

ENHANCING STUDENT EXPERIENCE THROUGH CROSS-BORDER INITIATIVES

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BACKGROUND

York University:

- international as a strategic priority (University Academic Plan)
- objectives:
 - York as a national leader in international activities
 - make international opportunities available to all students who wish to participate
- priority to enhance the student experience

Beyond York:

- internationalization is a priority for many universities in Canada and elsewhere
- increased interest in international links from government

BENEFITS OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

For students:

- broaden horizons
- enriched educational experience
- international engagement leading to new perspectives
- cultural awareness
- new career paths and opportunities

For institutions:

- international partnerships
- enhanced profile

CHALLENGES

Students:

- costs of study abroad (travel, loss of income)
- family responsibilities
- integration of international experience with degree studies
- language barriers/culture shock
- bureaucratic obstacles

Institutions:

- identification of appropriate partners (quality, location, programs)
- development of international experiences fitting a range of disciplines
- opportunities for cultural immersion
- provision of supports

STRATEGIES

- must provide a range of opportunities to experience the international, including “international at home”
- international must be pervasive: available and meaningful in all programs and through extra-curricular activities
- need to offer support: financial and advisory
- examples of opportunities to gain international experience:
 - language courses
 - degree programs
 - exchanges
 - internships
 - research
 - students learning from each other, e.g., “global house”
 - local communities
- letters of recognition of international experience

YORK INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

- international summer internships: worldwide and university-wide
- unique features:
 - financial support for students → accessibility
 - placements arranged by York → strategic direction
- application of theory to practice
- integration of international experiences into educational experience

COLLABORATION

- with other institutions and government
- Ontario/Baden-Württemberg exchange agreement provides a model for collaborative agreements
- Ontario Maharashtra-Goa agreement
- development of institutional and cultural links