment of English (or French) proficiency is a further example of an issue that becomes vital when moving beyond Canadian borders, and standardized test scores alone may not be as reflective of proficiency as one would wish. Further screening methods may well serve the selection process.

In most markets of interest to Canadian course-based graduate programs, there is significant variance across institutions, and even within an institution over a period of a scant few years. Higher education in a great many countries abroad is exceedingly fluid and it can be daunting to keep abreast of the flux. At times, literally going by the book (or books) can result in either refusals or admissions that might be determined otherwise with more scrutiny. Admission requirements amongst domestic and foreign competitors are always moving. Maintaining up-to-date information in this regard may not change decision-making, but at least ensures more informed decision-making.

Step 7: Bring the Best Prospects to Canada's Graduate Programs

Formulaically speaking, the best possible prospects are those that the program identifies as being most attractive academically and experientially who have the greatest likelihood of coming (for present purposes the “target group”). An effective application architecture will help yield this data so that disproportionately more staff and faculty time is spent on the target group.

Implementation has to maximize personalization from the prospective student standpoint. A variety of means should be implemented to create personal connectedness between the student and the institution and certainly interpersonally effective and responsive faculty can make a decided difference.

The processing architecture has to be able to efficiently maintain reliable communications with the target group to ensure their anxieties and hopes alike are addressed. Another bane is the not-so-simple challenge of ensuring that the student has the offer in her hands. So, while on the one hand admission letters are being received by students with no further interest, some target group students may be unduly awaiting decisions to be made, or even paperwork already published and sent, but not received.

Finally, predictability of arrivals is a paramount issue. Recruitment of overseas students, with all the planning and investment entailed, requires predictable numbers of arrivals with a sufferable plus/minus variance. Addressing issues related to the study permit process involved is vital in trying to smooth and facilitate the co-operation of both students and visa offices alike.

A further thorny and related issue relates to ensuring that the good name of the university, Faculty or Department is not abused by candidates seeking to elicit an offer only to abuse it for the purposes of obtaining a study permit with no intent to study. The cumulative effect of successful abuses of this kind weakens the program and university reputations both with student markets and Canadian visa offices overseas.

To address these issues, design features are available that can bring greater and early clarity as to the student's capacity and intent to take advantage of an offer granted. At the same time, effective design can hold the student to her representations and to her intent such that the risk of abuse of the study permit is minimized while the yield and the predictability of the yield is maximized.²⁴

Final Thoughts

Coming to grips with the importance of international competition is a first key reckoning in considering ventures and investments in international graduate student recruitment. At the core is the need for a strategic and studied analysis of the possibilities. The program's own resources and self-assessment in the context of international marketability is the starting point in this exercise from which aspirations can then be explored. The product of this exercise may well lead to the cessation of some contemplated initiatives and the energizing of others.

As in any other field of endeavour, whether commercialized or not, the international marketplace is a volatile one where the unforeseen must always be considered as part of the framework for decision-making. Canadian institutions have a great range of assets to call upon in pursuing international initiatives. But given the limited funding for exploration, the pressure to make good decisions will remain. In maximizing the opportunity for staying in the arena, initiatives will need to realize strategically relevant brand definition tied to overseas opportunities that most play to their strengths based upon historic and current competitive forces. Marketing plans must be incisively and expertly developed and executed. Crucially, the application architecture must be designed and delivered so that at one and the same time, the increased interest presumably engaged by an effective marketing plan, can be efficiently distilled into target group candidates who can best be converted from prospects into registered and thriving students.

END NOTES

¹ Momentum: The 2008 report on university research and knowledge mobilization, Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. 2008.
<<http://www.aucc.ca/pdf/english/publications/momentum-2008-low-res.pdf>>

“In confronting the global race for talent, Canadian universities must also compete for the best master’s and doctoral students who fuel the pipeline of highly qualified personnel required by universities themselves and by other sectors of Canada’s economy. . . . To ensure that Canada has the requisite number of highly qualified personnel for all sectors of the workforce, universities will need both to increase the size of the domestic talent pool and to attract more students from abroad. Upon completion of their degrees, students from abroad may choose to stay and work in Canada or return to their home countries and become valuable international collaborators. As for the domestic pool, the OECD reports that Canada trails far behind leading nations in the number of doctoral graduates produced. For example, in the 2005 cohort of graduates 25 to 29 years old, U.S. universities awarded twice as many master’s degrees per capita and 30 percent more doctoral degrees per capita than their Canadian counterparts.” Pages 43-44.

² Ibid. Momentum:

“To complement federal, provincial and university initiatives that attract foreign talent to Canada, The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) has also revised the eligibility criteria of some scholarship and fellowship programs to increase support available for international students.” Page 98.

³ Lowe, Sophia. “Canada: Changing Employment and Visa Regulations to Improve the Recruitment of International Students.” World Education Services. June 2008. <http://www.wes.org/ewenr/PF/08june/pfeature.htm>.

⁴ Lamrock, Kelly. “A Pan-Canadian Brand is a Challenge Worth Pursuing.” Embassy: Canada’s Foreign Policy Newsweekly. February 20, 2008.

⁵ For example:

Province of Nova Scotia: www.edunova.ca

Province of Québec: http://www.crepuq.qc.ca/spip.php?article1065&var_recherche=international&lang=fr, Province of Manitoba:

www.gov.mb.ca/ie/

Province of British Columbia: www.bccie.bc.ca

Province of New Brunswick: <http://international.nbed.nb.ca/>

⁶ See for example: http://cbie.ca/english/scholarship/non_canadians.htm.

See also sidebar at: <http://www.wusc.ca/en/overseas/africa/botswana>
“Administering scholarships for more than 800 Botswana students who have studied at Canadian post-secondary institutions; more than 95% graduate and return home.”

See also the Sauvé Scholars Program: www.sauvescholars.org/

Finally, note also Canada’s Emerging Leaders of the Americas (ELAP) program. www.scholarships.gc.ca/elap-eng.aspx and it’s potential for combination with country specific programs such as that of Canada-Chile Leadership (Cusep-GSEP) - http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/chile-chili/highlights-faits/student-chili_chile-etudiant.aspx?lang=en

⁷ Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada. Report of the International Review Committee on the Discovery Grants Program, April, 2009. www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/stats/wdownload.asp?d=/doc/Reports-Rapports/Consultations/DGinternational_review-rpt_e.pdf

“There is an international “talent war” to attract the best trainees. . . . The announcement in the most recent federal budget to create a prestigious new class of doctoral scholarships – the “Vanier” scholarships – is therefore welcome. These will provide an annual stipend of \$50,000 for three years for 500 (Canadian and international) students per year across all fields. The Committee believes there is also a need to encourage more postdoctoral fellows from abroad – who are not currently eligible for direct NSERC support – to come to Canadian universities. (Foreign PDFs and students can be supported via Discovery Grants at the discretion of the grant holders.) Postdoctoral fellows provide very cost-effective leverage of research funds and their experience in Canada may either lead them to stay, or at least to foster on-going relationships between Canadian researchers and those in their eventual location of work.” Page 38.

Piper, Martha. “Building a Civil Society: A New Role for the Human Sciences.” The Killam Trusts. 2002 http://www.killamtrusts.ca/docs/Killam_Lec_02.pdf

The need for attracting more talent to the human sciences was given particular thrust in the 2002 Killam Annual Lecture, Dr. Martha Piper nicely elucidated the relationship between both the need to develop Canadian identity in a global context and the importance of improved scholarship and research in the human sciences. Page 20.

⁸ Op. cit. Momentum. Page 44.

Ibid. *“Relative to the size of the population, Canada awards only half as many master’s degrees...annually than does the U.S.” Page 45.*

Ibid. See also page 98 where the authors refer to revised eligibility criteria to increase support for international students

Ibid. *“Taken together, the chapters of Momentum provide a detailed assessment – one that is mindful of the appropriate timeframes required to achieve long-term research goals. It also illustrates that research funding and performance must be carefully, thoroughly and continually assessed and reassessed against international competition.”*Page 111.

⁹ “Sweden's Master Programs prove popular with international student”. Australian Education International. E-Newsletter: Edition 008/2009. February 25, 2009. <<http://aei.gov.au/AEI/MIP/eNewsletter/eNewsletter?Edition=008&Year=2009>>

“One year after the new system for Masters program was introduced the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education has reviewed its impact. The new 'masters' structure has been widely adopted and proved popular with international students, with 61 per cent of enrolments coming from overseas.”

¹⁰ Fox, Holly. "EU hikes funding for study abroad programs". AP Worldstream. February 16, 2009. <<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1A1-D96CNHEO4.html>>

“EU Education Commissioner Jan Figel said euro950 million (\$1.2 billion) has been earmarked for university exchange programs, up 56 percent from 2004-2008 when euro609 million (\$779 million) helped fund more than 10,000 scholarships for non-EU students. . . . Begun in 2004, the Erasmus Mundus program does likewise for students and academics from non-EU nations and funds studies of EU nationals at non-EU universities. It aims to stem a European brain drain by attracting top international students to mostly master degree programs at Europe's storied universities.”

¹¹ Committee on Science, Security, and Prosperity; Committee on Scientific Communication and National Security; National Research Council. Beyond 'Fortress America': National Security Controls on Science and Technology in a Globalized World. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press. 2009.

See also: Labi, Aisha. “As World Economies Struggle, Competition Heats Up for Students From Abroad”. The Chronicle. November 21, 2008. <<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v55/i13/13a02201.htm>>

See also: “US universities take steps to attract international students.” The Guardian, UK. November 17, 2008. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/nov/17/usa-university-diversity>>

¹² Dean, Cornelia, “Scientists Fear Visa Trouble Will Drive Foreign Students Away.” New York Times. March 2, 2009. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/03/science/03visa.html?ref=education>>

This New York Times report describes threats to American dominance in Attracting Foreign Students

¹³ Kalita, S. Mitra. "Foreign Applications to U.S. Graduate Schools Slow", The Wall Street Journal. April 7, 2009.
<<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123906554985795469.html>>

See also: McMurtrie, Beth, "Foreign Students Pour Back Into the U.S." The Chronicle International. November 21, 2008.
< <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v55/i13/13a00101.htm>>

More particular to the graduate student arena, the results are less clear: *"The number of students seeking graduate degrees, who account for nearly half of all foreign students here, grew by 4.8 percent in 2007. . . . In addition a report by the Council of Graduate Schools, released this month, concluded that the rate of growth in graduate enrollments was slowing down."*

See also: Parker, Tamsyn. "The battle to attract international students." The New Zealand Herald. March 14, 2009.
<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=10561638&pnum=4>

Interest by Canadian media has been percolating in recent years. Media coverage can play an important role in galvanizing political attention, and ultimately public investments. See: Broitman, Mel. Interview. Masala Canada. Radio Canada International. Apr. 2009. <http://www.rcinet.ca/rci/console/index.asp?langue=EN&IDExtraits=930331>

¹⁴ Committee on Enhancing the Master's Degree in the Natural Sciences, National Research Council. Science Professionals: Master's Education for a Competitive World. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press. 2008.

¹⁵ Healy, Guy. "Unis to chase overseas research talent." The Australian. March 16, 2008.
<<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25194021-12332,00.html>>.

See also: "Minister eager to recruit international students", The Copenhagen Post. April 24, 2009.
<<http://www.cphpost.dk/news/politics/90-politics/45488-minister-eager-to-recruit-elite-international-students.html>>

"Top foreign students could get free education in exchange for committing to work in Denmark. Science Minister Helge Sander has announced plans to offer grants to top international students to study in Denmark if they agree to contribute to the national workforce for a couple of years."

¹⁶ Op. cit. Momentum

"For example, the Australian government offers approximately 660 Endeavour Awards at the master's, doctoral and postdoctoral levels. . . . Similarly, in the United Kingdom, the Chevening Scholarship Program, funded by the government with significant

contributions for higher education institutions and the private sector, attracts close to 2,300 international students each year, primarily at the master's level, to pursue studies in the U.K.” Page 45.

¹⁷ Association of Canadian Community Colleges Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance Pre-Budget Consultations 2008. Canada's Crisis in Advanced Skills <http://www.accc.ca/ftp/briefs-memoires/200808_finance.pdf>

See also: A brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). Achieving Canadian Excellence in and for the World: Knowledge Partnerships as Building Blocks of Canada's International Relations. October 27, 2005. <http://www.uacc.ca/pdf/english/reports/2005/achieving_excellence_10_27_e.pdf>

Particular attention is warranted at pages 6 and 7

See also: Bond, Sheryl. “Northern Lights: International Graduates of Canadian Institutions and the National Workforce.” Canadian Bureau of International Education. 2007.

See also: Timmons, Vianne. “International Education in Canada Needs More than a National Branding Strategy.” Embassy: Canada's Foreign Policy Newsweekly. February 20, 2008

See also:

CBIE Media Release on October 30, 2007: “Canada lags in competition for talented foreign graduates.”

<http://cbie.ca/data/media/releases/20071030_CanadaLags_e.pdf>

CBIE Media Release on November 16, 2007: “International students - Canada slides while the US climbs; International Education Week 2007 celebrated but improvement needed.”

<http://www.cbie.ca/data/media/releases/20071116_CanadaSlides_e.pdf>

¹⁸ National Academy of Sciences. 2008 Report to Congress. Washington, D.C. 2008 <<http://www.nationalacademies.org/annualreport/>>

The recognition of the need for more emphasis on offering such degrees has been given no less an endorsement than the United States National Research Council of the National Academies in a 2008 report. The Report states that *“Directors of master's programs in the sciences that are geared to the workplace argue that the students they are attracting are not typically the same ones who would have been attracted to doctoral education. A few graduates from these programs do go on to earn Ph.D.'s, but most chose master's programs to advance their careers in industry, government, or nonprofit organizations.” Page 32.*

The passage also refers to how such programs attract different demographics, and in particular, better serving underrepresented groups such as women.

It is precisely through leveraging course-based master degrees, that the United Kingdom, as an example *par excellence*, has achieved extraordinary results in recruiting international graduate students, despite the disadvantage of an extremely long run with a highly valued currency. Consider that the University of Nottingham offers an array of over 300 postgraduate taught courses. Mostly master degrees, view list: <<http://pgstudy.nottingham.ac.uk/postgraduate-courses/courses-a-z.aspx>>

This approach offers even more wide-ranging flexibility to pursue national objectives. For example, a group of five French universities has launched a two year master degree program in nuclear energy. See: [Nayak, Prachi]. “French Nuclear Energy degree for Indian grads”, DNA India. April 29, 2009, <<http://www.dnaindia.com/report.asp?newsid=1251563>>

¹⁹ In the French nuclear example canvassed above, while the program’s near term focus is in ensuring a talent supply for opportunities in France, the program also has a longer-term outlook. It is focused on attracting Indian students bearing in mind France’s nuclear research and development in India, and plans for France’s Areva to build six European Pressurised Water Reactors in India in the coming decade.

²⁰ David A. Shore, Associate Dean, Harvard School of Public Health, World Education Market Preview, for the World Education Market Conference, Vancouver, B.C. April 2001.

²¹ “Locked-In Tuition Is a Win for Families but a Tough Sell for Colleges.” The Chronicle. April 14, 2009. <http://chronicle.com/daily/2009/04/15710n.htm?utm_source=at&utm_medium=en>

²² Smith, Jacqueline. “Universities look at degree fast-tracking.” New Zealand Herald. April 27, 2009. <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10568764>

“Students will be able to fast-track their masters degrees if New Zealand universities agree to change the rigid structure of the system. The New Zealand standard has always been that to achieve a masters degree, a student must have completed five years of study, and universities have rigidly stuck to that system. But overseas, and particularly in Australia, flexible masters programmes, which take one year and can sometimes be entered after just three-years undergraduate study or professional experience, are attracting large numbers of students. International students often find the shorter, more intensive programmes better fit with their career-plan and budget. Last year the committee on university academic programmes, which comes under the New Zealand Vice Chancellor's Committee, started to look at whether New Zealand should introduce more flexibility to its masters degrees in order to increase New Zealand's into lucrative international markets.”

²³ Labi, Aisha. "American Graduate Schools Are Mulling Europe's New 3-Year Degrees" The Chronicle April 27, 2009, http://chronicle.com/daily/2009/04/16912n.htm?utm_source=at&utm_medium=en

For example, evaluating European degrees and the Bologna process. *"More than half of the survey respondents said their institutions 'had an official policy in place to guide the admissions response to three-year Bologna-compliant degrees; within this group, a third tended to view three-year Bologna-compliant degrees as equivalent to U.S. four-year degrees, and another third decided equivalency on a case-by-case basis,' the paper said. It added that respondents 'felt that the applicant's preparation for study in the specific field remained a much more important factor in academic faculty decisions than degree length'."*

²⁴ "Due Diligence and International Student Misrepresentation: Ensuring favourable policy and practice". Canadian Bureau of International Education Conference, October 26, 2003. Page 10.
<http://www.cbie.ca/conference/2003/Final_program_e.pdf>

About Higher-Edge

Originally a Made in Canada enterprise, Higher-Edge has become a global leader as consultant to higher education stakeholders across a breadth of internationalization issues.

Whether for a University, College, School, Provincial/State or Federal government, Higher-Edge offers unique strategic insights and planning to institutions keen to understand global markets and successfully navigate the choppy waters of international student recruitment.

Higher-Edge personnel have presented on international student recruitment issues before leading fora in Canada, the U.S.A., England, Germany, the U.A.E., Singapore and Nigeria and before student audiences totalling well over twenty thousand, in hundreds of educational institutions in dozens of countries worldwide.

Higher-Edge publishes electronic bulletins, and its widely recognized Overseas, Overwhelmed (since 2001) and Not-so-Foreign (since 2002) publications are read by thousands of subscribers. Readership spans the globe including personnel within academic institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and private industry.

Higher-Edge has advised and prepared consulting reports for academic institutions, government ministries, and university consortia.

Higher-Edge Canadian headquarters are in Toronto, with a global network of its own offices throughout Asia, Africa and South America.

About Daniel Zaretsky

Daniel Zaretsky is Chief Ideas Officer, Higher-Edge.

Mr. Zaretsky is one of Canada's leading consultants and commentators on international education. He is a graduate of the University of Toronto Law School (J.D.), and prior to launching Higher-Edge, Mr. Zaretsky headed Daniel Zaretsky, Barristers and Solicitors, a Toronto-based law firm, focussing on international law and human rights law. He did his undergraduate studies at York University in Toronto.

In 1997, Mr. Zaretsky founded Higher-Edge, with the aim at assisting Canadian higher education institutions in making more of an impact across Asia, Africa, Central and South America. Alongside his founding partner, Mr. Mel Broitman (York University, B.A.) and Columbia University Journalism School (M.Sc.), the two have pursued their vision of breaking down barriers to international student movement, a movement they see as integral to the welfare of global civil society.

Mr. Zaretsky is regularly quoted in print and broadcast media around the world, as his worldwide travels to promote international student mobility find interested audiences across Asia, Africa and South America.

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About John Corlett

John Corlett has been Dean of the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences at Brock University since 2002. He was previously Registrar and Dean of Student and Academic Services for five years at the University of Windsor where, working with Higher Edge, he oversaw a planned growth of the university's international student population, tripling it successfully in four years.

Prior to his appointment at Windsor, he taught for four years at the University of Botswana. He continues to work internationally, particularly in Central America where he has partnered for the past five years with the El Salvador Ministry of Education in a project to reduce youth violence.

Dr Corlett holds a PhD from Simon Fraser University and has published in a broad range of areas including international education, youth development, and the philosophical foundations of health and education professions.

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