

# Seeking Internationalization: The State of Canadian Higher Education

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## Abstract

This article explores the internationalization of Canadian universities, with a focus on the rise of foreign postsecondary students in Canada, the economic impacts, and the various benefits, challenges, and adjustments that have been influenced by the continuing demographic shifts on Canadian campuses since 2000. Rooted in recent global and Canadian higher education internationalization trends, this paper suggests that accommodations for such shifts have not kept pace with the influx of culturally and linguistically diverse foreign students, whose population growth rate outpaces domestic university students' by several times. I conclude with unresolved dilemmas that continue to pose challenges for Canadian universities, and with suggestions for manageable supports to ensure the needs of students are responsibly balanced with the economic constraints of universities.

## Résumé

Cet article explore l'internationalisation des universités canadiennes en mettant l'accent sur l'augmentation du nombre d'étudiants étrangers au Canada au niveau postsecondaire, les conséquences économiques, ainsi que la variété d'avantages, de défis et de modifications marqués par l'évolution démographique sur les campus canadiens depuis l'an 2000. Prenant pour base les tendances récentes à l'internationalisation dans l'enseignement supérieur au Canada et dans le monde, cet article soutient que les aménagements entrepris face à cette évolution n'ont pas réussi à suivre l'afflux des étudiants étrangers, de cultures et de langues diverses, et dont le taux de croissance dépasse plusieurs fois celui des étudiants domestiques. L'article se conclut par une discussion des dilemmes irrésolus représentant encore des défis pour

les universités canadiennes, et par des propositions de soutiens gérables afin de s'assurer que les besoins des étudiants s'équilibrent de façon responsable avec les contraintes économiques des universités.

### Introduction

The proliferation of global student mobility and academic cosmopolitanism continues to significantly alter the landscape of Canadian universities. Between 2000 and 2011, foreign student<sup>1</sup> populations grew over 99% in Canada, from 89,532 to 178,491—more than doubling domestic university students' 37% growth (Statistics Canada, 2013a, 2013b). Over this period, tuition fees for international students<sup>2</sup> have accordingly skyrocketed to address and take advantage of the growth in international students wishing to attend Canadian universities. These high tuition fees have been necessitated (or at least justified) by ongoing budget cuts to public universities (CAUT, 2013; Kiley, 2011; Thompson & Bekhradnia, 2010) and mitigated by the significant educational and social capital of Canadian universities and their ability to attract globally mobile students. Figures 1 and 2 outline the changing revenue streams of Canadian universities between 2000 and 2012. Although federally allotted postsecondary funding as a proportion of GDP has declined considerably since the early 1990s (CAUT, 2013), it has remained generally static since 2000 as a percentage of total university revenues (Statistics Canada, n.d.). The most notable changes have instead come with reductions in non-federal funding to Canadian universities (such as provincial and municipal grants and allocations) and other sources, including donations, investments, endowments, and non-governmental grants. In contrast to these reductions, there have been equally significant increases in revenues generated by student tuition fees. Since 2000, profits from tuition rose five percent as a proportion of total university revenues, from just under four billion to over eight billion dollars in 2012–2013<sup>3</sup> when adjusted for inflation (see Figures 1 and 2).

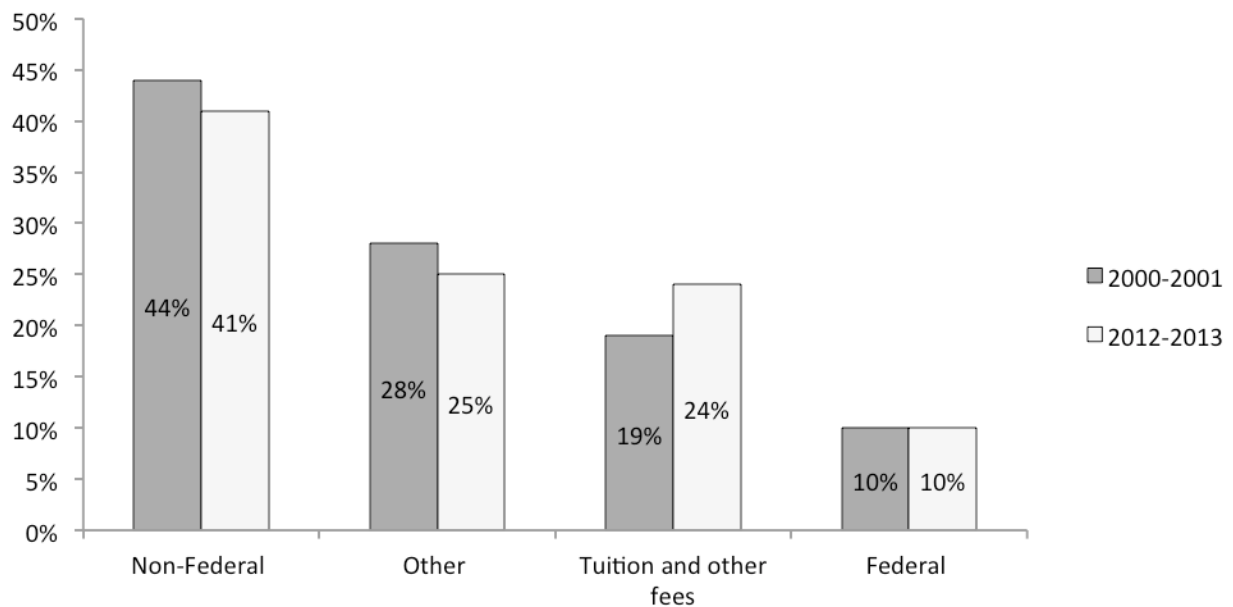


Figure 1. Percentage of total revenues of universities and degree-granting colleges (2013 dollars) (Statistics Canada, 2014a)

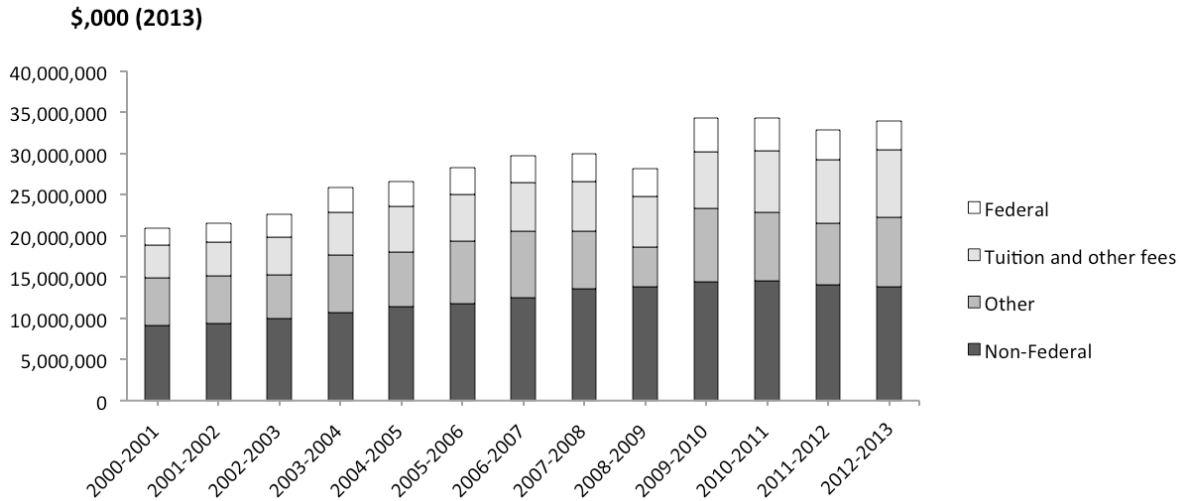


Figure 2. Annual revenues by type of funds of universities and degree-granting colleges (2013 dollars x1,000) (Statistics Canada, n.d.)

A considerable portion of these rising tuition revenues have derived from international students, who typically pay three to four times that of domestic students, with international undergraduate students’ annual tuition costs averaging \$18,462 in 2012–2013 compared to \$5,646 for their Canadian peers (Statistics Canada, 2014a, 2014b). International graduate student tuition costs were also considerably higher, at \$13,299 compared to \$5,979 for Canadian students. Although changes to the Statistics Canada survey universe make comparisons of pre- and post-2006 tuition data difficult,<sup>4</sup> Figure 3 provides a general look at the rising tuition fees for international and domestic students since 2000 (with two sets of data, to account for Statistics Canada’s survey changes). Adjusted for inflation, tuition for Canadian undergraduate students remains the lowest, slightly behind Canadian graduate students’, while international undergraduate students have experienced the largest and fastest-growing increases, from paying just under \$12,000 in 2000–2001 to almost \$18,500 in 2012–2013.

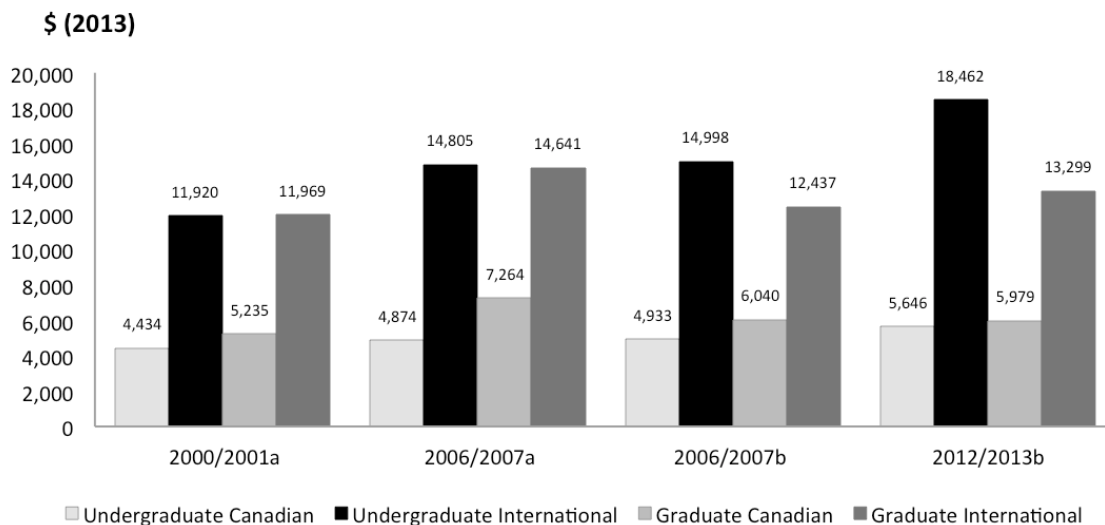


Figure 3. Canadian tuition fees, 2000–2001 to 2012–2013 (2013 dollars) (Statistics Canada, 2014a, 2014b)

Although the differential fee structures for international and Canadian students are in part due to the public subsidization of higher education in the country, they also reveal the ongoing corporatization of higher education as universities search for alternative revenue sources (Altbach & Knight, 2007)—issues that reflect the broader marketization of western universities across various spheres of management, leadership, decision making, (intellectual) property structures, research, and funding (Marginson, 1999). This ongoing neoliberal imagining of Canadian higher education, while certainly not a new phenomenon, can pose challenges for universities regarding the need to balance fiscal pressures with their social and educational responsibilities to students. The extent to which universities *have* or *have not* been able to adapt to and accommodate the shifting student demographics in this era of hyper-internationalization remains an area of concern, particularly for some culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students who speak English as a second (L2) or additional language. The promotion of postsecondary-level internationalization<sup>5</sup> in Canada has therefore created an ethical tension between the various benefits of larger numbers of foreign students versus the potential challenges and accommodations of adapting to increasingly diverse university populations. The following explores these issues in greater detail against the recent backdrop of Canadian and global higher education internationalization trends since 2000.

### Global Perspectives

The increase of globally mobile students has unfolded steadily over the last several decades with the most dramatic changes occurring since 2000 (see Figure 4). Most areas of the globe have experienced considerable growth at the postsecondary level, with Asia, North America, and Europe the leaders in attracting foreign students to their universities. Between 2000 and 2011, Asia's share of enrolled foreign tertiary students grew 133% from 214,744 to 500,947, compared to Europe's 121% increase from 920,140 to 2,033,082, and North America's 60% growth from 569,640 to 913,464 (OECD, 2013a). Increases were not confined to these areas, however, as the total global population of foreign tertiary students grew over 100% between 2000 and 2011, from 2,071,963 to 4,265,579 (OECD, 2013a). Predictions for future growth suggest few signs of abatement, with estimates ranging from 6.4 to 8 million students studying outside their countries of citizenship by the year 2025 (Goddard, 2012; OECD, 2009).

The United States maintained its spot as the most popular single-country destination for foreign tertiary students, with 709,565 students in 2011 (despite a six percent drop in global market share between 2000 and 2011, from 23% to 17%), while in the same year continental Europe attracted nearly 50% of all foreign tertiary students studying abroad (OECD, 2013b). Canada's global market share grew only marginally during this period, from 4.6% to 4.9% (OECD, 2013a, 2014), despite significant net increases in total enrolled foreign student populations nationally—as outlined in the forthcoming sections. Overall enrolments of international tertiary students in Canada as a percentage of total tertiary enrolments sits at 8.2%, slightly higher than the 2011 OECD average of 6.9% and more than double that of the United States at 3.4% (OECD, 2013a, 2014). The regions of origin for global foreign tertiary students, however, paint a significantly different picture from the regions of destination, with the vast majority of foreign students (approximately 75%)

originating from non-OECD countries<sup>6</sup> (OECD, 2013b). This outlines the disproportionate amount of symbolic and economic capital that OECD countries and their postsecondary institutions have for both fellow members and non-members alike. Fuelled strongly by China and its rapid liberalization and economic growth over the last two decades, Asia leads the world, with 2,149,708 tertiary students studying abroad, accounting for 50% of global totals. China is the largest single-country supplier of foreign tertiary students, with 722,915 people engaged in cross-border study as of 2011; comprising almost 17% of global totals, more than three times higher than its closest rival country, India, and over five times higher than the next largest sending countries, Korea and Germany (OECD, 2013b).

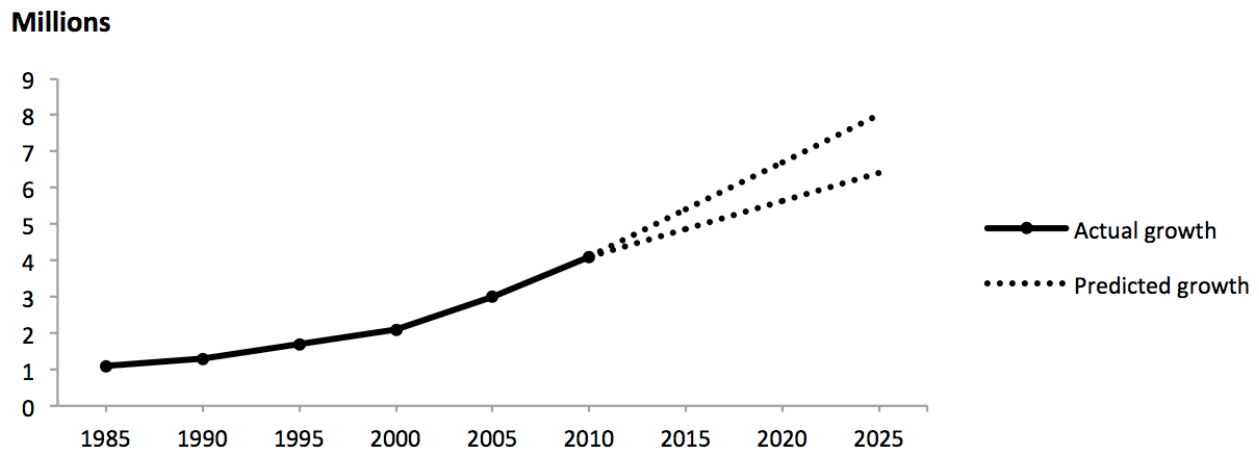


Figure 4. Global growth in foreign tertiary education (Goddard, 2012; OECD, 2009)

### Canadian Perspectives<sup>7</sup>

The Canadian federal government's internationalization policy continues to revolve around the positive economic contributions of international students and the desire to increase innovation through the recruitment of skilled foreign professionals (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011; Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, 2011, 2012, 2014). Although Canada's overall market share of foreign tertiary student enrolments remains relatively modest in global terms, these students' contributions to the Canadian economy have been considerable. In 2010 alone, international student expenditures contributed \$7.7 billion to the Canadian economy, \$445 million of that being direct governmental revenue, with an estimated creation or maintenance of 81,000 jobs (Roslyn Kunin & Associates, 2012). In addition to the more tangible economic benefits, internationalization positively impacts Canadian universities by providing domestic students access to a variety of perspectives, languages, cultures, and experiences that foreign students bring with them to campuses—perspectives that have potential entrepreneurial, educational, and intellectual impacts. In a sense, internationalization brings the world to Canada without Canadian students ever having to leave. Foreign students who return to their countries of birth (or go elsewhere) after studying in Canada may also become future allies, collaborators, or business partners with Canadian academics, governments, or industry.

Canada wants to transmit to highly educated and skilled foreign students the allure of the country and its institutions in hopes of improving Canada's attractiveness and influence on the global stage, including the targeted migration of talented students to the country, particularly at the graduate level. Shifts in Canadian immigration policy have accordingly become more aggressive in actively encouraging international graduate students to come to Canadian universities by making migration more accessible than in the recent past. In November 2011, the Canadian federal government announced a revised international graduate student recruitment policy that outlined a plan to attract up to 1,000 additional international PhD students per year to Canadian universities as permanent residents (PR) through the Federal Skilled Worker Program (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011). The Canadian Minister of State at the time, Gary Goodyear, speaking of this program, noted that "[d]octoral graduates play a unique role in the economy. They drive research, encourage innovation and pass on their knowledge through teaching. . . . And quite simply, Canada needs more of them" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011, p. 2). The recent announcement of the federal government's International Education Strategy is similarly aimed at enticing international researchers and students to Canada through the strengthening of the Canadian education "brand" globally—with targeted recruitment focusing on six emerging markets (Brazil, China, India, Mexico, North Africa and the Middle East, and Vietnam)—and through providing enhanced funding opportunities for researchers and students who come (Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, 2014).

This imperative to increase the presence of international students in Canada appears to be working. Table 1 outlines overall Canadian and foreign student enrolments in Canadian universities between 2000 and 2011, with foreign students doubling their population in just 11 years. Table 2 further delineates enrolment classifications into six categories and their corresponding growth percentages since 2000. Canadian undergraduate students remain the largest population quite substantially. International student numbers, however, have increased most dramatically over this period, including 167% growth for undergraduate students and 114% growth for graduate students—numbers that are especially resonant for Canadian universities due to the elevated tuition fees for international students, particularly at the undergraduate level. While total enrolments for domestic students remain considerably higher, the discrepancy in growth percentages between domestic and foreign university students in Canada is in line with global trends more generally, and it fits well with university and government mandates to further internationalize Canadian campuses.

Table 3 details the continent of origin of foreign students in Canadian universities since 2000. Similar to global trends (OECD, 2013b), continental Asia is the largest source of students for Canadian universities, providing 88,224 in 2010–2011—nearly as much as every other region of the globe combined. Table 4 notes the top five countries of origin for foreign students between 2000–2001 and 2010–2011, with students from China forming the largest group, comprising 19% of all foreign university students in Canada and exhibiting a 176% increase in that period.

Table 1.  
Canadian and Foreign Student Enrolments in Canadian Universities<sup>1</sup>

Status	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011
Canadian	693,483	714,051	749,736	795,468	813,366	825,204	838,995	843,246	860,655	924,876	952,299
Foreign	89,535	100,407	114,084	127,215	135,957	141,600	144,081	147,900	151,764	166,584	178,488
Total	783,018	814,458	863,820	922,683	949,323	966,804	983,076	991,146	1,012,419	1,091,460	1,130,787

Source: (Statistics Canada, 2013a, 2013b)

Note 1. Statistics Canada counts are “randomly rounded to a multiple of 3 using the following procedure: counts which are already a multiple of 3 are not adjusted; counts one greater than a multiple of 3 are adjusted to the next lowest multiple of 3 with a probability of two-thirds and to the next highest multiple of 3 with a probability of one-third. The probabilities are reversed for counts that are one less than a multiple of 3” (Statistics Canada, 2013b). Some subtotals and grand totals of the Canadian postsecondary data used in this paper will therefore be inconsistent when comparing data across tables, due to Statistics Canada’s rounding of numbers.

Table 2.  
Canadian, Permanent Resident, and International Student Enrolments in Canadian Universities

Status	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	% Growth
Canadian Undergraduate	596,424	613,653	642,984	683,883	693,567	703,602	710,466	707,676	720,672	770,802	794,172	33
Canadian Graduate	85,584	88,809	95,043	98,865	104,886	106,731	110,886	117,636	120,336	126,480	128,703	50
PR Undergraduate	37,827	40,152	43,290	45,675	48,036	49,983	51,798	52,944	54,843	59,523	62,190	64
PR Graduate	12,843	14,970	17,763	18,801	19,293	19,125	19,530	20,106	19,920	20,394	21,234	65
International Undergraduate	23,439	28,143	34,059	40,860	45,132	47,910	47,979	49,266	50,748	56,964	62,679	167
International Graduate	13,599	15,105	16,725	19,302	20,706	21,573	21,471	21,984	22,509	25,635	29,142	114

Source: (Statistics Canada, 2013a, 2013b)

Table 3.  
*Total Foreign Student Enrolments in Canadian Universities by Continent of Origin*

Continent of origin	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011
Asia	42,885	50,187	58,839	67,179	72,150	74,997	74,343	74,973	77,853	86,046	88,224
Africa	11,973	13,626	15,816	17,421	18,081	18,939	19,734	20,913	21,717	23,454	25,092
Europe	16,629	17,043	17,955	18,996	19,536	20,370	20,427	20,979	21,336	22,146	22,824
Other	3,879	4,104	3,876	4,344	5,718	5,577	7,668	8,493	8,484	11,169	18,327
North & Central America & Caribbean	11,184	12,183	13,983	15,207	15,972	16,698	16,512	16,947	16,272	17,154	17,103
South America	2,382	2,661	3,045	3,465	3,894	4,422	4,791	4,974	5,451	5,940	6,273
Oceania	600	603	570	606	609	600	603	621	645	672	642

Source. Statistics Canada, 2013a, 2013b

Table 4.  
*Top Five Sources of Undergraduate and Graduate Foreign University Student Enrolments at Canadian Universities by Country of Origin*

Country of origin	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011
China	12,330	17,349	22,950	27,693	29,823	29,991	28,788	27,744	28,455	32,889	34,041
France	3,987	4,236	4,665	5,022	5,352	5,727	6,507	7,191	7,701	8,637	9,672
United States	6,411	6,801	7,869	8,520	9,075	9,486	9,369	9,585	8,676	9,192	9,150
India	3,369	4,035	4,968	6,096	6,738	7,233	7,362	7,521	7,824	8,682	8,988
South Korea	2,697	3,111	3,489	4,260	4,866	5,799	6,456	6,702	7,065	7,317	7,194

Source. Statistics Canada, 2013a, 2013b



At the graduate level, China remains the largest provider of foreign students, with a total of 6,762 in 2010–2011 (see Table 5). Interestingly, and at odds with the overall growth trends of Chinese tertiary students globally, foreign Chinese graduate students in Canada peaked in 2003–2004 at 9,726 and have declined steadily since, with only marginal gains in 2009–2010, followed by further declines the following year. The result has been a 30% reduction in Chinese graduate students from peak numbers a decade ago. Table 6 specifies the broader grouping of foreign Chinese graduate students into their respective “international” and “permanent resident” categories. Since 2003, the number of international Chinese graduate students has risen by 29%, notably less than the overall international graduate student growth of 114% (Statistics Canada, 2013b). Permanent resident Chinese graduate students have declined 62% over this period, while the other four top source countries for PR graduate students in Canada (Iran, India, France, and the United States) have all increased considerably (Statistics Canada, 2013a). This dip appears likely to correspond to the decline in overall PR populations from China since the early 2000s, as noted in Figure 5. Causes for the stagnant growth in Chinese international graduate students in Canada appear slightly more varied. The 985 Project, an initiative of the Chinese government to improve the quality and reputation of its elite universities through large injections of financial capital, may be influencing an increasing number of Chinese students to remain in China as opposed to studying abroad. The presence of English-medium satellite universities and branch campuses in China is similarly providing alternative high-quality opportunities for Chinese students wanting international experiences without the exceptionally high costs associated with overseas study in western universities (Mok, 2007; Stanfield & Shimmi, 2012). The number of postsecondary institutions has also grown considerably over this period in China, from 599 in 2000 to 1,112 in 2010, as have domestic graduate university populations, which increased 430% between 2000 to 2010 from 283,000 students to over 1.5 million (Stanfield & Shimmi, 2012). Factoring in these changes with the rising Canadian tuition costs for international graduate students (particularly at the master’s level), the marginal growth of foreign Chinese graduate students in Canada highlights the various “push-pull” factors that motivate or constrain students’ mobility decisions with respect to international education. These trends, however, should still concern Canadian graduate programs in terms of attracting top (Chinese) talent to Canadian universities and to Canadian job markets post graduation, particularly as the Canadian government continues to pursue growth in Chinese student enrolments against the backdrop of the Asia-Pacific Gateway initiative and the goal to strengthen economic supply chains between North America and Asia (APGCI, 2013; Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010). While overall foreign undergraduate and graduate student growth continues to trend upwards, the 30% decline in the nation’s largest foreign graduate student population should warrant attention moving forward, particularly as the international education market continues to become increasingly competitive.

Table 5.  
*Top Five Sources of Foreign Graduate Student Enrolments at Canadian Universities by Country of Origin (Master's, Doctorate, or Equivalent)*

Country of origin	2000/		2001/		2002/		2003/		2004/		2005/		2006/		2007/		2008/		2009/		2010/		2011/		
	2001	2002	2002	2003	2003	2004	2004	2005	2005	2006	2006	2007	2007	2008	2008	2009	2009	2010	2010	2010	2011	2011	2011	2011	
China	5,337	6,762	8,799	9,726	9,459	8,688	7,881	7,497	6,996	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200	6,762
Iran	828	924	1,179	1,500	1,983	2,529	2,679	3,000	3,405	4,179	4,179	4,179	4,179	4,179	4,179	4,179	4,179	4,179	4,179	4,179	4,179	4,179	4,179	4,179	4,410
France	1,749	1,968	2,103	2,361	2,505	2,646	2,847	2,973	2,952	3,282	3,282	3,282	3,282	3,282	3,282	3,282	3,282	3,282	3,282	3,282	3,282	3,282	3,282	3,282	3,594
India	963	1,113	1,410	1,848	2,013	2,052	2,070	2,211	2,313	2,697	2,697	2,697	2,697	2,697	2,697	2,697	2,697	2,697	2,697	2,697	2,697	2,697	2,697	2,697	2,991
United States	1,869	1,776	2,055	2,103	2,274	2,379	2,490	2,691	2,628	2,919	2,919	2,919	2,919	2,919	2,919	2,919	2,919	2,919	2,919	2,919	2,919	2,919	2,919	2,919	2,964

Source. Statistics Canada, 2013a, 2013b

Table 6.  
*Total Foreign Chinese Graduate Students in Canada by Immigration Status*

Status	2000/		2001/		2002/		2003/		2004/		2005/		2006/		2007/		2008/		2009/		2010/		2011/		
	2001	2002	2002	2003	2003	2004	2004	2005	2005	2006	2006	2007	2007	2008	2008	2009	2009	2010	2010	2010	2011	2011	2011	2011	
Permanent Residents	3,849	4,935	6,339	6,372	5,418	4,599	3,921	3,537	3,000	2,787	2,430	2,430	2,430	2,430	2,430	2,430	2,430	2,430	2,430	2,430	2,430	2,430	2,430	2,430	2,430
International	1,488	1,827	2,460	3,354	4,041	4,089	3,960	3,960	3,960	4,413	4,332	4,332	4,332	4,332	4,332	4,332	4,332	4,332	4,332	4,332	4,332	4,332	4,332	4,332	4,332

Source. Statistics Canada, 2013a, 2013b

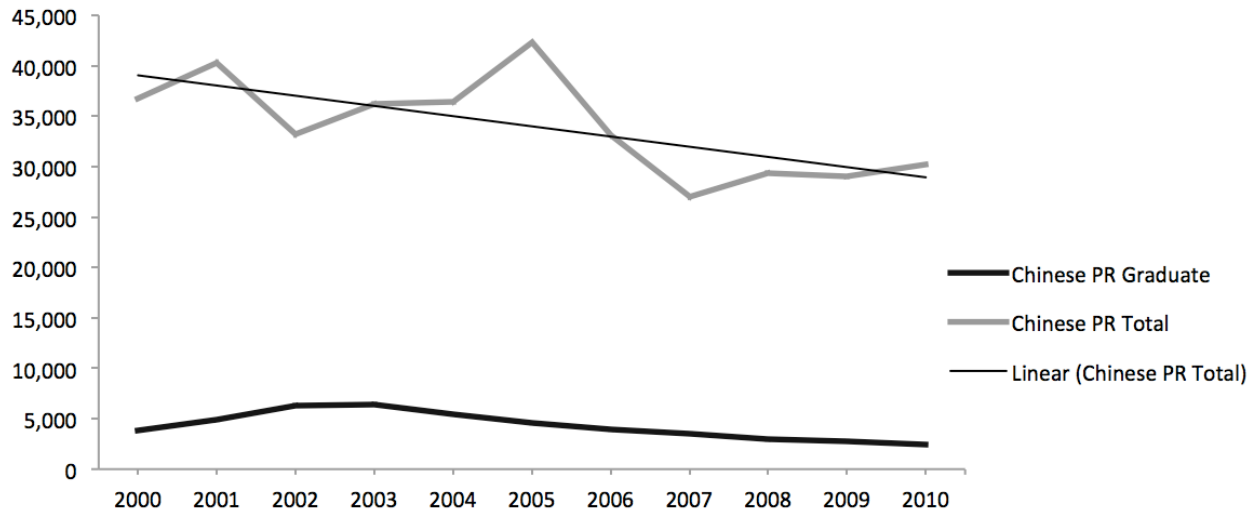


Figure 5. Chinese permanent resident trends in Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003, 2013; Statistics Canada, 2013a, 2013b)

## Challenges of Canadian Internationalization: Macro and Micro Perspectives

### Macro Perspectives

The promotion of the internationalization of higher education has not been without critique, particularly regarding the role it plays in the spread of (neo)colonial and neoliberal discourses from the west “outwards,” and the standardization of English-mediated and Anglocentric epistemologies and ontologies, including a bias towards western-based knowledge creation, research methods, methodologies, and academic discourses. What constitutes “legitimate” research and knowledge has long been determined by colonial powers, who act as gatekeepers to academic communities, both within the west and outside it (Smith, 1999). Akena (2012) notes:

European colonizers have defined legitimate knowledge as Western knowledge, essentially European colonizers’ ways of knowing, often taken as objective and universal knowledge. Arriving with the colonizers and influenced by Western ethnocentrism, Western knowledge imposed a monolithic world view that gave power and control in the hands of Europeans. It delegitimized other ways of knowing as savage, superstitious, and primitive. (p. 600)

The resulting “homogenization of academic culture” (Kubota, 2009) that English-mediated and western-based internationalization promotes thus contributes to the intensification of *academic neocolonization* in both study-abroad and home contexts for many foreign students (Altbach, 1971; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Kubota, 2009; Mok, 2007). These issues can create challenges for students as they attempt to competitively (re)position themselves after returning home or in the global market place while negotiating their way in an Anglocentric and Eurocentric academic world. Alternatively, Steinman (2009) suggests that western universities and their instructors should move to establish

more flexible and additive relationships with foreign students coming from non-Western academic traditions instead of expecting them to unilaterally morph into the conventions and practices of their new academic communities and discourses.

Another potential concern has been the perceived tension between rising foreign CLD student populations and the necessity to maintain rigorous admission and academic standards. In the UK, for example, it has been suggested that nearly two-thirds of recently admitted international undergraduate students might lack the language proficiency needed to thrive in classes (Paton, 2012). There have been related and highly charged discussions surrounding these enrolment trends and the potential preference that higher fee-paying international students may receive over more “qualified” (and culturally and linguistically advantaged) domestic students (Stanford, 2012; Watt & Newell, 2012). Similar types of discussions are also occurring in the Canadian context, including a controversial opinion piece from the online magazine of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, *University Affairs*, titled “Internationalizing the Canadian Campus: ESL Students and the Erosion of Higher Education” (Friesen & Keeney, 2013). The authors, both Canadian professors at the time of the article’s publication, argue that the challenges of underperforming “ESL students” in their classrooms outweigh any potential benefits:

There is no sugar-coated way to say this: many of those who are welcomed at our universities are simply unprepared for the rigours of the university classroom. . . . Instead of engaging students in disentangling the nuances and subtleties of a particularly important passage from the assigned readings, one begins speaking to the class as one might speak to academically challenged teenagers. . . . Qualified students can hardly be blamed if they slouch in their seats and study their shoelaces, as the professor iterates, yet again, something they learned in grade school. . . . Given our experience, we believe that Canadian universities need to rethink their enthusiasm for non-English-speaking students. (n.p.)

Although unrealistic, even hyperbolic, these opinions are certainly not unique in the broader discussion related to the increased presence of foreign students at Canadian universities. Recent articles in *Maclean’s* (“The Flap over the Fluency Gap,” MacQueen, 2013), *The Vancouver Sun* (“Foreign Students a New Cash Cow,” Todd, 2013), and CBC (“U of R International Students Hurt by Lack of English Skills, Prof Says,” CBC, 2013) highlight the growing debate over the potential language proficiency gaps of some foreign students and the compromising impact on Canadian higher education. Arguments such as this reflect a demographic frustrated with the shifting nature of Canadian education and the challenges that some foreign students and those around them can encounter. These opinions, however, also reflect an unbalanced perspective on the current realities of higher education in Canada, from the short-term economic and socio-educational benefits to the longer-term impacts surrounding the recruitment, training, and possible migration of talented incomers. From purely pragmatic, strategic, and economic perspectives, it makes little sense for Canadian universities to “rethink their enthusiasm for non-English-speaking students” if this rethinking results in fewer students enrolling at Canadian universities.

A conspicuously lacking point in many of these heated discussions is not whether Canadian governments and universities should continue to recruit and enrol CLD foreign

students in the first place but how stakeholders can and should work together to ensure foreign students are provided better opportunities to succeed and socialize within their local communities and discourse practices. Leask (2010) argues that many of the perceived barriers of foreign L2 students, such as the ones outlined above, impact domestic students' willingness to interact with foreign students in class—a reaction that limits foreign students' opportunities to acculturate into their university communities. Dialectical hierarchies that favour standardized forms of English over non-standard varieties may also serve as barriers for some foreign students who speak English as a first or native language but do not speak the dialect of preference in their university setting—issues that can apply to Canadian students as well. Steinman's (2009) call for a “flexible, additive intent rather than a prescriptive, subtractive one” (p. 164) regarding the socialization of foreign L2 students is also important here, in both a pedagogical as well as an epistemological sense. Pedagogically, an inclusive, adaptive approach can lessen potential tensions and misunderstandings by encouraging greater reflexivity, understanding, and communication between teachers and CLD students. This reflexivity and responsiveness can facilitate the possibility of further internationalizing course curricula and teaching and learning approaches. In this sense, both students and teachers (foreign and domestic alike) can achieve greater degrees of understanding and co-operation by being receptive to each others' perspectives while at the same time acknowledging and (co)constructing what types of academic expectations are typically preferred in their specific Canadian contexts. Epistemologically, a flexible, additive approach marks a shift away from Anglocentric and Eurocentric academic norms and practices that can serve as barriers for some foreign students and can position them as culturally and linguistically “deficient” compared to their domestic peers, instead of as active agents with valuable skills and knowledge of their own.

### **Micro Perspectives**

Sometimes overlooked in broader macro-level discussions of the internationalization of higher education are the perspectives of the students themselves. There is a wide variety of research, some seemingly contradictory, that addresses international students' experiences in Canadian universities. The Canadian Bureau for International Education's (CBIE) 2009 national survey of postsecondary students reported overall satisfaction levels to be quite high for international university students, including the accessibility of professors, academic supports, and student advisors, for example. As a result, equally high numbers of students reported self-perceived successes in adjusting to the academic demands of their programs while in Canada. Grayson's (2008) survey of four Canadian universities found similar results for both domestic and international students, with 75% and 70% of students, respectively, reporting general satisfaction with their programs.

A significant body of research, on the other hand, has been more critical of the types of available supports and subsequent outcomes for international CLD students in Canada. The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada reported that fewer than half of Canadian universities provided specific programs to sufficiently assist international students' social and academic well-being (AUCC, 2007). Examples of this lack of support have been well documented through a variety of qualitatively orientated studies at the tertiary level. Seror (2008), for example, reported on the struggles that Japanese L2 uni-

versity students encountered when attempting to decode instructors' feedback on written academic assignments, and the potentially harmful ways such feedback can position or alienate students as deficient or "ESL" and in need of remedial support, as opposed to offering positive and affirming positionalities, such as those of "legitimate" or "autonomous" emerging scholars and professionals. Other foreign L2 students have reported struggling with academic reading and writing tasks due to the heavy demands of university course work, frustrations with receiving insufficient or confusing feedback from instructors, and oral fluency challenges during presentations and class discussions (Bronson, 2005; Cheng, Myles, & Curtis, 2004; Jenkins, 2005; Lu & Han, 2010; Zappa-Hollman, 2007). At times, L2 students may also speak less or write shorter and less-complex texts to try to decrease potential errors (Cheng, Myles, & Curtis, 2004), and may rely on academic coping or rhetorical strategies like textual borrowing or patchwriting—which are often considered plagiarism in many western contexts, a view that may be at odds with some students' prior academic experiences (Pecorari, 2003; Polio & Shi, 2012; Shi, 2004).

These varied perspectives suggest that although Canadian universities appear to be providing adequate opportunities for many foreign L2 students to succeed, there remains a considerable percentage who would benefit from more comprehensive and targeted academic support—support that can also benefit domestic English-speaking students who may require similar types of academic assistance. By further developing infrastructure that ensures students are able to access more precise academic assistance when needed, both domestic and foreign students alike will be better positioned to thrive during their time in Canadian universities and beyond.

### Conclusion

Canada has experienced incremental growth in attracting foreign students to its universities; however, compared to other major destination countries, particularly in Europe, growth has been moderate, and even disappointing or underutilized for some (Davidson, 2012; Friesen, 2012). Although increasing foreign student populations has been a prominent talking point for the Canadian federal government of late, other countries, particularly non-OECD members, are also targeting these core demographics in hopes of growing numbers at their own universities (Sharma, 2012) and realizing the subsequent financial, social, and educational gains from such change. China, for example, the world's current largest *exporter* of students, has recently outlined its own aggressive goal to attract 500,000 students by 2020, up considerably from 328,000 in 2012 (Hu, 2014; Millar, 2012). These alternative destination spots, such as China, will be appealing for some internationally mobile students based on lower tuition fees and cost of living alone. The Canadian federal government has similarly announced its own lofty targets to double current international student numbers by 2022 (Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, 2012)—targets that will be increasingly difficult as alternative, and perhaps more economically viable, options emerge globally. As Saneh (2009) notes, "the face of higher education in North America is changing" (p. 169), and Canadian universities, educators, and students will need to better accommodate and adapt to such inevitable change instead of unfairly lamenting the "erosion" of Canadian higher education by the influx of "non-English-speaking students." Universities, after all, have an "academic and social responsibility in the local and global communities" (Kubota & Abels, 2006, p. 82) to provide

support and adapt to (and with) the students they so desperately seek. A failure to do so would be a failure not only to students but to the universities, their instructors, and the broader Canadian and international communities as well.

In my own current research project—a longitudinal, multiple-case study investigating the second-language socialization (Duff, 2010, 2012) of seven foreign Chinese PhD students at a large Canadian university—many challenges and frustrations similar to those presented above have emerged from my participants through in-depth interviews, narrative inquiry, and document analysis (Anderson, in preparation). Several of the students encountered various challenges acculturating into their respective academic literacies and discourses during their programs, experiencing vastly differing degrees of success. The pressures of negotiating their way into the English academy while maintaining high grades, writing comprehensive exams and dissertation proposals, presenting at conferences, and writing for publication (in several languages) can be overwhelming tasks for many graduate students, particularly in the context of highly competitive doctoral programs at tier-one research universities. Several findings from my study, in particular, are pertinent in the broader discussion of Canadian postsecondary internationalization. First, despite an increasing focus on issues related to the affective impact of teacher-directed feedback on students' academic writing tasks at the postsecondary level (e.g., Anderson, 2010; Bronson, 2005; Leki, 2006; Seror, 2008), too frequently the feedback that foreign L2 students receive on their academic writing is still misconstrued and insufficient. Instructors should continually reflect on their own practices and strive for more effective feedback strategies, particularly for L2 students who may require more thorough explanations and less ambiguous comments on their writing. Second, there is a crucial need for discipline-specific and level-appropriate academic writing support at universities to ensure all students are better prepared to learn the vocabulary, genres, registers, and conventions that are standard in their respective fields. Providing basic support for students in the form of writing centres or general writing courses may be missing the target, however well intentioned they are. In my study, several students reported seeking help from the university's writing centre, only to be disappointed and disillusioned by the lack of graduate-level assistance that was available. Those who attempted to access the writing centre's services were paired with undergraduate tutors, often from different disciplinary backgrounds than themselves, who lacked the ability to provide targeted and nuanced guidance for complex and technical academic writing tasks required at the graduate level.

Based on these findings, the following outlines several attainable and manageable supports that could ensure appropriate opportunities are available for struggling students who require them:

1. The development of faculty- or departmental-level peer-support networks or peer mentorships to serve both the academic and the social outcomes of students' experiences (Topping, 1996; Westwood & Barker, 1990). This might include pairing incoming CLD students with senior-level students to facilitate both academic and linguistic support (if needed) as well as the exchange of knowledge, experience, and intercultural communication between pairs (Leask, 2010).
2. Reshaping university writing centres to offer discipline-specific content and genre knowledge (Mohamad & Boyd, 2010) and level-appropriate support for both undergraduate and graduate students.

3. Further refining university-provided academic support programs for struggling students to ensure discipline-based academic skills are being addressed (Baik & Greig, 2009).
4. Organizing student-run writing groups in which students can share, collaborate, be inspired, and learn from each other (Li & Vandermensbrugghe, 2011)
5. The facilitation and management of online departmental repositories that host samples of common professional and academic disciplinary genres that students will be expected to produce during their studies (and beyond, in some cases). These sample texts can act as guides or models for students unfamiliar with the specific conventions and practices that are standard in their content areas.

Several of the above suggestions should be appealing for cost-benefit purposes alone. Peer support, peer tutors, peer-run writing groups, and academic text repositories all require limited initial set-up and maintenance in terms of financial capital. Added to the academic benefits of these activities are the potential social benefits as new students, foreign and domestic alike, are provided opportunities to immediately connect to their fellow students. Peer support and its associated interactions can play vital roles in socializing students into their new programs and academic discourses. Minor investments in student support infrastructure could therefore entail both short- and long-term gains for universities. In the short term, students would be provided more opportunities to succeed, attrition rates might be lessened, and the quality of work would improve. In the long term, students' positive experiences would be more likely to translate into favourable reviews and reputations for their former programs and universities (Andrade, 2006; Carr, McKay, & Rugimbana, 1999). 🍁

### Notes

1. *Foreign students* refers to postsecondary students who are not citizens of the country where the data were collected.
2. *International students* refers to postsecondary students who have crossed a border with the express intention to study.
3. All figures in this paper have been converted to real 2013 Canadian dollars to adjust for inflation.
4. "Data for 2006–2007 [onwards] result from the modifications to the questionnaire (implementation of the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) for both undergraduate and graduate programs) and the expansion of the survey universe" (Statistics Canada, 2014a).
5. Internationalization of higher education refers to the process of global student and staff mobility, partnerships and cooperation between international higher education institutions (HEI), the proliferation of branch campuses and distance learning, and the associated intercultural and international impacts on curricula, teaching, and learning. (Knight, 2004, 2008).
6. OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) member countries for 2013 are as follows: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey,



United Kingdom, and the United States.

7. The following operationalizations are maintained throughout the paper for all data related to the discussion of Canadian higher education: (1) *International students* refers to students on a student visa who entered Canada with the sole purpose of studying at a Canadian university, those on diplomatic, trade, and other missions, and refugees. (2) *Foreign students* refers to “international students” and “permanent resident” students. (3) *Canadian students* refers to Canadian citizens. (4) The program types included are: undergraduate (first cycle), post-baccalaureate non-graduate program, graduate qualifying program (second cycle), health-related residency program, graduate program (second cycle), and graduate program (third cycle).

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