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## INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION: NURSING IN A GLOBAL WORLD

Clémance Dallaire<sup>1</sup>

The growing international influences on each country, the increasing complexity of the world around us and the increasing amount of knowledge needed to deal with today's world highlight the importance of international collaboration. Similarly to large corporations which think and act in international terms and to national governments which invest numerous efforts to coordinate their mutual interest, universities are involved in international collaboration. Education plays a role in the transmission of international influence since students have to be prepared to work in a global world, to think in both global and local terms, to be more aware of cultural differences, and promote an open, understanding mind that will enable them to live in this world. Nursing education is no exception. Moreover, thanks to the availability of telecommunications, nursing education is influenced by information flowing in from the four corners of the globe.

The idea of bringing the variety of international activities of universities under the term internationalization is a relatively recent one, starting in the early 1990s<sup>(2)</sup>. More specifically, internationalization for universities relates to how they internalize an openness to the world in all their objectives, processes, structures, activities and results. In this perspective, international collaboration is not something that is added to university's mission but it is rather an integral part of its existence. Thus, international information, action, and decision-making are brought to influence university's life<sup>(2)</sup>. The concept of internationalization is helpful to universities because it implies an organized approach to offering an educational experience filled with a richer basis of the knowledge available worldwide that comes with a cross-cultural and global openness. In fact, universities' benefit can be greater if they see internationalization as a tool for their own development.

Internationalization is even more pertinent since universities see it as their mission to produce and disseminate knowledge on a universal scale. In that perspective, universities have supported their professors' efforts to integrate themselves into the international scientific community and secure their place in academic disciplines. Furthermore, scientific rules and norms aim toward universality, limited only by the knowledge available. In fact, some suggests that internationalization of scientific activity is developing at an accelerating pace and disciplines benefit from intellectual communities working on a world scale. Nursing's efforts to be fully recognized as a scientific and academic discipline is unthinkable without active international collaboration.

Alternatively, although the basic mission of universities relates to teaching and service to a local community, this mission must be balanced with the universal orientation of their scientific mission. Consequently, universities cannot be isolated ivory towers as readily perceived by those who know little of university reality. Nonetheless, it constitutes a real challenge for universities to balance service to communities in close physical proximity with an openness to international communities, to accommodate education systems in other countries, to identify appropriate partners and to develop effective institutional partnership strategies.

Beside the potential contribution to their own development, universities can have many benefits from international collaboration. Internationalization can bring new realm of collaboration, whether in student mobility, language instruction, distance education, or in the co-granting of degrees. International collaboration can also provide a larger pool of available ideas, methods and re- sources. Under specific circumstances, it could allows cost sharing and time saving for the development of new knowledge. Paradoxically, universities can no longer know everything. Because of the increasing complexity of the world and the many ways of understanding, it is increasingly obvious that more knowledge than before is needed. Unfortunately, it is not easy for institutions seeking to open themselves to the world not to succumb to confusion in the face of so much information.

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<sup>2</sup>Weber L. Internationalization at Canadian Universities: where are we now? *Brock Education J.* 2007;16(2):38-43