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New initiative by Canadian Universities in Ukraine

Edmonton--During the week of February 11 to 16, 2013, over three dozen Ukrainian universities met in Kyiv and Lviv with a delegation of 12 Canadian universities. There they expressed their desire and willingness to co-operate both in faculty and graduate student exchanges and joint research projects.

Throughout the visit questions were asked about how best to establish a system that would benefit the faculty and students from many institutions, in various regions of Canada and Ukraine. Three specific suggestions caught the attention of participants.

First, many agreed that thematic consortia or networks of researchers should be financed, created and allowed to manage themselves. The model would have individual faculty members and researchers from various institutions organize themselves by their discipline and work together to maintain a dialogue between faculty members in Ukraine and in Canada.

Second, many speakers referred to Ukraine’s experience with double diplomas and encouraged Canadians to use this method more actively. After agreeing to course equivalencies between two institutions, this procedure allows students to do two years at one institution (e.g. in their own country) and then complete their program at a university in the partner country. This arrangement allows graduates to receive two diplomas. The model is also well suited for students to complete a baccalaureate and then move on to a Master’s program under a three-plus two-year arrangement. Studying a discipline in two universities in two different languages yields both professional skills and prepares the students able to work internationally.

A third suggestion was that universities in Canada and Ukraine might also develop a system of distance education to allow greater access for more students to participate and save students some of the costs of travel, learning materials and housing. Certainly the technical capacity to create a Canada-Ukraine system of online courses exists. What would be needed is the financing and joint management of such a distance-education system. This would truly be an innovative and powerful system of international education between Canada and Ukraine.

The Canadian side included three presidents, three vice-presidents, two deans and International office representatives from post-secondary institutions in seven provinces. These were from the Universities of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Calgary, Vancouver Island, Winnipeg, Lethbridge, Regina, along with Sackville’s Mount Allison, Halifax’s St Mary’s and Edmonton’s MacEwan University. All emphasized their interest in Ukraine and the need to establish working relations through individual professors from their institutions.

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