Imagine the Future of Colleges and Institutes

CICan-McConnell Foundation Collaborative Initiative
to Strengthen Social Infrastructure in Canada
Aide-Memoire
Presidents' Leadership Network and Follow-up Event
CICan Annual Conference, Victoria BC April 28-29, 2018

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Background

Over the past year, CICan has initiated or contributed to a number of discussions related to the role of post-secondary institutions in addressing key issues of our time, with a focus on the role that colleges and institutes must play in meeting the evolving needs of their learners, partners and communities. These include:

➢ CiCan's *Imagine the Future* consultations to inform its 2019-2024 Strategic Plan
➢ A series of exchanges with regional representatives, culminating in a workshop with Deloitte's *Future of Work* research team[1] and a group of Presidents and CEOs from across the country;
➢ Two CiCan-J.W McConnell Foundation's RECODE initiative[2] workshops on the role that colleges and institutes play in building social infrastructure and opportunities to work together to increase their impact on communities[3].
➢ A CICan-Ashoka[4] workshop on building a changemaker culture across campus, based on using social innovation to better prepare students, transform institutional culture, and lead society towards a brighter future.
➢ A focus on the future of colleges at CICan events, including a dedicated track at the national conference and keynote presentations on the future of jobs and education at the annual Leaders Forum and other member gatherings.

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[1] The Deloitte reports focus primarily on the role of universities in addressing challenges re: the future of work. The workshop exchange provided an opportunity to exchange with the research team about the role played and work performed by colleges and institutes.

[2] The McConnell Foundation's RECODE initiative goal is to increase solutions-centered 21st century post-secondary education that enhances community well-being. It engages with post-secondary education institutions to explore how to leverage what they already do, how to align efforts and collaborate to address societal problems by building "social infrastructure" to affect system change. RECODE has invited CICan to develop a collaborative initiative to amplify the capacity of colleges and institutes to build social infrastructure by leveraging the considerable collective capabilities of the system to increase its impact on communities.

[3] Forty CEOs and college leaders participated in one or both workshops. They identified key assets of colleges and institutes in Canada and generated three proposals targeting many of the same challenges discussed with Deloitte and identified during the strategic plan consultations.

[4] AshokaU offers the Changemaker Campus program, a globally-recognized designation for social innovation in higher education. 40 post-secondary institutions have achieved the designation, including six in Canada (five universities: Simon Fraser, Ryerson, Royal Roads, Mount Royal and Laurier; and one college: Georgian).

On April 28 in the context of the CICan Annual Conference, the Presidents' Leadership Network held a session on *Imagine the Future of Colleges and Institutes.* An insightful and provocative presentation by Sheldon Levy was followed by updates and a discussion on these CICan initiatives.

Two members of the CICan Board of Directors – Don Bureaux, President of NSCC and Dr. Paula Burns, President of Lethbridge College, were joined by Chad Lubelsky, Director of the RECODE Initiative at the McConnell Foundation and Denise Amyot, President and CEO of CICan to share the perspectives gained from participating in these and other initiatives. Participants in the PLN meeting were given the chance to ask questions and provide feedback and suggestions for moving forward and were invited to pursue the conversation at a workshop-dinner hosted by CICan and the McConnell Foundation on the following day. The evening workshop attracted strong participation, including by those who had not been part of the previous events and concluded with a call for action and a commitment to engagement by a significant majority of participants.

This Aide-Memoire reviews key points that emerged from the PLN session and from the workshop-dinner and describes CICan's actions for moving forward based on the conclusions of the past year.

Future of Work: Challenges and opportunities

- Chad Lubelsky, Director of the RECODE Initiative: the McConnell Foundation supports collaborative initiatives of post-secondary institutions that build resilient communities and creates conditions for larger social systemic change. Colleges and institutes are present in thousands of communities and have significant assets that could be leveraged in aid of achieving the 17 United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals to which Canada has subscribed[5] e.g. reducing poverty and social inequalities, quality education, economic development, peace and social justice, good health, climate action, etc. The Foundation is interested in supporting colleges and institutes to play their role and to scale up their impact. It sees its role as investor, convenor, connector and neutral broker – working with colleges and institutes to achieve valued goals.

- Don Bureaux, President of NSCC: Don reflected on the growing gaps in productivity and wages and between those who benefit and those who are left behind, and on the changing demographics of student population in colleges and institutes (increasing numbers of first generation students, students with prior PSE, with declared disability). These trends constitute a call to the core values of accessibility and democratization that are rooted in colleges' and institutes' DNA. He underscored the belief that colleges and institutes play an important role in building communities, and that as a system, we could scale their work and accelerate their contribution to a socially inclusive nation through education. He called for a bold vision and a new narrative about the system, to mobilize and inspire colleges and institutes to play their nation building role in a more intentional, concerted and visible way.

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5 http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/agenda-programme.aspx?lang=eng&_ga=2.154435704.1144048315.1522423197-1862304515.1522423197

- Paula Burns, President and CEO of Lethbridge College: Paula noted that the need for a new narrative also emerged from conversations with Deloitte. Students are not prepared for the workplace of the future, and while colleges and institutes are good at innovating at the institutional and community level, they haven't figured out how to scale practices across the sector, forge stronger pathways and transfer arrangements, and collaborate to accelerate change. The conversations and initiatives proposed are about how we can come together to work on key opportunities to better prepare our students for the workplace of the future and unleash their capacity for innovation and leading change.

- The exchange among presidents that followed revealed a growing consensus on the following points:
  - The future is coming and it's coming fast. It is bringing tremendous opportunities and some significant threats for the world of work, for our social fabric and for our own institutions. There are calls for action, for change, for new ways of thinking about how to do the work.
  - Colleges and institutes believe they have a unique set of assets, and the capacity to facilitate a successful transition to the future. Many times, over the past few months and more than once in the past few days, the message was: this is our moment.
  - There has long been a strong sense that there are ways that colleges and institutes can act together that will amplify and accelerate our individual efforts; our success in acting on this has been limited but the urgency has never been greater.
  - A bold, compelling vision and new narrative on the role of colleges and institutes in building a socially inclusive nation could focus our collective energies and promote broad awareness of the capacity and assets that our institutions offer society.
  - It could be done as a set of projects, each focused on a particular objective, issue or opportunity, or as a joint initiative within a region, to build toward the vision that has emerged.
  - Mandating a convenor/coordinator with some funding to capitalize on existing capacity, support efforts to do the work and connect with groups would help.

A Call to Action

- The invitation to participate in an impromptu, follow-up conversation on how to move forward generated a strong response. The evening session brought together college leaders who heard about the initiative for the first time at PLN as well as those who had participated in one of events noted in the *Background* section above.

- Participants at the dinner described their interest and motivation as follows:
  - **Learn** more about social innovation and the use of the SDGs as a conceptual framework – a new way to guide work in different regions of the country – and opportunities to work with McConnell on related initiatives.
  - **Work as a movement for social change** around access for non-traditional learners, as a bigger platform at the national level; defining what we want the movement to be and how it could lead to action.
  - **Move to action:** How to get something going? How to advance at a national level and implement at a local level? What does it really mean on the ground for the institutions? How to hold ourselves accountable (metrics)?

Ideas for collaborative work with support from CICan and McConnell Foundation

Discussions at tables generated ideas that colleges and institutes could undertake to move forward. Building on and beyond the proposals that were brought forward from previous conversations and workshops, participants identified two main thrusts for a RECODE supported initiative:

1) **Work coalescing around areas that groups of colleges and institutes care about and could be scaled to others,** for example:
    o The future of work: all colleges and institutes are concerned about this and working to respond independently. Pooling existing resources with additional support from CICan/McConnell could help inform strategies and scale them up (keeping in mind jurisdictional constraints).
    o Increasing access and social inclusion: changing institutional practices to increase the success of populations who will be left behind e.g. Indigenous learner success – address drop-out rates, essential skills, delivery of curriculum on reserve, pathways into college and university, ensuring social supports. This could build on the shared principles of the Indigenous Education protocol, and be scaled if successful.
    o Mental health and wellness issues are increasing in general population. As access increases, colleges and institutes need to deal with it, share and scale practices.
    o Leverage existing programs (for example, Enactus, Changemakers) by supporting groups of colleges acting in tandem, adapting approaches and sharing resources to align with the assets of colleges and institutes.

    Any project would need to provide opportunities for faculty and students to work on social issues in their communities and generate metrics to assess contributions of colleges to social impact.

2) **Creating a new narrative** by issuing a compelling call to action to inspire and mobilize our own institutions as well as key stakeholders regarding the role that colleges and institutes, individually and collectively, play in community and nation building. The impetus for this narrative derives from a long-standing belief that decision-makers – beginning with individual students and extending to parents, K-12 teachers, employers and government policy-makers – have a limited understanding of the capacity and potential of our institutions to increase inclusion, stimulate innovation and effect positive social change. The intention is to improve outcomes for individuals and communities by capitalizing more fully on the publicly supported social infrastructure that our institutions represent.

- Participants were polled on their level of interest and commitment for moving forward on a CICan-RECODE supported collaborative initiative (1= stay informed, 2= part of ongoing conversations; 3= join working groups). A majority characterized their interest as level 3 – joining a working group, indicating their readiness to tackle an initiative -- big or small -- provided it makes a difference. They concluded by saying that the success of one or several collaborative initiatives would depend on a third-party convener with energy and resources to facilitate and support them.

Next steps

Following outcomes of the various workshops, discussions at the annual conference and strong expressed commitment from presidents, McConnell Foundation's RECODE has signaled its interest in supporting colleges and institutes to move forward on collaborative initiatives. This will be done in two steps:

As a first step, we will identify a limited number of illustrative collaborative initiatives based on the discussions to date and describe the proposed approach and mechanisms for managing the initiative going forward.

The proposal to McConnell will be based on supplementing CICan's HR capacity to develop and manage the project and contributing to the operational costs involved in convening and supporting the member-based project teams that form up around individual collaborative initiatives.

If the McConnell Board decides to support the proposal, CICan anticipates the following actions will take place between late-2018 and mid-2019:

- Recruit a CICan staff person to lead the work under the direction of a senior executive
- Establish a small steering committee of Presidents/CEOs to guide the initiative
- Develop proposals for, and issue invitations to all members to be active participants in, a limited number of projects
- Establish project teams and plans; conduct start-up activities

All members of CICan will be kept informed of decisions, progress and opportunities to become involved through its regular communication channels (e-mails, newsletter, monthly outreach reports, conference, etc.).