

# Synergy 2012 Post-Event Report

The 7th Annual Synergy Conference held on November 1 & 2 at the Hilton Garden Inn near Toronto which focused on Canada-India educational initiatives was yet another stunning success. With over 100 delegates in attendance including representatives from dozens of Colleges and Universities across Canada and some from India, this annual event has become a 'must attend' fixture for institutions and academics working the 'Canada India education corridor'.

CIEC is a not for profit, bi-national, independent, event-driven, membership-based organization established to operate exclusively in the 'Canada India education corridor', enhance ties and create opportunities for academic institutions. Since 2007, the Synergy Conference series has successfully brought hundreds of Canadian institutions together to discuss common objectives, challenges and opportunities.



**Prof. Balbir Sahni**, Concordia University shared the Shastri Institute's figures on international student mobility, Canada-India MOUs, economic impact and advisory panel reports, selective focus areas, and interpretive observations. He stressed that a major hindrance to the creation of MOUs between Canadian and Indian institutions is the lack of regulation/credentials for Indian institutions. Prof. Sahni suggested that although the focus remains on Canadian universities, we should include colleges, trade schools & others in our internationalization strategy. He also insisted that Canada's internationalization strategy should be about more than financial reward. Rather, the key to success is the promotion of Canadian & Indian linkages.

**Dr. Lalu Mansinha**, University of Western Ontario, presented an overview of the Ontario-Maharashtra-Goa Student Exchange Program (OMG) program, including history, stakeholder experience, accomplishments and goals. He included an insightful analysis of unexpected benefits to students and expressed his wish to broaden the program to include research collaboration, faculty exchange and student exchange at the masters and PhD levels. Dr. Lalu Mansinha warned that Canadian government policies are influenced by risk management and Canadian institutions should leverage strengths directly to Indian students/institutions. He also suggested that the excess of Canadian PhD students would meet India's need for qualified and world-class professors. Alternatively, Indian students can attain their PhDs in Canada and return to India to teach.

**Nikhil Bhatia**, PwC – India, enlightened the audience about the many [tax] pitfalls of setting up in India with an entertaining and thorough presentation shedding light on the risks and benefits of each option open to Canadian academic institutions wishing to tap into the Indian market. He provided an overview of the regulatory regime by categorizing regulated and non-regulated segments (institutions), discussed key legislations/regulations in the pipeline, including Bill 57 and new regulations on twinning/joint degree programs. He summarized the pros and cons of entity set up modes as well as tie-up/collaborations (without entity set up), presented case studies and discussed tax obligations, social security contributions and institution/personnel requirements.

**Goldy Hyder**, Hill & Knowlton, painted a stark but optimistic picture of Canada's prospects and role in the international education sector as well as India's secured and newly recognized place in the international arena. He reminded us that it is no longer India that needs us, but us them. He urged business must become involved in growing the Canadian brand in order to succeed in penetrating the market savvy Indian populace, and academic institutions must present a united front to government to secure funding for internationalization initiatives.

**Rod Skinkle**, Academica Group, impartially weighed Canada's education brand and warned that conditions are ripe for both success and mediocrity. Market growth, a national education brand, and Canada being viewed as a desirable destination country are cause for optimism, but setbacks include a lack of a nationally coordinated strategy and student awareness, an increase in competitive growth, and our institutions' current state of infancy and inability to measure ROI because of a lack of objective data. Rod shared the results of Academica's 'International Student Prospect Survey,' and 'Institutional Strategy Survey,' drawing upon the results to conclude that a values approach to international recruitment is necessary for success, the details of which are found in his presentation on the CIEC website..



**Prof. Roseann O'Reilly Runte**, Carleton University, discussed Carleton's Canada-India Centre for Excellence in Science, Technology, Trade and Policy (CICE), providing a historical outlook of Carleton's 25 year involvement in India including the securing of over 2 dozen formal agreements with Indian institutions and establishing partnerships with the business community through their mandate of sharing expertise and promoting research. CICE's strategic relationship building focuses on promoting trade partnerships, economic development and opportunities, innovation and research, and a collaborative R&D setting, as well as the exchange of students, post-doctorate fellows, and academics. Prof. Runte stressed that the end goal should always be to solve real world problems and address community needs.

**Rudy Sabas**, Association of Canadian Community Colleges provided the Synergy audience with an update on the Student Partnership Program as well as an overview of ACCC, the institutions it is comprised of and its goals. He discussed the conception of the SPP pilot project and ACCC's role as an international partner matchmaker. The SPP is an administrative framework in partnership between Canada visa offices in India & ACCC. SPP aims to increase approval rates for study permit applications and ensure programs integrity and minimizes immigration violations

**Mariam Rabkin**, DFAIT provided an overview of DFAIT's scholarship and policy developments, internationalization education strategy, S & T relations, as well as Canada's objectives in India. The Going Global Innovation (GGI) is another program created by DFAIT which aims to catalyze global R&D partnership that accelerate commercialization and increase Canada's competitiveness and provides financial benefits to Canadian companies and researches wishing to collaborate on a R&D plan or agreement.

**Janine Knight-Grofe**, CBIE discussed CBIE's vision & mission, programs and services, including the Canadian Consortium for International Education Marketing (CCIEEM). CBIE aims to contribute to bring more students to Canada and collaborate with associations and stakeholders. They believe full engagement of institutions and the organizations that represent them is key to achieving sustainable results in education marketing.

**Dr. Ryan Touhey**, University of Waterloo and **Margaret Walton-Roberts**, Wilfrid Laurier University, directed a 'round table dialogue' with input from Canadian stakeholders, academic institutions & partners discussing academic relations between Canada and India, fielding questions and sharing their expertise with Synergy attendees.

## Testimonials

*"Great event this week" – Rod S.*

*"The conference was a very valuable dialogue all around! I very much appreciated the open discussions representing many different perspectives"*  
– Michele D.

*"Husain, as always, you are to be congratulated for developing excellent content and a diverse range of speakers that otherwise would not have a chance to talk with each other"* – Ryan T.

*"I am already looking forward to the next one!"* – Nasreen A.

*"I wanted to say that I really enjoyed the Synergy event. I've shared a lot of information from that event with colleagues here"* – Chris C.



### Excerpts from CIEC's 'Live From Synergy 2012' social media live-stream:

- A quick survey shows there are 326 MOU's across the country, with Central Canada (ON, QC) representing 197 of these. Some institutions have entered in agreements with the private sector.
- We must place emphasis on the importance of educational strategy as a driving force for prosperity. Without strategy, sustained quality and progress is impossible.
- International students have gone in recent years from being unwanted to being welcomed eagerly. The change in perspective is reflected in terms of change of policy.
- The majority of foreign students coming to Canada are consistently male. With the under-representation of women in the market, this becomes obvious room for growth in coming years.
- Different initiatives have been made in streamlining the application process, creating more international partnerships (with government and institutions) and increasing the opportunities for work and residence visas.
- For success, policy changes must incorporate all of Canada to keep the provinces and territories involved. But in marketing Canada globally there still remain issues in representing clearly what Canada has to offer.
- How important is the focus on a Canadian brand to promote foreign exchange? Schools report the wait for budget allocation is too long when they could be taking their own initiatives. Ultimately, if a school excels in and promotes a given program it benefits the overall 'Canada brand' as well as the individual institution involved.