

# **International Academic Mobility: Two Decades of Practice**

***International Academic Mobility in Higher Education (IAMHE):  
Building up a fully structured campus-wide IAM Core Program***

**WHITE PAPER by Daniel Guay**

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CONTACT: Jean-Marc Hachey, Author and Online Publisher  
296 Sackville Street, Toronto, Ontario M5A 3G2 Canada  
Tel. 888-493-2239 (US and Canada), or 416-925-0479, Fax 866-379-0487  
[jmhachey@myworldabroad.com](mailto:jmhachey@myworldabroad.com)  
[www.MyWorldAbroad.com](http://www.MyWorldAbroad.com)

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## Acronyms

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HEI	Higher Education Institutions
IAM	International Academic Mobility
IAMHE	International Academic Mobility in Higher Education
ICP	IAM Core Programs
MOU	Memorandum Of Understanding
TTT	Tactical Think Tank
AUCC	Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
CBIE	Canadian Bureau of International Education
CONAHEC	Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration
HRSCD	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
NAFSA	National Association of Foreign Students Advisers
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

## ABSTRACT

### **International Academic Mobility: Two Decades of Practice**

***International Academic Mobility in Higher Education (IAMHE): Building up a fully structured campus-wide IAM Core Program***

IAMHE is any form of international mobility for academic purposes between at least two higher education institutions (HEI) bonded by a memorandum of understanding (MOU) so that an equal number of students engage in two-way roundtrip circuits from their home institution to the host partner institution and back. IAMHE is an international and intercultural skill-building process that functions to increase students' talents and level of cross-cultural understanding. As universities send their graduates into an increasingly knowledge-based global economy, the search for such talents is becoming fiercely competitive and methodical. Within this context, HEI internationalization strategies may shift from individual effectiveness to concerted efficiency, i.e. from scattered individual initiatives to campus-wide, fully structured *IAM core programs (ICP)*. Building up an ICP ranks among the most efficient internationalization strategies for HEIs, both as a method of coping with the challenges of globalization and as a method of benefiting from its opportunities. ICPs contain universal governance rules and criteria for selecting and funding two main types of projects: 1) professors' international missions to set up partnerships generating mobility circuits; and 2) students' fully structured academic mobility circuits, including a) academic guidance, supervision and recognition before their departure; b) logistical and professional advice as well as financial assistance before, during and following their journey. Basically, the ICP is a toolbox with an operating manual, from which HEIs can implement a campus-wide approach that can generate scores of discipline-adapted projects with built-in student mobility. The ICP mechanism facilitates collaboration between local and international *stakeholders*, sharing academic and professional skills to optimize the internationalization process. The ICP enables the *University Direction Team* to plan for start-up resources and provide funding. A *Tactical Think Tank* will design the ICP mechanism that the *Executive Unit* will manage so that *Faculty Members* may adapt it to their disciplinary goals. *Professional Units* provide technical information and logistical assistance to professors to encourage and assist *students* in upgrading their academic, international and intercultural skills as well as their personal resumes. Off-campus *community and government stakeholders* may be invited to collaborate to the process.

***By Daniel Guay for MyWorldAbroad (formerly The BIG Guide to Living and Working Overseas ONLINE)***

# International Academic Mobility: Two Decades of Practice

## ***International Academic Mobility in Higher Education (IAMHE): Building up a fully structured campus-wide IAM Core Program***

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### **A personal standpoint**

This overview of two decades of practice in *International academic mobility in higher education (IAMHE)* in North America presents to student advisers, and hopefully to faculty members and students, a practitioner's personal standpoint and insight into an exciting era during which a myriad of ideas and projects were tested. Hopefully newcomers will glean useful ideas from it, while seasoned practitioners may use it to compare notes, whether in designing new in *International academic mobility IAM* programs or in tweaking existing ones.

### **What is IAMHE?**

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Any form of international mobility for academic purposes between two (bilateral) or among a network (multilateral) of *Higher education institutions (HEI)*.

### **What is a roundtrip two-way IAM circuit?**

Students engaged in IAM usually follow a circuit from their home HEI (outbound mobility) to the host partner HEI (inbound mobility) and back (roundtrip). This implies that professors and/or professionals have set up the circuit before any student mobility takes place. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) will be jointly signed so that an equal or balanced number of students will engage in the two-way roundtrip circuits.

### **IAMHE models**

IAMHE can be boiled down to these models of the mobility circuit: individual outbound; individual roundtrip; semi-assisted roundtrip; and structured and assisted roundtrip. As described further down, these models include some or all of the following components: academic supervision, professional advice and/or financial assistance.

### **How did IAMHE evolve?**

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#### **Berlin, post-WWII to 11/09/1989**

The fall of the Berlin Wall opened the drawbridge to a new global free-market economy, enticing European countries to boost their post-WWII game plans to foster continental socioeconomic solidarity and strengthen the European identity. IAMHE emerged as a means to these ends.

## **United States, 1948**

The National Association of Foreign Students Advisers (NAFSA) was founded “to promote the professional development of American college and university officials responsible for assisting and advising the 25,000 foreign students who had come to study in the United States after World War II.”

## **Canada, 1965 to 1994**

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) was incorporated in 1965 and the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE) was founded in 1966. Canadian universities set up *International Offices* to deal with international relations, overseas missions, delegations from abroad, collaboration agreements, fund-seeking, and technical support and assistance for faculty for North-to-North teaching and research cooperation initiatives, and for North-to-South development projects. Students sometimes engaged in academic mobility within these projects, but North American IAMHE as we know it today first really took off with the *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA).

## **North America, 1994**

Canada, Mexico and the United States signed the *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA), and CONAHEC, the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration, was founded to advise and connect HEIs interested in establishing or strengthening academic collaborative programs in the North American region.

## **The IAMHE North American Trilateral Program, 1995**

The three countries agreed to launch an international academic mobility initiative to support student mobility and academic cooperation between their respective nations.

Quite suddenly, student international academic mobility hit the front page of many North American HEI agendas. A new email question pops up on International Offices’ brand new computer screens...

## **What can your International Office do for students’ mobility?**

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In the mid-90s, only a few international advisers had an objective understanding of what student international mobility implied, and fewer still had the practical know-how to make it fly. Most started from scratch and spent the rest of the decade and beyond trying to figure out how to internationalize their campus through IAMHE.

The *North American Trilateral Program* was entrusted to three federal agencies: the American Council on Education in the USA, the Secretaria de Educación Pública in Mexico, and Human Resources and Skills Development in Canada.

This initiative quickly became a genuine school of thought and practice within IAMHE. Thousands of North American students, hundreds of faculty members and professionals from tens of universities and colleges earn their IAMHE wings by jointly setting in place a six-university consortium around a single academic theme, with a four-year funding plan. The Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) was instrumental in creating these consortia and dissemination good practices among North American HEI.

North American universities rapidly gain ground on their European counterparts, but then...

## **Meanwhile back at the ranch...**

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While North American universities were figuring out how to internationalize their campuses, something was simmering on the global backburner. Suddenly the reality of globalization hit in a major way.

### **New kids on the block**

Globalization moved in so fast that within a few years, *three billion new capitalists* (according to Clyde Prestowitz) had rushed in to flatten the borders and level off the free market playing field. Planetary corporate networks involving myriads of workers from scores of emerging countries suddenly started manufacturing and shipping out everything from computers to iPhones. This brand new, ferociously competitive knowledge-based economy settled in at such lightning speed that western developed countries seemed sentenced to import manufactured goods from overseas, while exporting manufacturing plants and jobs.

### **From the Berlin Wall to Wall Street**

On November 11, 1989 the new planetary free market and knowledge-based economy stormed in with the fall of the Berlin Wall. Then, on September 11, 2001, global realities collided at the World Trade Center. Some hijackers held international student visas; and from then on, IAMHE had to deal with a whole new set of security issues. Then, on September 3, 2009, twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a global financial collapse brought Wall Street close to the ground. We realized that not only were we moving into a global context where the world was (and is) “hot, flat and crowded,” as author Thomas L. Friedman describes it, but we may have overshot into what journalist and commentator Fareed Zakaria has called a “post-American world.” After the Wall Street collapse, international advisers saw a whole new set of questions pop up on their BlackBerry screens...

## **Internationalization or globalization?**

### **Where do we go from here? And how?**

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Internationalization is what happens to you when you cross your national borders outbound into “the world out there.”

Globalization is what happens to you when “the world out there” crosses your national borders inbound, whether you move or not.

### **Darwin’s advice: Adapt and innovate, or else...**

Here is a recipe for innovative adaptation: First, throw away Barnum & Bailey’s circus elephants and lions—but keep the tent, the clowns and the acrobats. Then, blend in some *commedia dell’arte*, stir well and... *voilà! Le Cirque du Soleil!*

We have no choice but to adapt in the modern age. So many things we take for granted as strictly local can be digitized and outsourced elsewhere on the planet and done overnight. Things so obviously local as engineering plans, x-rays, income tax reports, and personal resumes are being

churned out abroad. If you call your airline to retrieve your lost luggage, Option #1 will direct you to an English-speaking agent in Bangalore, Option #2 to a Spanish-speaking agent in the Dominican Republic and Option #3 to a French-speaking agent in Tunisia... The bottom line is: adapt and innovate, or someone else will step ahead in the global circus parade!

### **The knowledge economy: Internationalization as a coping strategy**

By definition, global socioeconomic and environmental issues will keep crossing national borders. Increasingly, a new breed of specialists with international and intercultural skills are being called upon, both on the local and the international scenes, to work within cross-border communities of practice.

American and Canadian universities and colleges in aging communities are now facing declining numbers and, thus, a scarcity of future intercultural specialists. As transmitters of knowledge and producers of future professionals, HEIs' mission statements must now seek to engage directly with the worldwide knowledge economy if they are to stay afloat and produce competitive graduates. The competition to attract and recruit talented intercultural professionals into the workforce will continue to grow, gradually sentencing HEIs to a condition of continuous innovation and adaptation.

As time goes on, multiple coping strategies are emerging. Some high-ranking research HEIs are refining and polishing their world-class statuses to increase their visibility and to attract, recruit and retain local and international talents. Other HEIs are devising strategic alliances to join international networks and multidisciplinary expertise clusters.

In all cases, professional and academic skill-building is remaining and will remain the driving force of international partnerships and mobility. This type of skill-building is the only realistic way to both cope with the challenges presented by globalization, and to benefit from the opportunities it presents.

### **IAM in-house Core Program building as a skill-building strategy**

Designing, setting up and managing a campus-wide IAM Core Program may well rank among the most efficient of all internationalization strategies, but beware—the process of building a Core Program *must* be supported by a genuine commitment at each and every level of the HEI, its partners and beyond.

### **Internationalizing the curriculum vs. international mobility?**

The short answer is: do both. As the world becomes “flatter,” HEIs will have no choice but to internationalize the curriculum within every academic discipline to ensure that each student graduates with a global understanding of his or her field of study. But increasingly, graduates will need practical intercultural skills in order to become functional and successful in a global context after finishing school. Total international skill-building requires a marriage of theoretical knowledge with practical know-how and intercultural awareness. As in tennis, playing the game of the global workforce not only implies learning the rules, but also stepping onto the court and playing with the right attitude.



## **Is IAMHE worth the effort?**

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### **From oddity to necessity**

A few years ago, skill-building through IAMHE could be perceived as an oddity; then, as the nature of the new global economy became apparent, it became a commodity. Now that “the world out there” is forcing its way into our local environments more than ever before, IAMHE is on its way to becoming a necessity.

But let’s be sure to deal with the realities of current internationalization programs: the recruitment of foreign students is now primarily a profit-centered operation, especially so if few or none of the proceedings are being reinvested in any outbound student IAM. Outbound student IAMs are sometimes perceived as a spend-center rather than an investment opportunity, but this is not necessarily the case.

### **A value-adding initiative**

IAM in-house initiatives are gradually becoming value-adding assets, increasing HEIs’ visibility and attractiveness both at the local and international levels.

An ever-increasing number of students, are seeking to acquire or increase their international, language and intercultural skills (i.e. knowledge, know-how, and awareness above and beyond traditional academic programs), whether to enrich their personal experience or to increase their competitive edge in terms of a value-added resume and employability.

Many departments and faculty members would not mind getting more elbow room and some technical support with occasional financial assistance to add attractiveness to their courseware by developing mutually beneficial international joint research and teaching projects; joining cross-disciplinary networks, communities of practice and expertise clusters; setting up program-to-program mobility circuits with built-in cross-border studies and internships; etc.

Many student advisers and professional staff in internationally-oriented offices (student services, international and registrars offices, recruiting, etc) would appreciate some professional capacity-building to improve operations such as: logistical, financial and technical assistance to academic mobility and partnerships; fundraising; specialized documentation and guidelines design; security, language and cultural training sessions; student files management; overseas trouble-shooting, supervision and assistance; etc.

The majority of community stakeholders are aware that globalization is not a transient fad but a long-term structural reality that most socioeconomic sectors will have to cope with. They hope they will be able to count on knowledge workers, both local and incoming international graduates with capacities to innovate, and build capacity and visibility.

## Why are only 2% of North American students engaging in international mobility?

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### Nomadic options in sedentary contexts

Higher education offers a traditionally secluded and somewhat sedentary environment wherein reputation stakes are high, competition is serious and time is precious. Incoming mobility resulting from recruiting is seen as a normal upgrading move, but outbound mobility for local students introduces a comparative element between home and host HEIs, and involves formal partnering with other HEIs.

Introducing in-house IAM to the core of the regular, harmonious academic environment tends to bring about a good amount of apprehension and a number of serious questions. So, let's come up with some answers.

### Why change?

The motivation to move out of one's comfort zone towards greener (or simply *different*) pastures is simple: *to upgrade one's personal lot*. For two million students a year, IAM does spell *upgrading my lot*. But the vast majority of these students are from outside North America, and our governments and universities are making it more attractive for them not only to come to North America, but to stay and settle down.

Interestingly enough, North American students apply similar logic when choosing not to move abroad! Why move if it is to *downgrade* my lot? Outbound IAM will increase once we can demonstrate that international mobility and skill-building does *upgrade one's personal lot*, regardless of the relative affluence of the nation visited.

## Mobility models and circuits

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The following models and circuits range from casual to systemic, and are described based on whether they include the following components: 1) academic circuit planning and supervision of student mobility among HEI partners; 2) professional advice and support for international travel; 3) financial assistance to cover extra costs; and 4) the presence or absence of an in-house IAM program.

### The individual outbound mobility circuit, the occasional exodus

*Since 1948, IAMHE has, in some cases, meant a one-way mobility circuit that does not have to involve the two-way exchanged that we increasingly associate with it.*

In fact, Western universities' international recruiting strategies foster the most important form of student one-way outbound mobility. Many students from developing countries may engage in IAM having a roundtrip plan in mind, but ultimately end up staying in their host country and immigrating.

Worldwide in 2010, roughly 2 million individuals will cross their national borders to pursue a college-level education, and these numbers are on a growing curve. On an annual basis, the US welcomes close to 600,000 of these students, where they collectively amount to 10% of the total American student population (5.6 million). The UK and France host some 330,000 and 260,000 students, respectively. And in 2008-9, Canada greeted some 70,000 full-time international students; their yearly economic impact is estimated at 6.5 billion dollars.

In Europe, outbound IAM is estimated at 3% to 6% of the student population. The European target has been set at 10%, and IAM may soon become mandatory to obtain a university diploma in some countries.

In Canada and the US, the average outbound IAMHE runs from 1% to 2% of the student population. Why is North America lagging behind in this area? Let's try and find out.

### **The individual roundtrip mobility circuit, the obstacle course**

*At first, we thought that once a loosely worded student exchange agreement was signed between two consenting HEI high-ranking officers, IAM would naturally and spontaneously happen. But turning an IAM inbound circuit into an outbound roundtrip can be quite tricky.*

Why? Well, like in the preceding individual model, IAM rests entirely on the student's shoulders with minimal institutional and technical support. Not to mention that academic recognition usually proves to be a tough sell upon students' return since mobility was often not done under academic supervision to start with.

For many students, this type of individual IAM tends to look like an expedition into the unknown. How do they pick the right country, university, study program, and academic calendar when there are limited resources available to assist them? How will the home university recognize the training and credits from the host university upon their return? Will studying abroad delay their graduation? If they decide to take the leap, what should they pack to go: passport, visas, permits, vaccines, insurances, etc? How much will it cost? Why risk cultural shock upon arrival over there; linguistic and cultural misinterpretation while being there; and the academic challenge and even culture shock upon return home? From this perspective, individual self-organized IAM sounds like a solitary, complex and costly adventure far away from one's comfort zone, coupled with costly risks for questionable added value. Mixed motivations are amplified by the scarcity of available funding, information, encouragement, supervision and success stories. Only the students with a strong unerring desire to travel and see the world feel comfortable embarking on such an uncertain journey.

No wonder this type of IAM currently fails to attract more than 2% of North American students.

### **The semi-assisted roundtrip circuit**

*As IAM evolved, it became evident that IAM would have to involve some kind of structuring and support from networks of universities linked together by more specific agreements on such components as tuition fee swaps for participating students.*

It became clear that this model had to include some sort of technical support from the home student advisers who would help students plan their international journeys.

Academic recognition of credits upon students' return is more or less accepted because delving deep into the marking schemes of other institutions is time-consuming and headache-generating, since it has to be done on a case-by-case basis. Many European IAM programs are based on this type of semi-assisted approach and although student exchanges cannot always be balanced among all participating HEIs, they still attract up to 6% of their student population, which is significantly more than North America's 2% average.

## **The fully structured IAM circuit**

*A fully structured approach implies that its nature will be less casual and more systemic, and the responsibility of organizing the student IAM circuit would shift from the students to the academics and the advisers who would have to collaborate from the outset in the home HEI as well as in the host HEI.*

This model is based on reciprocal student exchanges between two or more HEIs bound by a common memorandum of understanding (MOU).

The participating HEIs have set in place an in-house IAM Core Program (described below) to provide compatible admissibility criteria and guidance rules, logistical support and training as well as financial assistance.

Rather than being a strictly individual initiative, student mobility stems from an active and mutually beneficial academic partnership between the HEI that involves teaching and research projects which are supported by professional units and student advisers.

These circuits are based on a disciplinary approach. Participating students are supervised by their home department professors and receive logistical support and financial assistance from their home student advisers before moving from their home program to a complementary host program.

In a thimble, a fully structured IAM circuit implies that students know before leaving: where, with whom in the home and host HEIs, why, with what, for how long, and for how much will they be able to study abroad without delaying their graduation while adding value to their academic resume.

## **One odd fact**

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### **From 2% to 15%**

While less than 2% of North American students engage in international mobility, a happy few Canadian universities send up to 15% of their students abroad (for a full semester or more). The same situation exists in the US (with some notable exceptions, mainly small US schools).

### **Assumptions based on observation**

IAM increases in proportion with the degree of planning and organization of the mobility circuits and programs offered. IAM increases as soon as it becomes a built-in upgrade feature of a regular academic curriculum. IAM increases with the guarantee of academic recognition of credits upon return, with the availability of funding and supervision before, during and upon return, and with the level familiarity between the home and the host programs and establishments.

## **Building up an in-house fully structured IAM Core Program**

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### **The building blocks**

One efficient way to implement a fully structured IAM is to set in place a campus-wide IAM Core Program in order to bring together and share all the skills available to systematize and optimize the internationalization process.

## **The Core Program**

A campus IAM Core Program contains universal governance rules and a list of criteria to select and fund two main types of projects: 1) professors' international missions to explore and set up partnerships that will generate IAM circuits; 2) students' IAM circuits.

Once in place, a Core Program can fund a score of discipline-adapted IAM projects such as undergraduate and graduate program-to-program studies; observation, exploratory or commercial missions; practical and humanitarian internships, etc. They are all pre-recognized by credits and pre-defined in terms of dates and duration, ranging from a few weeks up to two semesters. These projects result from internal as well as international collaborations between academic and administrative units, respectively taking care of the academic supervision and logistical support elements. The components of a Core Program help draw practical memoranda of agreements to frame and supervise partnerships among HEIs.

## **The Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU)**

Home and host HEIs jointly design and sign an MOU which contains a series of components and principles including: mutuality of benefits and tuition fee waiving (all students pay tuition fees to their home university); similarity of requirements, admissibility criteria and guidance rules; predetermined recognition of training, equivalencies, and credit transfers; compatibility of pedagogical approaches; complementarily study programs for program-to-program mobility; harmonization of calendars and semester timelines; reciprocity and guarantee of balance in exchanges; student services and related costs; academic quality assurance; etc.

## **The stakeholders: roles and responsibilities**

Wherever IAM programs work, one usually finds the following stakeholders linked and working together on and off campus, both locally and overseas:

### **The international HEI partners**

*Their role is to act alternately as home and host HEI for incoming and outbound mobile students.*

Their responsibility is to propose the same features, guarantees and services at both ends of the IAM circuit.

### **The university direction team**

*Their role is to incorporate internationalization into the university's three-tier mandate: 1) academic training: acquiring skills through mobility; 2) teaching and research: innovative partnerships through international networks; and 3) community service: capacity-building in a knowledge-based economy.*

Their responsibilities are to establish the international strategic guidelines; provide the start-up resources and funding for the Core Program; invite the governments and communities to invest in the program and collaborate; assess the outcomes; and officially recognize the successful faculty, staff and students.

### **The executive unit (Vice-Presidency - VP)**

*Their role is to structure, supervise, oversee, and manage the Core Program.*

Their responsibilities are to select the projects; provide logistical support and financial assistance to participants according to the criteria; organize systematic collaborations among internal and international academic and administrative units; and produce adequate documentation and guidelines.

### **The Tactical Think Tank (TTT)**

Some HEIs have been efficiently using internal counseling groups or tactical think tanks composed of academic and administrative representatives (and sometimes external help) to work with the executive unit.

*Their role is to design the Core Program so that academic units may adapt it to their own disciplinary specificities and goals.*

Their responsibilities are to find the core program title; design its general operational and financial guidelines; determine project selection criteria; counsel on the academic eligibility of projects, partners, candidates, and curricula; determine the student admissibility criteria (citizenship, full-time status, minimum number of credits/semesters completed prior to departure, maximum number of credits/semesters while overseas, cumulative grade average, etc.); establish funding rules and by-laws for recognition of training with mention on diploma; suggest useful documentation and templates for agreements, field guides, forms, and student candidacy files; devise visibility information and marketing campaigns; and collect, assess and publish results and findings from the projects.

### **The academic units: faculties, departments and professors**

*Their role is to adapt the Core Program to their own discipline.*

Their responsibilities are to explore international partnerships and communities of practice; identify international partner HEIs; set up program-to-program approach between complementary disciplines; plan AIM projects, models and circuits between the home and the host partner HEIs; submit projects to the Core Program for funding; propose agreements for official signing; implement projects in collaboration with the internal support units and professionals; promote the program in their units; encourage, select and supervise students.

### **The administrative support units and student advisers**

*Their role is to provide technical information and assistance to academic units, professors and students.*

Their responsibilities are to collaborate with academic units by providing technical and logistical support; offer security guidelines, language courses and intercultural pre-departure and re-entry training sessions; propose MOU templates; produce field guides, checklists and forms to help students prepare their personal dossiers and international itineraries (passport, vaccines, insurances, etc.); troubleshoot when necessary; and maintain contact with the mobile students before, during and after their overseas stays.

### **The students**

*Their role is to upgrade their learning paths, academic skills and personal resumes.*

Their responsibilities are to pay tuition fees at the home university and some incidental costs to the host university; comply with institutional rules both at home and overseas; provide adequate financial guarantees and insurances; submit their candidacy to their home academic unit for approval; attend training sessions offered by the student advisers; follow preparation guidelines; produce

academic and mobility reports upon return; and, in some cases, join discussion groups to assist fellow students and help improve the Core Program.

### **The governments and home community**

These stakeholders represent different levels of government, and home community socioeconomic sectors.

*Their role is to share views with and consider their university as a genuine partner in capacity building.*

Their responsibilities are to collaborate in the process of campus internationalization and IAM building; and invest valuable assets (i.e. funding, resources, practical internships and residences to international students).

### **How can we pay for all of this?**

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Funding sources do exist. Getting to them is essentially a matter of university priority and political choice. In Canada, some provinces offer funding programs for IAMHE. The Federal Government through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) offers funded IAM programs. Universities can use some of the tuition fees from incoming international students to fund outgoing international mobility. A portion of the university endowment fund can be earmarked as an opportunity for donors to invest in student IAM projects. Private foundations and the home community stakeholders are precious investing partners. Students may also be considered as co-investors from the moment they realize that an international academic resume coupled with linguistic and intercultural skills represent a quite hefty competitive edge in today's job market.

### **IAM-related skills**

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This topic is well documented in many web pages of *MyWorldAbroad* (formerly *The BIG Guide to Living and Working Overseas*). It is important to underline that being sufficiently autonomous and skilled enough to function professionally in a setting that is culturally different from one's own is a formidable asset in the global knowledge economy.

### **From computer age to knowledge economy**

You may remember the days when the computer surreptitiously muscled its way into our daily professional and private lives. Who could have fathomed in those years that being keyboard savvy and being able to type – from two to ten-thumb typing - would become an indispensable skill to land a job? Now, the next question is to try and figure out which skills will be the most valuable assets as we move into this global environment where one finds a larger number of college graduates in 20 emerging countries universities than in the combined 30 Member States of the OECD [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)].

## Closing words

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As internationalization increases in diversity and complexity, so will the need for professional and academic systemic approaches.

The block-by-block building process of an IAM Core Program allows a university to set in place the basic components from which all sorts of IAM patterns and projects can be created.

In fact, a Core Program is a basic toolbox with an operating manual that allows the HEI implement one systemic approach that can gradually be adapted to all disciplines, starting with the more interested ones. Interest will grow as success stories pile up. Starting small is a good idea, and tweaking makes perfect.

Many universities are discovering that once they successfully overcome the first hurdles of putting together a fully structured IAM Core Program, the rest of the way is downhill.

The first success factor is the HEI's dedication to the internationalization of its mission statement and to investing proper resources in an in-house IAM Program.

From the moment the Program starts offering encouragement and funding, academics usually propose partnering projects with built-in student mobility.

The Program fosters collaboration between professional advisers and academics to set up partnerships and help students internationalize their academic profile.

Once you build it, projects come and create an attractive critical mass for faculty and students alike. Successful returning students encourage more students to enlist. Projects then evolve in complexity, diversity and interest.

The past two decades of academic international mobility have been an exciting era during which a myriad of ideas and projects have been tested and validated.

The first manifestation of international mobility in and between institutions of higher learning has been fascinating. Watching how the trend develops further promises to be even more exciting.

## The author

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**DANIEL GUAY** is actively involved in coaching institutions of higher learning, associations and organizations wishing to internationalize their missions through strategic planning, development, funding and management of international projects in the Americas and Europe. Daniel holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Educational Technology and Second-Language Didactics from *Université Laval* where he was an Assistant Professor in Second-Language Didactics from 1970-1980. From 1980 to 2004, he served as a Senior Advisor in the *International Office at l'Université Laval* focusing on the development sector and the strategic planning, management and funding of international projects. Throughout his career, he has worked extensively with international NGOs and government agencies in the Americas and Europe, and from 2004-2009 he worked as an *Advisor on International Affairs* as well as an *Executive Assistant to the President* of the *Université du Québec*, a nine-university public system. Daniel is a *Senior Associate* to *CONAHEC (Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration)* and recipient of the *2010 Manuel T. Pacheco Award* (for his pivotal role in the establishment and strengthening of CONAHEC). He also collaborates with Jean-Marc Hachey, author and online publisher of *MyWorldAbroad* (formerly *The BIG Guide to Living and Working Overseas*),



*Intercultural Systems / Systèmes Interculturels (ISSI) Inc.* Since 2009, Daniel Guay has been an international education consultant and provides strategic advice on international projects in the following areas:

- International academic mobility, internships and partnerships (North America/Europe)
- Humanitarian University-NGO collaboration projects
- Joint postgraduate programs, R&D projects, University-Private sector partnerships
- Multimedia production in distance and continuing education

**Daniel Guay**

[danielguay@live.com](mailto:danielguay@live.com)