

---

October 2014

# **I LOVE YOU, PLEASE CHANGE**

**Universities and their  
relationships**



Stephen J. Toope

---

### **About the Author**

**Professor Stephen Toope** earned his PhD from Trinity College, Cambridge, his degrees in common law (LLB) and civil law (BCL) with honours from McGill University, and graduated magna cum laude with his AB in History and Literature from Harvard University. Prior to joining UBC, Professor Toope was President of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, a position he held since 2002. He has written, lectured and consulted extensively in the areas of public international law, legal theory, human rights, international dispute resolution, and family law.

During his eight years as President and Vice-Chancellor of UBC, Professor Toope made a number of instrumental changes, including the development of the Place and Promise strategic plan and launching the **start an evolution** campaign, which has resulted in \$1.3 billion in new philanthropic funds for the university. Professor Toope will be joining the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs as its next director January 1, 2015. Contact [stephen.toope@utoronto.ca](mailto:stephen.toope@utoronto.ca).

### **About the Initiative**

This paper is one of a series of reports commissioned for **Taking Action for Canada: Jobs and Skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**, an initiative of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE). The goal of the initiative is to bring together business, government and educators to develop solutions, share best practices and engage the next generation of Canadian workers.

The Canadian Council of Chief Executives is the senior voice of Canada's business community, representing 150 chief executives and leading entrepreneurs in all sectors and regions of the country. Its member companies collectively employ 1.5 million Canadians and are responsible for most of Canada's private sector investments, exports, workplace training and research and development.

The opinions in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the CCCE or its members.

## Introduction\*

*“To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.”*

*-Ralph Waldo Emerson*

“I love you, please change” – those two little phrases nobody wants to hear together. In personal relationships, they usually signal that all is not well. The person delivering the message is dissatisfied; the person hearing it feels trapped or inadequate. Universities around the world, including in Canada, are hearing those phrases a lot these days.

On the one hand, Canadians express strongly positive sentiments about their universities. A 2014 Nanos poll revealed that 60.5 percent of Canadians agree that university research makes a major contribution to economic prosperity. A further 25.5 percent “somewhat agree.” More than 55 percent associate a university degree with making the Canadian economy more globally competitive, up from 45 percent in 2012. At the same time, 65 percent associate a university degree with the highest-paying jobs (Nanos, 2014).

Yet despite the positive views of Canadians, there seems to be a persistent sense of dissatisfaction with universities, an assumption that universities need to change radically. Universities are under challenge from all sides, in every one of their relationships – whether it is government asking universities to “tweak” the research agenda to speed up commercialization; business questioning universities’ ability to meet the need for skilled workers; granting agencies wanting ever more “accountability”; or students wondering why the entire set of course offerings and every volume in the library system are not online yet.

“We love you, we need you; now if you could just be different.” You’re not commercial enough; not pure research enough. Not practical enough; not innovative enough. Not local enough or national enough. Not digital enough; not real-world enough. Not enough. Relationships! Expectations can be very hard to fulfill.

There is no shortage of well-meaning – and occasionally self-serving – recommendations as to how universities should proceed. “Maintain the status quo, but streamline,” is one. “Dominate a particular market niche,” is another. “Become a teaching-only institution,” is a third. “Focus on applied research,” is a fourth. “Merge with

---

\* Over the last eight years, while serving as the President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of British Columbia, I have been invited to discuss the future of universities on many occasions. This paper incorporates and expands upon work previously presented at the Association of Commonwealth Universities 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference, the Canadian Bureau for International Education 2014 Annual Meeting, and sessions of the U-15 network and the U-21 global university network. I am grateful for the invaluable work of Diane Haynes in helping me prepare for those earlier presentations. I want to thank the Canadian Council of Chief Executives for the opportunity to think about what I have learned over the last eight years of my life.

other sectors, such as media, innovation, and venture capitalism, to create something entirely new” is yet another. The common denominator, the phrase I hear in association with every recommendation, is the necessity for radical transformation.

In this paper, I will set out five fundamental issues facing Canadian universities today, each of which reflects the shifting nature of university relationships with various communities. I will offer recommendations for change to universities, business and policy-makers in government, ending with a cautionary note on what we might want to ensure we don't change.

## **Student expectations and ways of learning**

Today's students have grown up online. In 1995, there were 16 million users of the internet; at the end of 2005, just over one billion. That number had almost tripled by March 2014 (Internet World Stats, 2014). Tomorrow's students will be even more connected all the time. Information is available at the stroke of a key or the swipe of a finger. In such a world, there is little patience with the old model of the “sage on the stage” – the professor standing at the front of the classroom reading lecture notes focused on information content. Meanwhile, fundamental brain research and more applied teaching and learning research have taught us much about how adults learn, including the need for constant reinforcement of ideas, and the brain's limited ability to process passively. At the same time, technological innovation is allowing universities to provide much more flexibility in the acquisition of “content.”

These factors are pushing universities to adopt new, but already well-proven, teaching methods such as blended learning, which involves a varied mix of technologies outside and inside classrooms. These include the use of wireless handheld devices – “clickers” – to assess in real time what students have learned in class, as well as online innovations such as moderated chat rooms, problem-based learning modules and peer evaluation mechanisms. Increasingly, teaching takes place in so-called “flipped” classrooms where students review material online (often presented in interactive formats, with opportunities for self-assessment) while spending valuable time in class discussing, analyzing and working in groups to solve problems.

In their contemporary incarnation, professors are not merely dispensers of information. They are guides through the growing vastness of information, and provokers of critical analysis – facilitators who can effectively channel discussion so that learning becomes both a personal and a shared effort.

Other sectors have led the way for universities, demonstrating both what to do and what not to do. The music industry now has its iTunes, and the film and video industry its Netflix. In both cases, the end user has access to all available content at any time and in any way she wants it. No more commercials. No more waiting a week for the next

episode. No more vinyl records and CDs for which someone else has chosen all of the songs and determined the order in which they will be heard.

I offer these examples because universities, like book publishers and music, film and video producers, are to a great extent “content-based” (though universities are also about personal interaction). The pressures that universities face are entirely analogous to those facing other “content-based industries,” and the stakes for failure to change are just as high. The proprietary, exclusionary control of content is obsolete in every field. It is a university’s job to lower barriers that limit or disallow direct experience for students with information and knowledge. But it is also the crucial task of universities to help students navigate a world that is full of information, but offers precious little opportunity to filter, synthesize and make sense of that information.

Given the availability of so much content online from private and public sector providers, and the increasing ability to use technology-enhanced methods of teaching, the logical next question is, “Why would anyone go to a campus anymore?” Why not get your degree online?

I suspect the answer is that in future people won’t spend their scarce resources to come to a campus unless one of two conditions is met. The first is that the institution can claim some reputational advantage. A limited number of global university “brands” will continue to provide cachet and access to networks that will justify student expenditure in an on-campus experience. Some of those brands are already established; Harvard, Cambridge and Stanford are examples. Others are emerging, and a question for Canadians is whether we will manage to place any of our leading institutions in that category. I will return to this issue shortly.

The other condition will be that the university in question offers an on-campus experience so rich and unique that students feel drawn to participate actively. This implies a range of elements, including the provision of engaged learning in classrooms; ease of access to professors and researchers; first-rate student services with serious academic advising and career counselling; inviting informal learning spaces where students can work together; great housing with exciting residence activities; accessible athletic facilities; and vibrant student life including well-supported clubs, intramural sports, music and theatre, and robust student government.

Perhaps ironically, the on-campus experience will also have to be complemented by a variety of “experiential learning opportunities” that can’t be accessed online, but that allow the student to gain life experience off-campus, with the ability to reflect back on that experience as part of the on-campus academic program. Experiential learning will include traditional co-op placements in industry, government and civil society organizations, but also paid internships, community-service learning, and international educational opportunities.

## Recommendations

### *Universities:*

- Focus strongly and consistently on enhancing the learning experience of students by deploying new technologies (in-class and online) in light of the latest research on brain function and adult learning;
- Step up efforts to improve the on-campus student experience, especially in the areas of academic and career counselling;
- Complement the offerings of on-campus and online courses with a rich variety of “experiential learning” opportunities.

### *Government and business:*

- Stop projecting from your own now-outdated university experiences and find out how different student expectations are today;
- Partner with universities to create the “experiential learning” opportunities that students crave, such as expanded co-op and paid internship places, and international education.

## Differentiation and place

What all the technological innovation and the desire to create real “places” adds up to is a need for strong institutional differentiation and the building-up of unique campuses that are magnets for talent. As valuable as the technologies are that allow us to communicate and collaborate over distance, we must never let them blind us to the benefits of coming together physically as a diverse community. People come to universities to be transformed, to be inspired, to learn how to think, to learn how to learn, and to learn how to work with one another.

French philosopher Marc Augé describes “places” and “non-places.” Non-places are spaces that are essentially interchangeable, without distinctiveness. They tend to render humans anonymous. Think of the up-market malls scattered across major world cities, all pushing the same products by Gucci, Burberry, Tommy Hilfiger and the like. In such a place you could be anywhere or nowhere (Augé, 1995).

A constellation of trends is pushing universities in the same direction – toward a homogenization that undermines their ability to fulfill the mission that has shaped their evolution over centuries. If universities cease to be highly differentiated, specific places with distinctive personalities, they will undermine the intellectual diversity needed to produce the catalysis that ignites new ideas, new discoveries and healthy social, cultural and economic innovation. They will also fail to attract students who could learn

online but who can be prompted into personal interaction by strong place-specific education.

Three trends come together to undermine the sense of unique place and personality that is required for healthy intellectual biodiversity. The first driver to uniformity is the ever-growing list of global university-ranking schemes. By creating similar groups of metrics, these rankings signal that to be outstanding, a university must pursue a limited range of strategies: you can poach “star” researchers, focus on nominating staff for international prizes, and recruit a large number of international staff and students. There is almost no point in trying to improve the undergraduate student experience.

The second powerful impetus towards homogeneity is the increasing tendency of governments to try to “manage” research programs and enrolment strategies. Most obviously, the desire to promote the acquisition of defined skills needed to fuel short-term economic needs is growing apace around the world. Although this desire may seem reasonable, when linked to economic development strategies that are typically cookie-cutter copies of one another, the result is that universities are being pushed to do the same things everywhere. Over the last few years, whether in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, France or India, the same questions are asked by government of universities: How many jobs have you created recently, and are you producing job-ready graduates? I return to this specific question below.

The most recent impetus towards uniformity is the fixation with the promise of on-line learning, exemplified by Silicon Valley’s investments in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). I am leery of the promise of master classes taught by the great and the good at a handful of universities being distributed across the globe. And while it might make sense to agree upon relatively standardized approaches to introductory organic chemistry, I question any attempt to settle on a uniform introduction to “theories of justice” or “the quiet revolution in Quebec” or “gender politics”.

We know that biodiversity is essential to healthy and sustainable ecosystems. Intellectual biodiversity is equally essential to healthy and sustainable societies, regionally, nationally and globally. Intellectual biodiversity is created in part by ensuring that truly distinctive contributions to debate can be made by people rooted in unique places, where they can pursue a diversity of ends.

## Recommendations

### *Universities:*

- Identify the attributes that create a unique identity for a given university and drive those attributes to build differentiation;
- Resist the temptation to “compete” by replicating generic strategies that lead to a lack of intellectual biodiversity and the creation of a “non-place.”



## Intercultural understanding and international connectivity

The University of British Columbia is home to roughly 47,000 undergraduate students. Just over 6,200 of them hail from 149 countries outside Canada, and that number will grow. By way of comparison, in 2000 UBC hosted only 1,350 undergraduate international students. About 30 percent of the current graduate students are visa-holding. UBC's campuses are, in other words, visibly multicultural. Increasingly, so too are campuses across the country, especially in major urban centres.

What this means is that international education can begin at home, and if universities are to point the way toward a socially and economically healthy future for Canada, it must. At present in Canada, only two to three percent of undergraduate students have international experience linked to the education they are receiving (Statistics Canada, 2014). Although that number needs to grow dramatically, for the foreseeable future the most common "international" experience for Canadian university students will be interaction with students and professors from other parts of the world on our own campuses.

Canadians need to enjoy a secure and respectful fluency of interaction among ourselves, including those people Canada has welcomed, invited, even solicited to live, study and work here. Universities must create and model that fluency. Here is a concrete example of the leadership required, and the dramatic effects it can have:

Four small groups of students sit in a classroom at UBC's Institute of Asian Research. The groups are Japanese, Chinese, and Korean students (and Canadian students of those ancestries) as well as students from other parts of the world. The three groups of students of Asian origin have not interacted voluntarily before now, held on opposite sides of the room by decades-old conflicts in which none of them played any direct part.

Their professor hands each group a textbook that he has brought back from Japan, and asks the Japanese students to read aloud a section of text, translating it into English for the benefit of the other students. The Japanese students begin to read. The text concerns the Nanjing Massacre during the second Sino-Japanese War. Some historians claim that as many as 300,000 Chinese civilians and unarmed soldiers were murdered in the Massacre by the Imperial Japanese Army. Media around the world have reported, however, that only one Japanese textbook ever mentioned the atrocities, and then only briefly and with doubts about the number of people affected.

When the students finish their translations, there is silence, and then the room explodes. The Chinese and Korean students are astonished that this textbook contains clear information reflecting what they had heard before; they share the revelation with their groups. The Japanese students hear the others, adding information to what they know and have just read, and begin to question what they have been taught. In the course of the discussion, they all come to understand that not every Japanese textbook



has been whitewashed *and* that this one still does not adequately address the level of barbarity in Nanjing. Together, they destroy outworn myths and begin to construct a common narrative.

Canadian universities need to provide their students the opportunity to work intensively with others who are different from themselves. Massive change is happening in Canadian society. The visible minority population in Canada has grown steadily over the last 25 years, as has the proportion of people born outside the country – at 20.6 percent now the highest in the G-8, surpassing even the United States. The trend is much more pronounced in Canadian cities, where 95 percent of the visible minority population resides. In 2011, visible minorities made up about half of the population in Vancouver and Toronto. In both cities, the first language of more than 50 per cent of the population is neither English nor French. The diversity of Canada's population will continue to increase during the next two decades. By 2031, visible minority groups are projected to comprise 63 percent of the population of Toronto, 59 percent in Vancouver and 31 percent in Montréal (Statistics Canada, 2011).

We must hone our aptitudes as a society in order to function effectively in an interconnected world. We must equip Canadian students with the intercultural fluency skills, the linguistic skills, the new attitudes and mental responses this new situation demands. We otherwise risk an altogether unwelcome change: devolving into separated ethnic communities and losing the ability to function effectively in our home country, let alone abroad.

The need for international and intercultural connectivity is every bit as great when one considers the research mission of universities. As modern research, especially in the sciences and engineering, becomes an ever-more global enterprise, innovation within countries will often depend upon robust linkages with sources of ideas and discovery in other countries. Today, 12 percent of UBC's entire research budget is funded by foreign governments, foundations, non-profits, and corporations. And whereas in 1994, only 25 percent of UBC-generated scientific papers were produced in collaboration with someone outside Canada, by 2013 that number had increased to 60 percent, involving researchers in 115 countries. Knowledge flows freely across borders in idea and innovation supply chains. If Canada is to maintain and enhance its standard of living, we have to be a contributing and benefitting part of those supply chains. That requires funding that can be expended in partnership, sometimes outside Canada. It requires active exploration of research partnership opportunities. It requires easy mobility for professors and graduate students. In 1994, UBC had 118 partnership agreements with foreign universities and research centres. By 2014, almost 500 such agreements had been concluded. These statistics are representative of developments at all major research universities in Canada.

## Recommendations

### *Universities:*

- Publicly identify the need to foster greater intercultural fluency as a primary contribution to Canadian (and global) society, and take concrete actions to pursue the goal;
- Continue to welcome a diverse group of international students to the campus, trying to avoid monolithic groups from only one or two countries, and work to ensure that international students are part of intercultural fluency initiatives;
- Identify areas of research strength that drive overall university reputation, and seek out robust international partnerships in those areas (this is both a top-down and bottom-up process).

### *Government:*

- Open Canada to a larger number of international students, and stop justifying this openness on solely economic grounds;
- Provide concrete help to leading Canadian universities that have the capacity to be globally influential and respected (the federal Canada First Research Excellence Fund is a good start if well-designed in practice);
- Carefully loosen rules that require government research funding to be spent in Canada, a restriction that prevents robust Canadian participation in international research partnerships.

### *Business:*

- Insist that universities help create a labour force that is able to work across cultural differences, and support concrete initiatives to that end;
- Look for more and stronger research partnerships with Canadian universities, to bolster their connectivity to industry and to help ensure that international idea supply chains reach into Canadian business.

## Education, jobs and skills: the 'Is university worth it?' debate

Over the past three years or so, after the recovery from the 2008-2009 "Great Recession" began to take hold, critics across the globe have launched a series of attacks on universities, accusing them of failing to address labour market needs. Politicians, journalists and bloggers – even a few economists – have joined in the assault.

A leading proponent of the view that there is a massive skills shortage in Canada that can be attributed in large measure to the failure of our universities is Gwyn Morgan, erstwhile CEO and regular contributor to *The Globe and Mail*:

Worse, many high school graduates who manage to gain the qualifications needed to enter STEM programs are turned away when they apply to university, even with good marks, because universities won't reallocate money to open more slots for students in those programs. A CIBC World Markets report last year confirmed that huge sums are being wasted churning out graduates in out-of-demand fields, such as arts and humanities, while turning away thousands of qualified STEM applicants (Morgan, 2014).

Morgan cites a CIBC report by Benjamin Tal and Emanuella Enenajor that recognizes clearly that "on average, higher education gives you a leg up in the job market," but that the leg up is less pronounced for graduates in the life sciences, humanities and social sciences than for graduates in "professional fields such as medicine, law and engineering." Note that "professional" degrees are often post-baccalaureate, second university degrees, so this comparison is problematic from the beginning (Tal and Enenajor, 2013).

Even if one were to accept the flawed premise, Morgan is highly selective in citing Tal and Enenajor. He does not mention that, according to the CIBC study, one of the most salient explanations for any limitation on the "payoff" from higher education is that immigrants with credentials earned elsewhere are statistically lumped together with people who have Canadian credentials. Those "foreign" credentials are a significant drag on the payoff numbers. According to Tal and Enenajor, "[a] Bachelor's degree in commerce earned abroad yields 40 percent less than the same degree earned in Canada." For engineering graduates, the gap is a staggering 70 percent. (Tal and Enenajor, 2013). Not surprisingly, the specific recommendations of the CIBC study focus on the need for better credential recognition for new immigrants and better labour market information.

Through no fault of their own – the statistics are new – Tal and Enenajor are out-of-date in suggesting that Canadian students are not shifting their choices in light of labour market demand. Data from BC reveal that from 2006 to 2013, the largest program percentage increases were in health professions (46.5 percent), business (34.3

percent), and engineering and computer science (34 percent). The largest decreases were in arts and humanities (-18.3 percent) and education (-0.6 percent) (Government of BC 2014). Students do indeed make choices that are influenced by job market considerations.

A recent TD Bank study that Morgan ignores undermines his argument fundamentally. Quite simply, there is no Canada-wide massive “skills shortage.”

The notion of a severe labour market skills mismatch has topped the headlines. With data in hand, we debunk the notion that Canada is facing an imminent skills crisis. At the same time, there is some evidence of mismatch across certain occupations and provinces, but the sparse, non-time-series data prevent us from saying whether the situation today is worse than in years past (TD Economics, 2013).

Exactly the same conclusion emerges from a 2013 Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE) survey of 96 major companies, the results of which were also neglected by Morgan: “The survey results do not support the argument that Canada is suffering from a comprehensive, national skills shortage” (CCCE, 2014).

What is more, the TD study showed that,

[T]he perception related to recent Canadian graduates flipping hamburgers is exaggerated. For instance, the 2011 [Statistics Canada] data showed that unemployment rates for the 25-29 year age cohort with some form of PSE ran in the 6-8 percent range depending on the level of education . . . . For people aged 25 to 64 years old [who] received their Bachelor degree in Canada, the unemployment rate is just 3.7 percent and only 5.5 percent for people aged 25-29 years. The comparable unemployment rates for those with high school are 6.9 percent and 10.4 percent, respectively (TD Economics, 2013).

These data were reinforced by B.C. statistics, which are particularly relevant because B.C. is one of the provinces supposedly most affected by a “skills mismatch” as a result of its high reliance on resource-based industries. The B.C. government’s own numbers show that, five years after graduation, 95 percent of graduates from B.C.’s research universities are employed in jobs closely related to their education (Government of BC, 2014).

Finally, the idea that there are too many “liberal arts graduates” in Canada is just plain wrong. Only 10 percent of university graduates study liberal arts. As TD Economics puts it,

[T]he often-held perception that Canada’s PSE system is heavily tilted towards generalized arts degrees is not borne out in the data . . . . The U.S. produces a higher share of arts and humanities graduates, while Canada has a larger bent

towards engineers, sciences and mathematicians. The U.S. stands out in its emphasis on business and management graduates (TD Economics, 2013).

In any event, a 10-year longitudinal study in the United States showed that the wage differentials that formerly existed between liberal arts majors and more “career-oriented” majors largely disappeared over the decade. The rate of compensation growth among liberal arts graduates was higher than for other fields (TD Economics, 2013). And in the U.S., the wage gap between college graduates and everyone else reached an all-time high in 2013 (New York Times, 2014).

## Recommendations

### *Universities:*

- Ensure that students have access to relevant job outcome data for the university programs they are considering;
- Expand and strengthen programs that provide opportunities for students to gain off-campus work experience during their undergraduate and graduate studies.

### *Government and business:*

- When advocating and attempting to shape policy, get past the barista-and-taxi-driver anecdotes and look at the data on the job market performance of university graduates;
- Have confidence that students will make rational choices on their own futures when they are presented with useful data, and stop talking as though we lived in a command economy.

## Aboriginal inclusion

A specifically Canadian issue where universities find themselves increasingly challenged concerns the inclusion of Aboriginal learners. In Western Canada especially, the need to include young Aboriginal and First Nations people in post-secondary education is felt acutely, both as a moral and an economic imperative. In both Manitoba and Saskatchewan, indigenous people account for more than 15 percent of the total population; 19 percent of them are between ages 15 and 24. In Alberta (6.2 percent) and B.C. (5.4 percent), the Aboriginal share of the population is not as high, but it is still significantly greater than in Central and Eastern Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011). The presence of First Nations on their traditional territory that is crucial to resource

development gives them a powerful political salience, especially after the Supreme Court of Canada decision in the *Tsilhqot'in Nation* case entrenching an expansive view of Aboriginal title (*Tsilhqot'in Nation*, 2014).

Although Canada's Aboriginal population is growing rapidly, its participation rate in post-secondary education remains far lower than for the rest of the population. Only eight percent of Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 in Canada hold a university degree, compared to 23 percent of non-Aboriginal people of the same age group. In part this is due to appallingly low graduation rates from high school: more than one-third of Aboriginal people have not completed high school and an even smaller percentage graduate with math and science credits, a fact that significantly constrains their opportunities in university (AUCC, 2014). This sad set of statistics contains an important implication: Young Aboriginal and First Nation learners still do not have enough strong role models to shape aspirations. This is true among the professoriate as well, where a tiny (though growing) number of teachers and researchers is of Aboriginal ancestry.

One very important means to address the weakness in Aboriginal post-secondary participation is the creation of better "laddering" mechanisms. It is often difficult for Aboriginal students, especially those from small communities, to make the transition directly from high school to a university, particularly to large, research universities such as McMaster or the University of Alberta. The solution may be for universities to conclude formal agreements with colleges so that an Aboriginal student can enter a college with a promise of admission to university after a year or two of successful academic performance. This laddering allows the student to benefit from more personalized attention in a closer-knit setting before moving to a larger campus with greater learning resources. An example is UBC's laddering agreement with Langara College in Vancouver.

Even with such programs in place, universities will have to continue to expand welcome and support initiatives for Aboriginal learners. It will take consistent effort over many years to overcome generations of disengagement and negative attitudes toward institutional education engendered by the history of residential schools.

Another major point of contention for young Aboriginals is access to resources for post-secondary study. The level of federal government funding to support Aboriginal students attending postsecondary institutions has increased by only two percent a year since 1996. Meanwhile, tuition has increased at an average rate of 4.4 percent, with the cost of living also rising. Given the growth of the 15-24 Aboriginal cohort, more and more students are qualified to receive funding but have to "wait their turn," given what is essentially a hard cap on government resources. Moreover, many self-identified Aboriginal people do not even qualify for targeted federal support. Universities are trying to pick up the slack with more scholarships and bursaries focused on Aboriginal students than ever before, financed by operating funds and philanthropy, but they are

not keeping up with the demand. Many qualified Aboriginal students are not getting the education that they and their communities need.

## Recommendations

### *Universities:*

- Create more laddering programs with colleges, especially in settings close to Aboriginal communities, to ease the transition to post-secondary education;
- Continue to bolster scholarship and bursary funds targeted at Aboriginal students;
- Further expand specially designed welcome and retention programs for Aboriginal learners;
- Make sincere and thorough efforts to identify and recruit fully qualified, promising Aboriginal professors.

### *Government:*

- Federal and provincial governments should conduct thorough reviews of their funding mechanisms for post-secondary-bound Aboriginal students to ensure sufficiency and appropriate ease of access.

### *Business:*

- In addition to specific job-focussed training for potential employees, companies should consider significant investments in bursaries and scholarships for Aboriginal learners so as to ensure the qualifications needed for community leadership that promotes social cohesion and economic success, which is in the interest all of Canadians.

## Conclusion

Universities need to change – a lot. They need to change fast. The process will be difficult and even painful at times. But “vital change” is not the same as “*radical* transformation.” Radical means “root.” It means changing in essence. And if universities do that, I think the game will be lost. I have made recommendations to universities, to government and to business in five crucial areas. Following those recommendations would, I believe, point Canadian universities down a path to future strength and to even greater contributions to Canadian and global society.



I want to conclude by suggesting what I think will, at the most basic level, enable universities to thrive through the next challenging decade. My suggestion is perhaps surprising: While changing dramatically in many ways, universities must hold fast to the mission that has shaped their contributions since medieval times. In a world where “disruption” is the over-hyped mantra, that is a truly radical idea.

This final piece of advice is derived once again from the world of interpersonal relations. Know yourself and be yourself. Universities have a unique mission: to serve the world through the preservation and dissemination of knowledge, and the creation of new knowledge. It is a mission that has persisted for hundreds of years. No corporation comes even close to matching the longevity of the university, and precious few states or governmental institutions could make that claim either. Admittedly, today’s students are facing a world powerfully changed from the one I graduated into some 35 years ago, and their education has to be structured and delivered in new ways. But universities do not need to become something entirely new, or to find something new to do. They need to do what they have done for generations, but differently and in ways better suited to new relationships in a new social and economic landscape.

## **Bibliography**

AUCC, “Aboriginal Education” at <http://www.aucc.ca/policy-issues/Aboriginal-education/> (accessed 29 June 2014).

Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1995).

Government of BC, “BC Headset” (2014).

Canadian Council of Chief Executives, “Second Survey Report: Skills Shortages in Canada” (March 2014).

Internet World Stats (2014) at <http://www.internetworldstats.com/emarketing.htm>.

David Leonhardt, “Is College Worth It? Clearly, New Data Say.” (*The New York Times*, 27 May 2014).

Gwyn Morgan, “Rising to the challenge of Canada’s skills shortage.” (*The Globe and Mail*, 6 April 2014).

Nik Nanos, Poll (AUCC Proprietary, 2014).

Benjamin Tal and Emanuella Enenajor, “Degrees of Success: The Payoff to Higher Education in Canada.” (CIBC, *In Focus* series, August 2013).

Statistics Canada, National Household Survey (2011).

Statistics Canada, Postsecondary Student Information System (2013)

TD Economics, “Jobs in Canada: Where, What and for Whom?” (22 October 2013).

*Tsilhqot’in Nation v. British Columbia* [2014] SCC 44 (26 June 2014).



To be added to our mailing list or for additional information, please visit  
[www.ceocouncil.ca](http://www.ceocouncil.ca)

To download a copy of this report, please visit  
[www.ceocouncil.ca/skills](http://www.ceocouncil.ca/skills)