



MEDIA RELEASE

CBIE REPORT URGES CULTURE SHIFT IN ACADEMIA AND GOVERNMENT TO OPEN STUDY ABROAD TO MANY MORE PARTICIPANTS

Too many students who plan to participate change their minds for financial and bureaucratic reasons

Ottawa, May 27, 2010: A report on study abroad by Canadians, *World of Learning: Canadian Post-Secondary Students and the Study Abroad Experience* suggests that a radical culture shift must take place in our colleges and universities, and in government, if we wish to graduate students who can effectively live and work in an internationalized world. Currently only about 3% of the student population have an international study experience.

Published this week by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), funded by the International Academic Mobility program of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), the report examines access to and success in study abroad programs from four perspectives: students; the general public; professional staff at universities and colleges; and professors.

“This is the first Canadian study of such scope, comprehensiveness and complexity to research the study abroad experience. We wanted to get it right, and launched this important research project because CBIE strongly believes in the transformational quality of the study abroad experience,” CBIE President Karen McBride said.

“Although it may sound idealistic, study abroad is not just a nice thing to do. International study by our students is a real need. The overwhelming global challenges faced by the new generation of students and graduates require a broad worldview, underpinned by direct experience of diverse cultures and alternative concerns. Though internationalized classrooms are helpful, substantive experience is crucial, and an important step in preparing future generations.”

World of Learning calls for a national funding program designed specifically to support participation in study abroad programs. Without a substantial infusion of effort and funds, engagement in study abroad will increase only slightly in the coming years – hardly sufficient to take Canadian participation rates to 15% as recommended in the report.

Dr. Vianne Timmons, Chair of the Board of CBIE, and President of the University of Regina, echoed these sentiments in an *Embassy Magazine* article in February 2010: “Investing in [Canadian students’] education is an investment in our own future – a future in which Canada must have the talent, knowledge and understanding to serve as leaders in the world.”

Although the report's findings are mixed in terms of participation, accessibility, institutional encouragement and support, a large majority of all groups surveyed value study abroad. A public opinion poll of 1,000 Canadians revealed that 90% believe study abroad to be valuable and an opportunity that should be available to more students. Students, also, appreciate the value of study abroad and show their initial keenness, but an enormous number of them abandon the option part-way through their studies.

Over the coming months, CBIE will use the report to foster dialogue on desirable changes in the way institutions and governments view and support study abroad.

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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.