

Opening statement at the

**Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC)
International Conference 2000
BEYOND BORDERS: Universities in An Era of Global Knowledge
Panel Discussion:**

The Global Research Village: how can Canada become a full citizen?

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Introduction

I was very pleased to be invited to participate this morning in the panel. The topic is an important one for IDRC and I am always pleased to meet with the Canadian university community.

I have been invited here today because through IDRC Canada has a thirty-year history of funding international research - what I shall refer to as **research for development**, done by researchers in the developing regions of the world (what I shall refer to as the **South**).

From the start, but especially over the last twenty years, Canadian university-based researchers have been very valued collaborators in IDRC-supported research projects. I hasten to stress that IDRC has called on the Canadian research capacity sparingly and selectively because, first and foremost, the IDRC grants are intended for Southern researchers. About 18% of Centre resources are devoted to projects with Canadian collaboration - but this is an important 18% and we appreciate the partnerships and collaborations with Canadian universities - we know that some very good and long-standing research networks have been established with Southern researchers.

There were several ways in which I could 'represent' Southern researchers this morning. I could underline the fact when we (Canada and frequently Canadian Institutions) talk new initiatives to enhance international research, we really mean North-North links; I could touch on the impact of globalization on research capacity in the South -- in some instances sharing exciting stories of how ICTs are making a difference to health research in Africa; in other instances I could lament the undervalued/[un]appreciated, hard-earned expertise or brain drain. I could share with you IDRC's experience of very effective international research networks that combine South-North and South-South research collaboration.

I want to take a slightly different tack and situate my remarks within the current climate of university research and what this has to say about Canada as a member of the Global Research village. I want to highlight three issues this morning:

First, International research collaboration in Canada must include increased research collaboration with Southern researchers - and this requires a special effort on the part of Canadian universities.

Second, a particular impediment to collaboration with Southern researchers.

Third, I want to underscore new opportunities for Canadian research collaborations with the South.

International Research collaboration in Canada must include increased research collaboration with Southern researchers - and this requires a special effort on the part of Canadian universities.

Advances in science/knowledge have always benefited from international collaboration.

By definition, the 'global research village' must include the South.

Jane Knight, in the publication she prepared earlier this year for AUCC, 'Progress and Promise⁽¹⁾', reports that the Canadian Universities, when asked to report on their geographic priorities, ranked Central and South America and Asia and the Pacific Rim ahead of Western Europe and North America. The situation is fluid: Knight reports a marked decline in interest in Asia - in favour of Central and Eastern Europe. And, with respect to Africa, ranked fifth out of seventh in the geographic league table, there is a falling off in favour of the Middle East.

I find this picture somewhat encouraging - two developing regions of the world have a high priority for the universities international work and, for the moment at least, Africa is not at the bottom of the league table.

I urge the universities to build from here, hopefully - learning from the experience with student recruitment, faculty exchanges and offshore education - that the full participation of Southern researchers will be the clearest measure of how well a university fulfills the international dimension of its mission statement.

I had hoped that the Report on the Expert Panel on Canada's Role in International Science and Technology⁽²⁾ would offer the universities a new opening. But the report published in mid-October says:

"[Development of S&T capacity in developing countries] is an important area of activity for CIDA, IDRC and, to a lesser extent, other government SBDAs (Science-based Departments and Agencies) (e.g. NRC). **Several participants in the regional workshops commented on the lack of discussion of these activities and the associated issues in the report. The Panel felt that the analysis of these issues was**

beyond the scope of its mandate".

On the one hand, I am disappointed with the Expert Panel basically leaving this issue up to CIDA and IDRC [particularly since IDRC gave the panel Chair, René Simard, lunch to offer our point of view!). I would have thought that a 're-imagining' of Canada's international science and technology efforts would include 'research for development'. On the other hand, I am heartened to learn that participants in the workshops did raise this issue with the panel.

I suspect that most of those 'participants' at the regional workshops were from the university community. How can those who speak for research for development get the attention this matter deserves at their universities? Let me share with you two thoughts:

First, espousing internationalization in the university's mission statement is a start - but research for development will only get the attention the times demand if the universities set an **explicit rationale and goal for university collaboration with developing country researchers**.

Second, universities need to develop and agree on **international standards of excellence** and to use these to evaluate their performance. I will pick up this point again in a minute.

I suggest that these two issues must be engaged if research for development is to be raised - beyond the laudable, but isolated, efforts of individual faculty members - to an institutional commitment which strives to 'mainstream' research for development and that can, for instance, get the attention of the **next** Expert Panel on Canada's International Science and Technology.

Let me leave this point by offering you two perspectives on the changing nature of international cooperation that might point to an explicit rationale for research for development in Canadian universities.

First, the Canadian Foreign Policy perspective:

Canada in the World, the government's foreign policy statement, underscores this new level of interconnectedness when it states "Domestic policy is foreign policy ... foreign policy is domestic policy."⁽³⁾

And the second perspective from one respected member of your own community:

In a recent letter in *University Affairs*, Kari Polanyi Levitt offered the following:

"...there can be no knowledge-based economy without a knowledge-based society - today that means knowledge of the diverse cultures of the world and the problems of the majority of the human family who live in poverty in a world of plenty. This constitutes the single greatest challenge of the new millennium. And a special challenge to those of us in the university community with Canada's first rank in the Human Development Index."⁽⁴⁾

I will turn now to a particular impediment to collaboration with Southern researchers.

I broached the challenge of establishing a rationale and standards of excellence for collaborations on research for development. I have offered a suggestion for the rationale. Let me offer you an entry point on the question of standards.

As I said at the outset, IDRC has a long and satisfying history of research collaboration with Canadian university-based researchers.

Yet one of the most persistent and dispiriting messages we get from colleagues at the university is that their work on international development projects 'doesn't count' for career promotion, for tenure -- if the products of research do not appear in the better known international journals, it cannot be counted.

I do understand the culture of peer review and the need for standards of excellence. And I do not think that, as a community, you are saying that Southern researchers do not have the credentials to live in 'your' Global Research Village (after all, you trained many of them!!). I am familiar enough with the university culture - having served on and been Chair of the Board of Carleton University - to know that there are crosscutting political considerations at play. And that this may be territory where Angels fear to tread...

You tell me it is an impediment to Canadians committing themselves to research collaborations with researchers in the most disadvantaged parts of the Global Research Village. This is an especially important consideration when you factor in the many younger faculty who will enter teaching and research positions over the next five to ten years (the faculty renewal phenomenon due the retirement of a generation of professors).

If you share this concern, IDRC would welcome an opportunity to work with you on the issue. What do we need to have better measures of what is rigorous and academically meritorious in research for international development? How do we find and study examples of more progressive approaches to promotion and tenure in an academic environment that accepts that the Global Research Village includes the South? What are the approaches and the criteria for valuing the contributions of Canadian researchers to research for development?

If you have answers to these questions, share them. If this issue is worthy of further study, IDRC would be interested in helping with the task.

New opportunities for Canadian research collaborations with the South.

I hope that I shall have the time to develop this point in the question period.

Let me tease you by saying that the increased funds now available to Canadian researchers in all domains (Social Sciences and Humanities, Natural Sciences and Engineering, and Health) are offering the

Canadian universities an unprecedented opportunity to think much more inclusively about research collaborations -- to put funds behind the 'internationalization' that is found in the university mission statements.

There are three opportunities we might come back to in the question period.

First, the \$900 million allocated over the next 5 years for the Canada Research Chairs.

What are the plans on your campus to align at least some of your allocation of Chairs to cooperation with researchers from the South?

Second, in October, the Economic Statement and Budget Update gave the Canada Foundation for Innovation \$100 million for 'international research' - earmarked for 'capital costs in Canada of large collaborative international research projects between Canadian universities and leading facilities in other countries'.

What imaginative ways can you propose to the CFI to include the South in its plans for internationalization?

Third, IDRC is following with interest the development of the Canadian Institute for Health Research and has noted in particular Henry Friesen's suggestion that this initiative will 'modernize health sciences research in Canada'. We know that consideration is being given to an institute for international health.

How will collaborations with Southern researchers be dealt with in this new Canadian approach to health research?

Let's talk!

Endnotes

1. «*Progression et promesse : Rapport 2000 de l'AUCC sur l'internationalisation des universités canadiennes.* » AUCC, 2000.

2. Reaching Out: Canada, International Science and Technology, and the Knowledge-based Economy. Report of the Expert Panel on Canada's Role in International Science and Technology. Presented to the Prime Minister's Advisory Council on Science and technology, October 2000, Available at [http://acst-ccst.gc.ca/acst/intel/home_e.html]

3. --

4. Letters, University Affairs, October 2000

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