



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Impressive results of US survey of international student enrolments suggest challenges for Canada**

*Ottawa, November 19, 2009:* Reviewing the findings of the latest survey from the United States on international student enrolment in that country, Canadians are likely to be amazed by our neighbour's success and concerned at what it means for our own performance in attracting students from abroad.

The Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) has been tracking trends in international student mobility for over 40 years, on behalf of its membership of educational institutions and associates across Canada. The *Open Doors* publication from CBIE's partner organization, the Institute of International Education (IIE), has measured US enrolments since 1919.

The new *Open Doors* reports a solid 8% increase in foreign higher education enrolments in 2008-09 over the preceding year, to an all-time high of 671,616 students. This follows annual increases of 7% in 2007-08 and 3% in 2006-07. A slight downturn after 9/11/2001 has been succeeded by several years of consistent growth.

More impressive still is the 16% increase in *new* (first-time) enrolments in 2008-09, following two years of 10% increases.

Interesting and possibly of concern from a Canadian perspective is the surge in Chinese student enrolment from 81,000 to 98,000, a 21% rise. China is Canada's top sending country, and it seems the US may be impinging on our opportunities for growth there. Alternatively, given the size of China's population and the expanding middle class, the increase may in fact signal heightened opportunity for Canadian education.

While increasing by just 2%, Canada has now risen to 4<sup>th</sup> place as a sending country to US higher education, supplanting Japan. In 2008-09, nearly 30,000 Canadians were enrolled in US universities and colleges. At the same time, enrolment of US students in Canada dipped slightly between 2007 and 2008 – from 12,003 to 11,317 (all levels including K-12). Nearly 10,000 US students were at the post-secondary level in Canada in 2008-09 (data from Citizenship and Immigration Canada - CIC).

Canada's own international student enrolments are also on the rise. According to CIC, between 2007-08 and 2008-09, there was a 1.2% increase in Canada's international student population (all levels including K-12) – hardly impressive compared to the US performance.

Canadians may well ask what the US numbers, coupled with further astonishing reports of growth from Australia and the United Kingdom, say about the impact of investments made by a country in promoting its educational institutions internationally?

While Canadian institutions put time, effort and funds into recruitment abroad, an array of studies has concluded that students frequently choose the country of study abroad initially, and then look for a specific school, college or university. CBIE's *Canada First 2009*, a national survey of international students, found that over half of those responding had selected Canada prior to choosing a study venue per se; among college students, nearly two out of three had chosen Canada and then an institution.

However in 2007, at the federal level, Canada committed the relatively small amount of \$2M over two years for promotion (exclusive of the Trade Commissioners Service), with perhaps another \$5M a year provided by provincial governments. Recently the two levels have come together to develop and launch an Education Canada brand, which promises to have a positive impact on future enrolments.

Other countries invest much more heavily, both in research to inform promotion and in promotion itself. For instance, the comprehensive, annual *Open Doors* survey is supported financially by the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The Bureau operates 400 Education USA advising/promotion centres.

The United Kingdom has reinvested in the promotion of its Education UK brand with approximately \$50M from 2006-08 for the Prime Minister's Initiative – in addition to core funding for the British Council, its main promotion organization, whose budget is over \$1B per annum. The Australian government provides over \$50M a year to its main education promotion organization, Australian Education International.

Recently Canada's Minister of International Trade released a report showing that international students in Canada provide about \$6.5B annually to the economy. While impressive, this total pales in comparison with the magnitude of revenues achieved in other countries. Australia estimates that in 2008 it received nearly \$15.5B from international student expenditures.

Worldwide there were over 2.9 million international students in 2006. By 2025, 8 million students are projected to be studying outside their home country.

Today Canada confronts aggressive competition from both traditional and emerging host countries. CBIE urges the federal government to invest in a comprehensive, sustained program of promotion to put Canada in the picture as a top international student destination.

Canada has lots to offer the world in quality, affordable, cutting-edge education, but *Open Doors 2009* impressively illustrates the competition we face in attracting international students.

*For more information:*

Jennifer Humphries, Vice President, Membership and Scholarships, CBIE  
Telephone: 613-237-4820 Ext. 246 - [jhumphries@cbie.ca](mailto:jhumphries@cbie.ca)

*CBIE is a national not-for-profit educational association made up of nearly 200 school boards, colleges, universities and associates. It is involved in both aid-supported and trade-related educational projects around the world.*