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The McMaster Model for Global Engagement



BRIGHTER WORLD



Vision

McMaster University aspires to make global engagement in education and knowledge generation an integral part of its identity and presence in Canada and the world.

Mission

McMaster will engage with the global community guided by principles of integrity, reciprocity, reflexivity, sustainability and transformation. We will foster global citizenship among students, faculty, staff, and administration through institutional participation in global initiatives, including international partnerships in support of research, academic excellence and value creation. We will integrate global awareness in the students' learning and co-curricular experiences, both on campus and through international mobility.



Background

By all accounts, McMaster University is a very international community: International students account for more than 16% of the undergraduate student population and 27% of the graduate student body, not counting the many domestic students with roots abroad. Overall, more than 120 countries are represented by our students, staff and full-time faculty. Well over 10,000 active alumni reside outside of Canada, in 137 countries, and many more are involved in international leadership roles from Canada.

Global Engagement and Internationalization

Global engagement is a response to the complex ways in which globalization has changed the world in which we live. It sees the many challenges of the contemporary and future world as requiring a form of global commitment by many.

Internationalization generally is defined as “to make international” or “to put under international control”. The significant part of the word is the prefix “inter” which in its original Latin meant “between”, “among”, “mutually”, “reciprocally”, and “together”. Internationalization in the higher education context has been defined as the integration of an inter-national and inter-cultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of the institution.

Global engagement and internationalization are not synonymous. While it is difficult to imagine being globally engaged without internationalization, the reverse is not necessarily true. For McMaster, the emphasis on global engagement is articulated in Forward with Integrity: A Letter to the McMaster Community (FWI), as “the transformation of the university on its own ground, whereby our academic orientation and breadth of knowledge embraces the globe, our approach to any problem is informed by a global awareness.” As an international center of excellence for teaching and learning, innovation, and creativity, McMaster continues to rank among Canada's most research-intensive universities. McMaster's global engagement, which is one of its Institutional Priorities and Strategic Goals [1] includes community-engaged and globally-connected educational offerings, student and faculty exchanges, and collaborations. It also includes the recognition that, as an expression of global citizenship, global engagement involves not just a passive awareness but an “active orientation to the challenges of the world.” As in anything that is successfully international, this requires humility, respect, and understanding.

References

- [1] <https://publications.mcmaster.ca/catalogue/mcmaster-university/institutional-priorities-and-strategic-goals-2021-2022/>
- [2] <https://academicimpact.un.org/content/principles>
- [3] <http://u15.ca/what-we-are-saying/u15-group-canadian-research-universities-joins-global-network>

The Transformational Model

As part of its vision for global engagement, McMaster thus is developing a *Transformational Model* that aims to incorporate the following important drivers of international activities:

- 1. Cooperation for peaceful coexistence and mutual benefit.**
- 2. International demand for the University's expertise in research, education, and learning.**
- 3. The civic mission of the University, embodying and enabling global citizenship.**

If one adds the dimension of critical social awareness, which implies the prioritization of equity, justice, and environmental stewardship, the model fully incorporates the principles outlined in *FWI the Institution's Priorities and Goals*. Moreover, it is aligned with the ethical values and principles to which McMaster is committed as a signatory to the *United Nations Academic Impact* [2] and the *2013 Hefei Statement on the Ten Characteristics of Contemporary Research Universities* [3].

Benefit to Canada

In addition to the above considerations of integrity, respect, and mutual benefit, it is important to note that Canada is a country that is very active internationally and that our standard of living is very much dependent on our ability to act well in our international relations. About 25% of our workforce has a university degree. That would be about 5 million people, of which one could estimate that about 70% (or over 3 million) are involved in some way in international value exchange, including trade. Most, if not all, professions are involved at some level, so the question is: how are we preparing them for that, and what would "that" mean? At the same time, millions of Canadians have friends and family abroad and thus, have a stake in the stated goals of global engagement.

It seems clear that internationalization is a significant factor in Canadians' lives. It is one of the hallmarks of a university's successful global engagement strategy to create widespread awareness and knowledge of the vital importance of internationalization to Canada's global relationships and economy, and to help develop the skills necessary to contribute in such an environment.

Key Strategic Elements

1. Integration of International, Intercultural and Global Dimensions in the Student Experience

The University endeavours to include an international dimension in its core activities of teaching, learning, research, and outreach. We will promote the value of studying abroad and encourage students to actively contribute to and benefit from the international flavour of our university. We will offer workshops to help faculty and researchers share international points of view, and actively engage in partnerships that create innovative learning environments. It is important that we diversify the countries from where students are recruited, create a supportive and inclusive environment for international students, and foster an atmosphere of mutual learning between international and local students.

2. Support of International Research and Scholarship

International initiatives often require activities that fall outside of traditionally funded approaches to research. We will aim to provide the same level of university support for the development of complex international initiatives and the administrative maintenance of successful proposals that exists for more conventional research endeavours. Of equal importance is to give tangible evidence to faculty and staff that international engagement is a valued activity and is viewed as a critical contributor to McMaster's global position.

3. Creation of a Global Identity

It is essential that global engagement become part of McMaster's culture and that the university strive to establish an active learning process that prepares students for successful international engagement and value exchange. We will work with provincial and federal governments in support of global programs and involve our extensive network of international alumni in defining McMaster's international culture as part of its global presence.

4. Strategic Approach to International Collaboration

We will identify specific institutions, countries, and regions that offer the best opportunities for sharing of learning and knowledge, as well as enhancing research, education and social and economic development. This includes support for the incubation of new ideas and initiatives to engage in world-class research in a global environment, but also capacity building for higher education at an international level. The rapid development and ubiquitous nature of advanced communication technologies greatly facilitates international collaboration, with the added benefit of mitigating some of the financial and environmental costs of internationalization.

5. Enhancement of Internal Coordination and Communication

Although McMaster is engaged in a myriad of international activities, these generally are not well publicized and many individuals on campus are unaware of what is happening outside their immediate area of work. In addition to regularly updating an inventory of international research and learning activities, we will create campus-wide opportunities for cross-Faculty dialogue to facilitate knowledge dissemination and foster interdisciplinary international interactions. We will also establish forums specifically for sharing of experiences among participants in international activities and those who have not (yet) participated. Such events will be widely publicized, both internally and externally.



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