



LEARNING ABROAD PHOTO CONTEST 2016

# Learning Beyond Borders

A National Conversation on Learning Abroad  
and Canada's Global Engagement Challenge



Canadian  
Bureau for  
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# **Learning Beyond Borders: A National Conversation on Learning Abroad and Canada's Global Engagement Challenge**

## **Canada's Global Engagement Challenge**

Canada faces a great challenge: getting more of our students to take advantage of learning experiences in other countries and preparing them to become global citizens in all the ways the term implies.

*Why is this so important?*

For Canada, a major trading nation whose continued prosperity hinges on the cross-border mobility of people, goods and services, ensuring Canadians are prepared to participate and contribute as global citizens, working across borders, cultures, languages and values to mutual benefit is vitally important.

*What can we do to develop Canada's leaders of tomorrow, the individuals who will negotiate, analyze, connect and engage in meaningful ways at the international level?*

## **Making learning abroad a reality for a critical mass of Canadian students requires a culture shift**

Cultivating the talent Canada needs to address its global engagement challenge calls for a multifaceted approach that will catalyze a culture shift when it comes to learning abroad for Canadian students at all levels of education. Learning abroad must not be viewed as a luxury but rather accepted as an integral part of Canada's high quality education for the 21st century. Students and families need to better understand that learning abroad opportunities are personally enriching and lead to concrete learning outcomes that enhance career prospects and career development; institutions need to address barriers that research shows reduce the impact of their efforts to engage Canadian students in learning abroad including but not limited to flexibility in learning abroad models, credit recognition and on-campus promotion; business, political and thought leaders need to join institutional leaders in speaking out about the necessity for Canada's young people to engage with the world, not only for our country's economic competitiveness in global markets but also to enhance Canada's image on the world stage.

## **Canada's education institutions are essential change agents in realizing this culture shift**

Other countries are making huge advances in internationalizing their next generation. In the United States there are initiatives such as the *100,000 Strong Initiative* with both China and the Americas, as well as the *Generation Study Abroad* campaign; the European Union's

*Erasmus Program* has been active for more than 25 years supporting learning abroad for over three million students; the Mexican government has developed *Proyección 100.000* and Australia's *New Colombo Plan* is expected to send more than 10,000 students across the Indo-Pacific region over 3 years.

Unlike these countries, which understand the strategic value of such investments, Canada has not approached the internationalization of its talent pool as a national imperative. It is time to leverage the leadership role of education institutions in a concerted and coordinated effort to give our next generation of leaders the knowledge, skills and global outlook they will need to thrive in our interconnected world.

*The students themselves have told us how to start.*

CBIE's new research findings, based on a survey of some 7,000 students across the country, confirm that financial support for Canadians to undertake learning abroad remains a key barrier: 86% of student respondents said they are interested in participating in a learning abroad experience, but 80% require financial assistance to do so. More must be done to make learning abroad affordable for students.

But money is not the only barrier. Attitudes, institutional policies and practices, effective promotion of existing opportunities and supports, as well as lack of awareness of the important benefits of learning abroad are also significant obstacles which must be addressed in order to facilitate a sustainable culture shift.

These are barriers that CBIE and its member institutions can work together to reduce, reinforcing each other's efforts and building momentum collectively.

## **Championing the conversation**

CBIE invites institutions representing all levels of education, including universities, colleges, polytechnics, cégeps and K-12 school boards, to get involved in the national conversation on learning abroad and become champions for change.

### ***Champion at the institutional level***

At this level institutions commit to identifying and addressing internal barriers to learning abroad and to participating in peer discussions with institutions across the country that are tackling similar issues and challenges.

In **February-March 2017**, institutions will convene key stakeholders, including students, in a structured dialogue to assess the most important barriers to learning abroad in their particular institutional context.

By **March 31 2017** they will have developed an action plan to address 3-5 key issues that will catalyze institutional change. They will prepare an analysis of the results of the action plan,

as well as lessons learned, to discuss at a special roundtable event during CBIE's 51st Annual Conference in Halifax.

CBIE will provide a toolkit to support institutions' on-campus process that will include national-level data from CBIE's 2016 Education Abroad Student Survey; a student survey template for use by institutions who did not participate in the national survey but want to collect local data for benchmarking purposes (institutions that participated in the survey already have data specific to their institution); and issues analysis based on the results of CBIE's 2016 Education Abroad Student Survey and any other relevant research.

In addition CBIE will organize thematic peer discussions throughout the year to allow institutions' change agents to discuss challenges and potential approaches; identify and disseminate supporting research, case studies and promising practices on common goals; and feature the commitment and progress of partners on the CBIE website, at national level meetings and at CBIE's 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference.

### ***Champion at the promotional level***

At this level institutions commit to contributing to a national communications campaign to promote the value of learning abroad to students and other stakeholders. They will create shareable content around the impact and outcomes of learning abroad, including but not limited to interviews with students, alumni, education leaders and champions in business and the public sector. They will engage with the local community on the importance of learning abroad for Canadian students in addressing Canada's global engagement challenge. They will write blogs and Op-ed pieces, integrate key messages into speeches given by institution leaders; organize panel discussions; meet with business and political leaders on the topic and disseminate content developed by CBIE and other participating institutions.

By **end of February 2017**, partners will have developed a communications action plan, outlining the institution's planned activities and anticipated timelines with respect to the above-mentioned commitments, such that CBIE can coordinate the national level implementation of the Learning Beyond Borders campaign and feature the institutions' efforts on its website and through its communications channels.

CBIE will develop fact sheets and other information tools to support the Learning Beyond Borders campaign, especially on the impact and outcomes of learning abroad; create an inventory of video and published testimonials on the importance of learning abroad by national level leaders; disseminate CBIE-created content to national/international audiences including media, and to institutional partners across the country; leverage its website and social media channels to feature and share partners' content, and finally it will provide national level research, international comparisons and suggested key messages to inform institutions' outreach with the local community.

## Launching of the national conversation on learning abroad

The Learning Beyond Borders initiative will be launched at the opening of CBIE's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference during International Education Week, November 14-16, 2016.

Institutions that are committed to helping create a culture shift are asked to sign on with CBIE **by end of January 2017**, specifying their level (s) of engagement and identifying a lead contact person for ongoing liaison with CBIE.

A formal reporting back on the progress of the Learning Beyond Borders campaign will be provided at CBIE's 51st conference in Halifax in November 2017.

Working together we can address Canada's global engagement challenge and begin to catalyze a culture shift. Through cooperation, collaboration and networking we invite all of you to lend your voices to the national conversation on learning abroad.

*To sign up as a champion for change, the executive head of CBIE member institutions should communicate directly with Karen McBride, CBIE President and CEO, at [kmcbride@cbie.ca](mailto:kmcbride@cbie.ca).*

*For more information on the national conversation, contact Jacquelyn Hoult, Director, Communications, at [jhoult@cbie.ca](mailto:jhoult@cbie.ca).*