

# PREPARING ACTIVE GLOBAL CITIZENS FOR A NEW ERA

Centennial College's 15-Year Journey to Inclusive Internationalization:  
**A CASE STUDY**



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We are particularly indebted to Ann Buller, College president for the fifteen years covered. She is a leader with a passion for the mission of colleges, a deep sense of justice and a strong commitment to providing educational opportunities for all, regardless of their origins or economic backgrounds. Having honed her values and leadership skills in an immigrant working-class family from Scotland and then in various management roles within Centennial College and Nova Scotia Community College, she returned to Centennial as its new President and CEO in June 2004 and led its journey to greater inclusion and more balanced internationalization until September of 2019 when she retired.

As we were finalizing the case study the COVID-19 pandemic broke out and disturbed all aspects of our lives. During the pandemic, we witnessed unprecedented mobilization of young people in protest of systemic racism in the USA, in Canada and around the world. We believe that Centennial College's story of transformation to a more inclusive institution that seeks to develop active global citizens is more relevant and compelling than ever and so, we conclude the case with lessons and initial reflections from this journey that could be useful for post-secondary institutions in Canada and abroad in this new era.

Our intention in writing this case was to foster learning at Centennial, within the college and polytechnic community more broadly, as well as internationally. We would greatly appreciate your reactions and contributions to the debate on these critical issues. You can do so by writing us at [pfbrennan52@gmail.com](mailto:pfbrennan52@gmail.com) or at [staschereau@gmail.com](mailto:staschereau@gmail.com).

# INTRODUCTION

## Why tell this story?

This case documents the 15 year journey of transformation of Centennial College from a near bankrupt college serving the poorer regions of Toronto, to an international and inclusive institution preparing all its learners to become global professionals, global entrepreneurs, and global citizens able to transform the uncertain world of tomorrow.

Located in the Scarborough part of Toronto, Centennial College serves a surrounding population that is one of the most diverse, under-served and high-risk of the Greater Toronto Area<sup>1</sup>. In 2001, Scarborough had 21 neighborhoods classified as having high levels of poverty (twice the national average) and 5 with extremely high levels of poverty (three times the national average). The population is also remarkably diverse: by 2011, 59.3% of the population was first generation immigrants and 25.6% second generation.

In 2003, Centennial College had a bad reputation, declining enrollment, increasing debt and employees disengaged from the mission and the vision of the institution. There was an urgent need to figure out how to increase enrollment and improve the College's reputation while respecting and honoring the community and students that it served. The leadership chose to make diversity an asset in a global world, and to give all learners the skills, opportunities, and confidence to venture into that world and make a difference.

Several academics around the world have questioned whether efforts at internationalization around the world are still only benefitting a new elite of well-off students who have the means to study abroad. They have been calling for a more comprehensive and inclusive internationalization in post-secondary institutions that truly benefits all learners. Three of its best known and respected analysts and practitioners, Elspeth Jones, Betty Leask, and Hans de Wit, recently concluded that: *"We are still far away from any form of internationalization that is inclusive and accessible rather than elitist and exclusive"*<sup>2</sup>

As the serious problems in Australia of a few years ago<sup>3</sup> and more recent debates in Canada illustrate, there is also a dangerous tendency for some to focus only on bringing in more and more well-paying international students as the only real objective of internationalization. All other aspects of internationalization are put aside, and too little attention is paid to improving the quality of the learning and living for all students, including the Canadian ones.

Examining how a higher education institution managed to implement more inclusive and comprehensive internationalization with a less well-off student population is therefore well worth exploring. This is especially critical as today's students are moving into a global context where some governments question the value of multilateral collaboration and where populations feel disempowered and left behind by globalization. It is a context where some leaders propose closing borders to immigrants and refugees and invoke fear of others who are different to justify racist and authoritarian approaches to governance. This is compounded by the huge uncertainties linked to the impacts of the Coronavirus on all aspects of our lives, including the issues of employability, social justice, and international collaboration.

This is a story about managing the complexities of leading transformational change in a post-secondary institution and balancing the inherent tensions in the process. These tensions include:

- Taking steps to ensure greater access to quality education for all students regardless of background while also needing to generate much needed revenue;
- Shaping a culture where student learning can be enriched because of diversity whilst addressing faculty concerns about how to manage such diverse classrooms;
- Strengthening the College’s own institutional values while building institutional partnerships in countries that hold different values.

Exploring these tensions and occasional setbacks will hopefully allow other institutions to learn from both the challenges and creative solutions along Centennial’s journey and inspire them to develop their own innovative solutions. It will also serve as a legacy document for new staff and students arriving at Centennial who do not know about this fascinating journey.

This case study is not about documenting all that the college has done in inclusive internationalization and global citizenship. A reflective piece, its main purpose is to capture lessons from the journey to inform future thinking and practice on inclusive internationalization at home and abroad. Its primary audience are Centennial College’s Board members and leadership team, as well as Boards, Presidents and Heads of International at other institutions looking for insights on moving forward towards a more inclusive internationalization. It could also serve as a teaching tool in post-secondary leadership development programs, where there are few case studies anchored in the Canadian context.<sup>4</sup>

## The study is structured in four sections:

**SECTION 1** Provides a conceptual framework for inclusive internationalization.

**SECTION 2** Tells the story of the fifteen-year journey in three phases: 1. establishing a foundation; 2. implementing and institutionalizing a new vision and culture; and 3. managing growth, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Innovations in internationalization are reviewed at the end of each sub-section of the study.

**SECTION 3** Reviews some of the transformational results at the institutional and individual levels at Centennial College, illustrated by testimonials.

**SECTION 4** Summarizes the lessons learned and implications for practice across the college system, and their continued relevance in the evolving context of a pandemic with all its serious impacts.

<sup>1</sup> United Way of Greater Toronto and the Canadian Council on Social Development (2004). *Poverty by Postal Code: The Geography of Neighborhood Poverty (1981-2001)*.

<sup>2</sup> [University World News](https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20181205093157690), December 07, 2018 editorial entitled: “Towards inclusive intercultural learning for all” and part of a call for submissions from around the globe on this topic. Elspeth Jones is British; Betty Leask is Australian; and Hans de Wit is Dutch, now working in the USA. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20181205093157690>

<sup>3</sup> In the rush to bring in more and more international students a series of fraudulent institutions and programs emerged around 2015, were exposed eventually and led to a drastic drop of numbers of students going to Australia to study for a few years.

<sup>4</sup> Some readers may not be familiar with the college system in Canada or in the province of Ontario. The province has a network of 24 publicly funded colleges serving all regions of the province. It is distinct from the network of publicly funded universities and has a mandate of preparing learners for the job opportunities that exist in the province using a variety of program offerings: from one-year certificates, to two- or three-year diplomas and more recently to four-year bachelor’s degrees that are the equal of university ones, except that they are usually more specialized and applied. Quality control is ensured by the provincial ministry of Colleges and Universities. Colleges also have a mandate of undertaking applied research in support of and in close collaboration with surrounding companies and organizations, engaging their students in any such endeavors. For more information on the Ontario College system please go to the Colleges Ontario website at: <https://www.collegesontario.org/en>

# 1

## A Conceptual Framework for Inclusive Internationalization

The earliest universally accepted definition of internationalization came from Dr. Jane Knight of the Ontario Institute for Studies on Education at the University of Toronto. She stated that the core objective of internationalization was:

*To systematically transform our institutional strategic plan, culture, programs and services to reflect the global, international and multicultural dimensions of our world.<sup>5</sup>*

This definition had the immense value of focusing on the systematic process of institutional transformation required to internationalize higher education. It went beyond mobility of students to focus on all the core elements of an institution such as its vision, mission, culture, programs, and services. It also expanded the relevant dimensions from global and international to include multicultural as well.

Knight and other authors later expanded the definition, arguing that internationalization had to be “comprehensive” and “inclusive” to go beyond simply allowing a minority of students to travel abroad to study.<sup>6</sup> They reframed Internationalization not as an end in itself, but rather as means to achieve other learning objectives and societal goals. This was a critical clarification in an age when increasingly important revenues from international students tended to dominate the discussions in the halls of many institutions and became the de-facto objective of internationalization.

Paul Brennan (2015) adapted the objective of internationalization to the specific realities of the colleges and institutes of Canada by proposing that it was to: “*Prepare our learners to become globally qualified professionals, global entrepreneurs and active global citizens*”<sup>7</sup> This definition resonated well with college and polytechnic leadership and staff, as their mission is to prepare learners for employment, entrepreneurship and applied research serving their surrounding communities. Building on exchanges with colleges, institutes and polytechnics across Canada, the framework in Figure 1 below was developed to capture the various dimensions of comprehensive and inclusive internationalization.

This framework places the improvement of student learning at the center of internationalization. Making explicit this core mission of educational institutions may seem self-evident. In practice, where this is not made explicit, the immediate objectives of each activity tend to take over as the basis for making important decisions. Notably with the recruitment of international students the motivator can easily become increasing their numbers and revenue, without sufficient attention paid to maintaining the quality of the educational experience offered to international students and domestic learners alike.

<sup>5</sup> See Dr Jane Knight’s numerous articles on the evolving definition of internationalization from *Internationalization: Elements and Checkpoints*, by CBIE, Research Papers, no 7 in 1994, to *Internationalization Remodeled: Definitions, Rationales and Approaches* in the *Journal for Studies in International Education*, Vol 8, No 1, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Please see Knight, De Wit or Hudzik on this evolution, as well as the work of the International Association of Universities.

<sup>7</sup> Brennan was then Vice-President, International Partnerships, at Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan), the national association for Canada’s 135 public colleges, Cégeps, institutes and polytechnics (see [www.collegespolytechnics.ca](http://www.collegespolytechnics.ca))



Internationalization of learning is particularly important in a context of increased diversity at home and limited opportunities for travel for most learners. Experts therefore proposed the concept of **Internationalization at Home** as the new priority. It was defined as: “...the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments<sup>9</sup>. The influential European Association for International Education proceeded to propose some key features for this new approach, as summarized in the box below.

<sup>8</sup>Brennan, 2017

<sup>9</sup>Beelen & Jones, 2015

## 1

**Integrates global perspectives in programs and in learning outcomes:**

Constitutes an effective means of actively including diverse student cohorts – both internationally mobile incoming students and local students from a variety of backgrounds – into teaching and learning processes.

## 2

**Moves beyond electives or specialized programs:**

Elements of internationalization are integrated systematically into the compulsory curriculum.

## 3

**Is supported by informal (co-)curriculum activities across the institution:**

More informal activities, such as intercultural communication workshops, buddy programs, volunteer learning activities and/or cultural programs.

## 4

**Makes purposeful use of cultural diversity in the classroom for inclusive learning, teaching and assessment practice:**

Includes finding ways of integrating experiences and knowledge of both internationally mobile students and local students from diverse backgrounds.

## 5

**Creates opportunities for student engagement with ‘cultural others’ in local society:**

Motivates students to seek ‘the intercultural’ as well as ‘the international’, and to acknowledge effects of globalization, migration, and cultural diversity on their doorstep e.g. community research projects, service learning, excursions, or class visits by community members.

## 6

**Involves all staff, not only academics and international officers:**

Academics take ownership, play a crucial role and are supported by from colleagues across the university – including international officers, educational developers, quality assurance officers and faculty administrators.

## 7

**Can include virtual mobility through online working with partner universities:**

Virtual guest lecturers, collaborations, shared teaching materials expand perspectives in classroom discussions and sensitize students to other forms of knowledge production and modes of conducting scientific research. Students gain access to knowledge and material not available on their home campus or, in more collaborative formats, enhance their communicative and social skills.

## 8

**Fosters purposeful engagement with international students:**

In formal and informal learning settings, teaching activities and assignments are designed to stimulate exchange and collaboration among students from diverse backgrounds, whether ‘domestic’ or international. Successful internationalization at home does not depend on the presence of international students.

The global Coronavirus pandemic impacts all aspects of life, including on the internationalization of higher education institutions. De Wit (2020) argues that the business model of internationalization is falling apart. Despite the difficulties, this crisis offers an opportunity to refocus on a more comprehensive and inclusive internationalization that contributes to preparing learners to contribute to an increasingly complex yet even more interconnected and unequal world than before.<sup>10</sup>

The interesting issue to explore in the Centennial journey is how it attempted to combine being the most successful college in terms of numbers of international students it attracted to Toronto, with a very proactive strategy to implement a more comprehensive and inclusive internationalization. As in many endeavors, finding the right balance between educational values (yin) and revenue generation (yang) required a special kind of values-based, entrepreneurial, and inclusive leadership.

<sup>10</sup>Hans de Wit’s article in University World News of May 23, 2020 entitled: “Business model of internationalisation is falling apart.”

# 2

## Centennial College's Journey to more Inclusive Internationalization

This case study explores how Centennial's approach to internationalization has contributed to improving student learning for all over a fifteen year period. It examines the institutional capabilities that contributed to Centennial College's transformation, focusing on distributed and inclusive leadership and on organizational alignment of strategies, structures, systems, staff and skills around shared values and objectives. It also explores how all of this connects to their surrounding communities.

The case draws on the phases of educational institution transformation, proposed by Michael Fullan<sup>11</sup> to capture key elements of Centennial College's journey to inclusive internationalization. For ease of reference, numbers correspond to sections in the report. Each section also identifies the innovations developed during that time period which will allow institutions who are at different phases in their journey to more easily learn from this case study.

<sup>11</sup>(1999) Michael Fullan is a worldwide authority on educational reform. A former Dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), he advises policymakers and practitioners around the world on providing leadership in education. <https://michaelfullan.ca/books/>

# PHASE 1

## 2.1

### Establishing the Foundation

(2004-2009)

- 2.1.1 Creating a sense of urgency and energy for change
- 2.1.2 Developing a shared vision and values
  - Learning for all
  - *Signature Learning Experience* – new branding for the college
  - Metrics

Statement of Diversity and Respect

- 2.1.3 Recruiting a leadership team committed to the vision and values
- 2.1.4 Formalizing vision and values in the Strategic Plan: *Book of Commitments*
- 2.1.5 Dedicated structures and resources to achieve goals
- 2.1.6 Aligning financial management systems and processes for shared accountability

# PHASE 2

## 2.2

### Institutionalizing the New Vision and Culture

(2009-2015)

- 2.2.1 Values-based, distributed, and inclusive leadership
- 2.2.2 Engaging the Board on critical issues
- 2.2.3 Removing obstacles and Empowering action: *Global Citizenship, Equity and Diversity* curriculum and training
- 2.2.4 Taking strategic orientation to another level: *A Call to Action*
- 2.2.5 Aligning organizational management processes and systems with evolving strategic orientations
- 2.2.6 Financial resources and incentives to support a culture of innovation, ongoing learning, and adaptation
- 2.2.7 Adapting HR and QA processes

# PHASE 3

## 2.3

### Managing Growth, Equity, and Inclusion

(2016-2019)

- 2.3.1 Focusing on the quality of student experience for all
- 2.3.2 International enrollment diversification and management
- 2.3.3 Restructuring for greater integration of students' services
- 2.3.4 Reinvesting financial resources
- 2.3.5 Hiring and training faculty with required new skills: inclusive internationalization tools and knowledge building

# PHASE 1

## 2.1

### **Establishing the Foundation**

(2004-2009)

## 2.1 Establishing the Foundation (2004-2009)

In 2004, Centennial College was financially bankrupt, domestic enrollment was declining and the college had among the worst reputations in the province. There was little sense of accountability across the organization, labor relations were antagonistic and employee morale was low. The College's international student population was less than 1,000, mainly from 3 countries (China, India, and Korea) and its international activities were limited to a few contract-training projects abroad. There was no internationalization strategy, nor much of a robust strategic plan to deal with the situation.<sup>12</sup>

The college needed to rapidly generate revenue and establish sound practices in financial management in order to survive. Long-term sustainability required developing a new shared vision and values, creating energy for change and powerful guiding coalitions as well as finding ways of keeping faculty and attracting more students.

### 2.1.1 Creating a sense of urgency and energy for change

In June 2004 when Ann Buller was hired as President, she was not sure they could make the next payroll. She went to the Board, to every campus and shared detailed information on the institutional and financial crisis. She was brutally honest in acknowledging just how bad it was and engaged faculty, staff and Board to identify things that needed fixing to turn the college around while also recognizing the strengths and assets they were proud of and could build upon. This created the spark that would mobilize collective energy for the long-term transformational journey towards inclusive internationalization.<sup>13</sup> Ann Buller would later say: *“Our college was transformed because we faced our demons and found our pride.”*

### 2.1.2 Developing a shared vision and values

Ann Buller introduced the general notion of developing a **Signature Learning Experience** that would become both an inspiring call to action and a marketable differentiating brand for the College. She felt it should have something to do with diversity because it would allow the college to honor the remarkably diverse community already coming to the college and to build on its strengths. There was a need however to frame it as something educationally bolder and more visionary than Canada's accepted policy of multiculturalism<sup>14</sup>. She mused that it could be something like 'global citizenship', as so many of Centennial's students were first generation immigrants. She wanted the college community to be engaged in shaping a shared vision and core beliefs to drive those choices and decisions and proceeded to create three committees to do so.

Opinion leaders from across the institution including the union presidents, executives, faculty, and students were invited to join three sub-committees of the **President's Task Force on Learning**:

**A. Learning for all:** The President's feeling was that *“we needed to get back to the classroom... remember we are a college, ... and remember what our students feel like”*. This sub-committee's task was to look at what professional development and training would look like so that all staff were re-connecting to learning for the benefit of all its students.

<sup>12</sup> According to all the leadership that was present at the time that we interviewed.

<sup>13</sup> See John Kotter's excellent work on the 8 steps to achieve lasting change, including a first step of Creating a Sense of Urgency by being very honest about existential challenges and requesting support from all to remedy.

<sup>14</sup> “The preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians.” is at the core of the definition of “multiculturalism” that governs Canada. See the [canadianencyclopedia.ca](http://canadianencyclopedia.ca) for the history and definitions.

<sup>15</sup> O'Banion, Terry (1997). *A Learning College for the 21st Century*. Phoenix, Arizona: American Council on Education and Onyx Press series on Higher Education. O'Banion presented an argument for the community college, with its strong penchant for innovation and risk-taking, as the ideal forum for creating a new learning paradigm - 'the learning college,' which was designed to help students make passionate connections to learning.

**B. The Signature Learning Experience:** This sub-committee’s task was to identify what the College’s Signature Learning Experience would mean and look like going forward. This group was co-chaired by the VP Academic and the President of the Faculty Union. Ann Buller met with the President of the Faculty Union, the President of the Support Staff Union, and the Student Association Leadership on the same day to engage them in the process. There was push back on the selection of the President of the Faculty Union who had described herself as ‘*a bully, and I love it*’. But she had also declared herself to be pro human rights and diversity, so there was potential common ground to build upon, which Ann was counting on.

**C. Looking at metrics:** This group was tasked with identifying “*what mattered to us*” and how to measure it. Each metric had to be grounded in research. The college community also had to be comfortable with the metrics, regardless of what metrics had to be sent to government to meet their official accountability obligations.

The learning-centered college model<sup>15</sup> out of the United States, with its emphasis on colleges needing to focus on learners instead of the staff and institution and needing to provide relevant learning in accessible ways, helped to stimulate new thinking in the **Learning for all** group. For example, lifelong learning was seen as a right and one that needed to be implemented pro-actively within the college itself.

Ann raised **Global Citizenship** as one option for the new **Signature Learning Experience** defining the college. The committee felt that it could indeed give a more pro-active and engaging perspective to their students. Rather than limiting themselves to the multicultural, multilingual reality they possessed, what if students were given the means to transform their existing reality into an asset for job-seeking and global engagement? Employers would need more employees with many languages, cross-cultural knowledge, skills, and experiences. The planet would need more citizens who felt confident to take on the growing global challenges of inequity, environmental degradation, and democratization if it was to survive.

Gradually, the discussion shifted from diversity to inclusion and equity. What had been seen by some as the ‘unfortunate context’ that Centennial found itself in could become an asset to build upon and promote as of great value to the world and to their own students. Ann would often say, “*I would not want to be viewed as ‘diverse’ or ‘multicultural’, but rather be included, valued and given the same opportunities as all others.*” Several committee members became quite excited about the potential for this vision, but many had difficulty figuring out what “Global Citizenship and Equity” would mean concretely in the college. In order to foster shared understanding, members of the sub-committee co-created a **Statement of Diversity** (see Box below). It became a collective statement of Centennial’s core values and commitments, supported by metrics and practices to support them and to monitor progress.

### Statement of Diversity – Guiding principles and Commitments

Centennial College and its Board of Governors value and embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion as fundamental to our mission to educate our students for career success within a context of global citizenship and social justice. We commit to:

1. A safe, secure, inclusive and accessible environment for learning, teaching and working;
2. Curriculum and instruction that reflects diversity and promotes equity and inclusion;
3. Equitable and accessible opportunities for student success;
4. Building knowledge and evaluating effectiveness;
5. HR management systems, policies and practices that reflect diversity and promote equity and inclusion;
6. Training and staff development, accessible and inclusive college communications;
7. Strategic engagement with diverse communities;
8. Relationships and partnerships that align with our mission, vision and values;
9. Committing financial and human resources to promote diversity, equity and inclusion.

### 2.1.3 Recruiting a leadership team committed to the College's vision and values

A special kind of leadership was required to manage the financial crisis and to establish a solid foundation for long-term sustainability. The recently arrived VP Finance and CFO, Brad Chapman, came with 30 years' experience in financial and organizational renewal in the private sector (including global companies), a capacity to assess risks based on solid analysis and an ability to take bold ideas and to bring them to life. The leadership team was further strengthened by recruiting senior managers with proven track records, international experience, and skills: An International Education Manager from another college (2007); an HR and OD expert from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (2008), and a Student Services Manager with international student services experience. Beyond expertise and experience in their fields, key criteria for hiring included both a proven commitment to inclusion and equity and a business mindset.

This fusion of the values-based leadership focus with a business mindset would mark Centennial for the future. These two approaches are often seen as opposites and rarely reside in the same person or leader. The financial reality at Centennial required a more business-like approach to implement a more inclusive and values-based set of strategic objectives. Hiring different people in the executive with a combination of those various skills was one way of doing so, but the two aspects of the reality needed to be integrated into a balanced approach for this to succeed. The new senior executive team worked on combining those aspects into creative solutions, eschewing the tyranny of the 'either-or' for the wisdom of the 'both-and'.

To come up with a both-and solution to a challenging problem was not easy. For example, a Middle Eastern country suddenly required the college to set up a Limited Liability Corporation to continue running a small GM contract there and was going to impose hefty financial penalties if the college did not comply. After a long debate, the leadership team decided to set up the Corporation to complete the contract and avoid penalties. It also simultaneously decided to withdraw from the country and contract as soon as possible because of unease with some of the values-based issues around the project.

### 2.1.4 Formalizing the vision and values in the College's Strategic Plan

The first strategic document formalizing the values and strategic directions of the College (2009) was entitled the Book of Commitments. The word 'commitment' was chosen, as Ann Buller would explain, "because you live up to commitments, because it is a promise". Instead of listing 30-40 things to do, the College picked 5 or 6 of the most significant things to accomplish in the plan. Highlighting that "as the world becomes smaller, our role in it and the role of our students must become larger", the Book of Commitments constituted a pledge to become an internationally recognized leader in education that places a strong emphasis on global citizenship, social justice, and equity. It committed the college to internationalize the curriculum and to strengthen and build capacity of staff to deliver on the promise made to all students. It succeeded in summarizing what they had agreed to in a useful manner:

*The way we created it was very inclusive, engaging the whole community. Because of its small size, and that it wasn't just a to do list but had interesting language on commitments, people actually carried the booklet around. I would be in a meeting and someone would say... 'I was just looking at the Book of Commitments and...'. They were using it!*

**Ann Buller**

### 2.1.5 Establishing structures to achieve strategic internationalization goals

At this stage of its internationalization journey, the focus was on recruiting more international students, setting up foundational structures and creating the bases for integrating global citizenship into the curriculum. Growing recruitment of international students offered a potential for immediate financial impact and there was physical capacity on campus to take on 2000-3000 more international students. The College set up offices in India and in China to make it happen in two of the largest markets.

The college aligned its structures to its strategic goals and invested significant resources in building the capacity of three dedicated structures that were expected to build relationships with and support academic Schools to achieve collective goals, with a focus on building faculty and staff capacities:

- ✓ The **International Education Division**, reporting to the VP Finance and Business Development, was responsible for recruitment of international students and services, projects, contract training and partnerships abroad. Staff in the International Education division were re-organized into regional teams to cover the major parts of the world. The College added staff in offices abroad and built the network and supports to kickstart growth.

The Division built relationships with deans to identify best programs to market abroad, ensuring brand recognition as a foundation for attracting more students. It also provided counsellors to meet specific needs of international students e.g., information and career guidance in choosing and applying for their program, orientation to life in Canada and to the College, information on employment regulations and assistance with work permit applications, health insurance, liaison and assistance with Immigration Canada, recreational and cultural activities, and job search assistance.

- ✓ The **Centre for Organizational Learning and Teaching (COLT)**. The notion of a Learning-Centered College and Global Citizenship framework set the stage for the oft-repeated phrase that “we are all learners” and made it part of the culture. COLT was intentionally not framed as a center for faculty development, but as a center for organizational learning and teaching that was open to all staff including deans, full time and part time faculty and administrative staff. Concepts such as global citizenship, diversity and equity were to be made meaningful and concrete in formalized processes e.g., formal orientations, learning outcomes tied to yearly assessments and program reviews.
- ✓ The **Centre for Global Citizenship Education and Inclusion (CGCEI)**. The President wanted to give more profile to the goals of global citizenship, creating an *Institute for Global Citizenship* (it evolved into the CGCEI). In 2008, the Centre took on the development of six Global Citizenship and Equity (GCE) learning outcomes. A bit later the CGCEI worked collaboratively with students, staff, and faculty across each academic program to effectively integrate the GCE outcomes into the curriculum. The Centre also became a hub for advancing knowledge on global citizenship education and inclusion.

### 2.1.6 Aligning financial management systems and processes for shared accountability

Established by the CFO/VP Business Development, an **Earned Revenue-based Budget Planning Model** made all academic schools and service areas responsible for managing their enrollment, expenses as well as revenues and expected contributions to the core. Introduction of financial controls, financial metrics and data-driven management, and good financial planning practices were made mandatory. For example, making it mandatory to prepare a business case to justify any investment or request for funding set the foundation for a culture of financial discipline and shared accountability for all college activities.

## 2.1.7 Innovations in Internationalization, Equity and Diversity – Phase 1

- ✓ The **Signature Learning Experience (SLE)**, the new brand for Centennial, was initially launched in 2006 with a focus on developing global citizenship and equity values and competencies for all domestic students. There were four main components to that SLE, as described in the box below:

### Centennial College's Signature Learning Experience components

**Gen Ed 500** – a mandatory applied general education course called **Global Citizenship, From Social Analysis to Social Action**. It explores the nature of diversity and discrimination in our society and builds global citizenship and equity competencies in every student. It also teaches that each of us has a special responsibility to give back to society, locally or globally.

#### **Embedding/integrating six GCE learning outcomes in the curriculum:**

1) empathy and global citizenship; 2) intercultural intelligence, 3) personal and social responsibility, 4) strategic communication, 5) recognize diverse perspectives, 6) global mindset and self-awareness.

**GCE Student Portfolio** requires students to develop global citizenship and equity knowledge, skills and abilities as it relates to sustainability of resources, individual and community identities, critical social analysis, and enhanced personal and social responsibility. Students also have the option of developing a Global Skills Electronic Portfolio (GSeP).

**Faculty and Staff training:** Professional development opportunities including *Global Citizenship and Equity Learning Experiences (GCELEs)*. Funded service-learning opportunities in diverse local and global communities; mentoring and coaching; and support for a new *Center for Global Citizenship and Equity* and materials such as the **GCE Curriculum Integration Faculty Manual**.

Most of these actions were truly innovative in 2006 with few colleges in Canada and around the world having gone so far in realizing such a merger of equity, inclusivity, and internationalization objectives, and making them happen with such new types of structures and supports.

Global citizenship later became part of the branding for Centennial College when recruiting abroad, and international students studying at the college began benefitting from global citizenship learning experiences. Global learning and citizenship were placed at the center of their commitment to all students, including the international ones. Challenges this posed are examined later in the case.

- ✓ **The Geographic International Student Recruitment Business Model.** At that point in time, this business model was innovative in the college system. Following restructuring into specialized regional teams, staff did in-depth market analysis of the potential in every priority country, using a variety of indicators. These included: number of student study permits, visa approval rates, existing strategic partners including any twin provinces and twin cities, the Canadian government's global marketing countries of focus, population purchasing power parity (PPP), GDP, demographic profiles and tendencies, major program interests and matches to Centennial offerings, financial capacity for students to study abroad, and political and economic stability. Countries were categorized into developed, developing and emerging markets, and strategies were adapted to each category.

Country-specific marketing and recruitment strategies were developed to enter, maintain, or grow markets as intelligence was gathered in the region. Recruitment offices were established in target markets to offer services in their time zones, with language capacity to serve the applicants, parents, and agents in their language. The geographic model also helped to develop in-depth knowledge of potential educational partners that would serve to grow various dimensions of international such as two-way institutional partnerships and contract training. A more scientific approach to recruitment led Centennial to become a leader in terms of absolute numbers of students, as well as in the integration and support for those students.

# PHASE 2

## 2.2

### **Institutionalizing the New Vision and Culture**

(2009-2015)

## 2.2 Institutionalizing the New Vision and Culture (2009-2015)

During this phase, international student recruitment grew fivefold at Centennial, from 1,195 in 2008 to 6,116 in 2015. The context during this period was no doubt favorable with the new Student Partners Program (SPP) mechanism for obtaining a visa coming into force<sup>16</sup>, the Canadian Government making it easier for graduating international students to stay on in Canada to work for a few years and then being able to apply for landed immigrant status. Centennial was most successful in taking advantage of these favorable conditions.

A rapid increase created new realities and tensions to deal with. As Canadian colleges in most provinces<sup>17</sup> could now offer applied degrees and one-year post-graduate certificates for students with a first college diploma or university degree, unemployed university graduates from abroad began to apply for such rather unique offerings. Some post-graduate certificate programs at Centennial ended up with 90% international students, and some with large proportions from a single country, mostly India.

There was a growing sense among faculty that issues of cross-cultural communication and differing study habits, as well as challenges of integrating larger numbers of international students with domestic ones, were affecting the quality of the domestic students' experience, and making it much harder to teach truly diverse classes. There was increasing tension between growing international numbers and ensuring the quality of learning for all students, the core objective.

The overall objectives of inclusive internationalization had been agreed to but implementing the vision presented new kinds of problems and some resistance. As few domestic students were going abroad for study or work due to financial or personal considerations, internationalization appeared to many in the college to be a one-way process. Some departments were also questioning the relevance of the new mandatory GenEd 500 course on Global Citizenship. Faculty resistance grew with concerns about what internationalization from an equity and inclusion perspective was about and why it was compulsory at all rather than optional.

### 2.2.1 Values-based, distributed, and inclusive leadership

The Centennial leadership team called upon all students and employees to engage in dialogue on these troubling issues to increase engagement and find innovative solutions:

*We wanted to institutionalize the value that leadership is part of everyone's responsibility. We needed to be solutions focused – giving people permission to lead, challenging, and supporting them.*

**Ann Buller**

A broad and deep leadership team with complementary capabilities and shared values was essential to address issues along the journey. Administrative and School leaders were empowered to act as drivers of change. The clear expectation was that they would take responsibility, work collaboratively to solve problems, and make decisions aligned with the core vision and values of the College.

<sup>16</sup> Student Partners Program (SPP) was an innovative administrative framework designed to streamline the visa application process for international students applying to Canadian colleges from India and China. The framework, put in place in 2019, was based on close cooperation between Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan), Scotia Bank and participating institutions.

<sup>17</sup> For the non-Canadian reader, it should be noted that education is a provincial/territorial jurisdiction in Canada so what is offered in a college will vary by province or territory.

The College's President took every opportunity to communicate institutional values and call upon the community to voice their concerns and possible solutions. They also fostered evidence-based decision-making to deal with the inevitable difficulties.

*To achieve a really internationalized institution, there must be a culture where we can have difficult conversations about issues that matter ... Challenging the status quo is about being fearless about surfacing the nuances and complexities of issues in ways that are not always easy but that lead to greater awareness and action.*

**Dr. Marilyn Herie, VP Academic and Chief Learning Officer**

College leadership recognized that for internationalization to be implemented and institutionalized as part of the college culture required faculty and students' buy-in above all. Management reached out to faculty and student union leadership, inviting them to raise their members' concerns and engage in ongoing dialogue to find ways of addressing them in a productive way.

*We have issues... I still get into heated yelling matches with management, but that is my job. We work on things together, they include us, they tell us in advance where problems are going down so we can work together. When international took off, faculty were concerned about workload – we gained faculty jobs. When faculty were concerned about maintaining rigor, we went to the VP academic - they provided some PD at all Schools about international students and gave hints on how to do things.*

**President of the Faculty Union (2018)**

*We get to sit on committees and College Council to deal with college policies. We have monthly meetings with the VP of Students' Services to discuss any emerging issues that have a College Students' Association connection. An MOU signed with the college outlines responsibilities of both parties – formalizing what we already do. We have been working together recently on improving the international student health plan for example.*

**President of the Students Association (2018)**

## 2.2.2 Engaging the Board on critical issues

The ultimate leadership of the college, its Board of Governors<sup>18</sup>, had to be involved. The College worked on attracting Board members with diverse backgrounds, reflecting their surrounding community. Board members came to understand and support the commitment to inclusion, social justice, and global citizenship. This led to discussions on the following issues:

- Do we have the infrastructure and capabilities to absorb international students, to bring them into the fold and to support them?
- Are we making sure we send faculty and students to other countries, creating ways for them to understand and immerse themselves in cultures, practices, and social norms of the country from which students they are going to host come from?
- Should we be working in countries where there is little chance that we can impact social change?
- Do we have the capacity to oversee local staff in 14 different countries?
- What levels of risk are involved in international activities and what is the college doing to manage the various aspects of those risks?

– **From Board and Executive member interviews**

<sup>18</sup>In Canada, a Board's role is to oversee the President, take strategic decisions, and manage risks.

Part of the Board's key roles was risk management of international activities. Centennial hired Deloitte to support the VPs for HR and Finance/Business Development to develop a **Risk Registry/Dashboard** that would allow them to monitor the college's international activities at a glance. Initially sixteen risks and suggested mitigation strategies were identified. These were reduced to six to eight major risks that were most concerning, even after mitigation strategies. At any time, Board members and the Executive could click on the Dashboard and see the explanation of each risk and its importance, and what the College was doing to address it. In general, the Board had no tolerance for risk on the quality of students' experience but were reassured with more appetite for risk when it came to international partnerships.

The President and Executive leadership team engaged the Board at every stage of the journey, aimed to be fully transparent and to build a strong level of mutual trust. The President showed confidence in her team by allowing them to have direct conversations with Board members in sub-committees to address key issues.

Recognizing the importance of experiential learning in guiding strategic decision making, College leadership regularly invited students and faculty to make presentations at Board meetings on their international learning experiences and even included interested Board members in some overseas partnership development missions.

### 2.2.3 Removing obstacles and empowering action

Integration of global citizenship in the curriculum happened in stages over four years. Initially, it meant different things to different people. It is only when the college started mapping **Global Citizenship and Equity (GCE)** learning outcomes to specific programs and courses that it started to make sense for people. That GCE learning outcomes were like many of the Essential Employability skills<sup>19</sup> that graduates needed to obtain many of the new jobs available helped. The Conference Board of Canada (business) and Human Resource Development Canada (government) had both researched and confirmed the importance of these learning outcomes, particularly in a very multicultural and trade dependent Canada.

*We had to do so much at the beginning re: what global citizenship and equity is, how you could integrate it in the curriculum, the mechanics of it. Developing learning outcomes was a very slow process... a lot of meetings with the schools, sharing ideas, a lot of trial and error.*

**Yasmin Razack, Director, Centre for Global Citizenship Education and Inclusion**

Some schools had no difficulties integrating Global Citizenship and Equity competencies into their programs, especially when their discipline lent itself to a global perspective (business and tourism for example) and/or when the deans or faculty had international work experience, origins or were part of global networks. But some departments resisted, as would be expected. A faculty member riled up students with the assertion that "We are preparing you to be technologists; we don't need this soft stuff", to a point where students said that they would not take the course.

College leadership suggested inviting HR managers from some of the major firms employing their graduates to class to debate the issue. Four of them came to the college and informed students that:

We are looking for the 'soft skills' more and more when we hire. If you have these, including diversity and teamwork skills and some international experience, that will put you at the top of our list.

This helped convince students, and eventually faculty, that it made sense to take the course.

Ironically, the Faculty of General Education resisted to introduction of the mandatory GenEd 500 course in the beginning. This new course would have to displace another course and students would have one less option to choose from. It was hard for some faculty to give up courses they had created and taught for 20 years. Despite extensive exchanges positioning GenEd as a liberal arts studies course, some faculty remained entrenched in their positions. The Vice-President Academic eventually reaffirmed the College's decision to go forward based on their students' needs. Only those who wanted to teach it would do so, which softened the decision. And consultation does have its limits: *"Once all have been consulted fully and a decision has been made, then all are expected to implement it"*, explained Ann Buller.

Ultimately, College leadership understood that everyone is on a continuum: if expectations were too high, lots of people would be leaving or be fired. Taking people where they were, they found ways to go forward with those that were ready, showed in practice how it could work well, and worked harder on those that were not ready. The leadership also recognized that it had to listen and acknowledge the real challenges faced by faculty in the classroom, and to take concrete actions to address the obstacles to student success.

For example, recognizing the ongoing challenge of inadequate English language levels of many international students in the classroom, Centennial established a Foundation semester or year for students who scored low on an internal English test. This required eight hours of English per week, one GenED course split over two semesters, and 3-4 courses related to the subject area they applied to in the first semester. Taking this route, a student could end up with an extra semester or more to their program, adding to their cost, but student success was much higher. At the end of the day, students greatly increased their chances of success and of getting a job afterwards, and faculty felt that administration had listened to them.

#### 2.2.4 Taking strategic orientations to another level: A Call to Action

The Second **Book of Commitments** (June 2013) expanded the College's commitment to developing global citizenship, social justice, and equity competencies by including a more detailed list of competencies deemed essential for a global world. These included digital cultural competencies, globalization perspectives and respect for Aboriginal/Indigenous peoples; digital literacy; entrepreneurship; personal resiliency, adaptation, negotiation; reflective practice, empathy, civility, and social responsibility.

This second strategic document affirmed the belief that:

The changing world demands a new set of essential employability skills, and the college can, and must do more than embedding the skills in curriculum... the college can work at a system scale to define, deliver, and measure the new essential skills for everyone who is part of the community: students, employees, peers and community partners.

Expanding the reach to the external community and employer partners was another big step forward in the journey, affirming that this is not only about their students but about the broader community as well.

Recognizing that language matters to create meaning and there needed to be a call to action to help implement the vision, the President concluded her foreword to the Strategic Plan by stating that: *"A commitment, after all, is so much more than a belief. It is a promise to act on that belief"*.

<sup>19</sup> Please see some of these skills outlined at: <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/edu/employability-skills.aspx> or at <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/essential-skills/definitions.html>

## 2.2.5 Aligning institutional systems and processes with evolving strategic orientations

The new **Academic Plan 2013-2020, Leading through Learning** was aligned to the Commitments of the College's strategic plan in tangible ways. Developed through extensive consultation, the Plan reaffirmed the college's academic promise to its stakeholders and spelled out actions and means to deliver on nine priorities.

For example, one of the means for providing pathways to enriched learning and employment for all learners was through domestic and international academic partnerships; another via experiential and work-integrated learning including opportunities for global mobility for learning; as well as work and scholarship and global service-learning opportunities. The academic plan also called for action on incorporating technology more into curriculum and pedagogy, to create online communities of learning and global networks. Priority 6 focused on expanding the reach of such Global Connections by:

Supporting international learning through Global Citizenship and Equity Learning Experiences (GCELEs), opportunities to study abroad, internships and exchanges funded through a sustainable scholarship model...and exploring new ways to embrace internationalization more comprehensively in our service and support areas.

Published in an accessible brochure, the Academic Plan provided a shared sense of direction and concrete action plan to guide academic and staff leadership in deepening and expanding more inclusive internationalization practices.

## 2.2.6 Financial resources, incentives, and risk mitigation

The revenue from international students' fees helped to financially sustain programs, to invest in hiring more faculty and staff, increase student services, build new infrastructure, and purchase equipment. The College kept reinvesting in the organization – anything that would provide longer term benefits to the college and its learners. For example, in the early stages they provided funds allowing many more underserved students to access the \$1,500. matching Government of Ontario Student Opportunity Trust Fund contribution.

Recognizing that buy-in was critical to ensuring continued support for internationalization, financial management processes had to ensure visible shared benefits.

*We set up this business model and what we also do is reallocate some of the international revenues back to the Schools - on per student basis, what the equivalent is to the domestic grant. It gives them the revenue to support their cost increases to hire new faculty, buy equipment, set up classrooms, etc. for the department. They could also apply for special initiatives and funding for innovative ideas on meeting the needs of a growing student body.*

**Brad Chapman, VP Finance and Business Development**

When the College had an unexpected jump in international students – some of those years where several hundred more showed up than expected - the College had to face faculty and student push back regarding an overflow of students in the classroom and inconvenient schedules. The leadership did a few things to address the situation. One was being honest with the community when mistakes were made and there were too many students at the College, broadcasting openly a *“Thank you for bending over backwards”* and rapidly announcing new investments where it was most needed, particularly in student and faculty support services.

To reduce the risk of being too reliant on one country for growth or having too much of a concentration from one country in specific classrooms, an **International diversification strategy** was launched around 2013. Its aim was to better manage financial risk and to foster a better experience for all students in the classroom. The college set an initial target of hosting 1/3 of its international students from India, 1/3 from China and 1/3 from the rest of the world. Investments were quickly made to open recruitment offices in other emerging countries like Turkey.

## 2.2.7 Adapting Human Resource and Quality Assurance Processes

- ✓ **Institutional values were embedded in recruitment, performance management and promotion practices and became one of the criteria for selection.** The college sought out and attracted talented managers/change agents with international and cross-cultural experience, and an entrepreneurial business mindset and skills to reinvigorate the college with new projects and approaches.

Leadership competencies were another key consideration. Every recruitment or promotion competition had a situational question about equity to assess the general fit of the applicant's approaches to the College's core values. As most of the interviewees had taught part-time at Centennial for some time, this did not generally pose an issue, but in some cases, it led to further discussions with the candidate and a conclusion that there was not enough of a match between the applicant's values and those of the college.

- ✓ **Resources were dedicated to support a culture of innovation, ongoing learning, and adaptation.** During this phase and to this day, College leadership systematically encouraged and financially supported management and staff to go to conferences and visit institutions seen as worth learning from or sharing with. Some examples include visiting NAIT Polytechnic in contract training and strategic approaches; the United States in student leadership development; Laval University in Québec re the idea of creating an Endowment Fund to support study abroad.

The College brought in external expertise where it could add value to its own internationalization efforts such as to support the development of a Risk Management framework, and to carry out an organizational review of international in light of its recent significant growth.

Management, faculty, and staff were encouraged to engage in action-research, to experiment and to pilot-test new ideas: "We do many pilot tests" says one manager. A business case had to be submitted to obtain funding. Key criteria included a systematic data-driven approach, previous consultation that clearly identifies a need, and an evaluation framework to show quality improvement on student experience.

Staff were encouraged and funded to pursue higher education in a field related to Education and/or public administration, to publish new knowledge, to contribute to and convene spaces for knowledge sharing and co-creation. One such example is the setting up of a Journal on **Global Citizenship and Equity** by Centennial, a peer-reviewed journal that encourages Centennial staff, and others, to contribute their research on this major initiative for the college<sup>20</sup>. Ann Buller modelled the expectation and fostered a culture of learning through her contributions to learning events at the College, in the pan-Canadian college network (CICan) as part of the Leadership Institutes and internationally via the World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> <http://journals.sfu.ca/jgcee/index.php/jgcee/index>

<sup>21</sup> See the WFCP Website ([wfcpc.org](http://wfcpc.org)) for more details on its role. Ann Buller was a leading faculty for the first International Leadership Institute of the WFCP.

- ✓ Beyond creating welcoming and respectful spaces for dialogue among various stakeholders, the College provided **opportunities for students and faculty who wanted to assume leadership roles** at the college and to foster social change locally and globally to develop their skills and experience. In 2011 the College created the **Leadership Passport for Students – a co-curricular distinction**<sup>22</sup>. Students did not have to disburse any fee to take part in order to ensure equitable access.
- ✓ In 2012, Centennial introduced an additional **Certificate in Inclusive Leadership Practices**<sup>23</sup> – four on-line courses delivered through the eCentennial learning portal. It examined theories, models, and practices of inclusive leadership. This reinforced the message of distributed leadership, that everyone can and should assume a leadership role and contribution wherever they are in the institution.

After the 2nd cohort of students received the Leadership distinction, some faculty said that “*it was the coolest thing we have ever seen*” and asked if they could do it as well. As part of the employee engagement and lifelong learning commitments, the leadership distinction was extended to employees in 2016.

- ✓ The **Employee Leadership Passport** involved a leadership self-assessment, two workshops on leadership skills, two elective courses out of six options, and three self-directed leadership experiences within or outside of the Centennial community, including volunteering abroad. Once all is reviewed the employee receives a Certificate of Accomplishment in Leadership.<sup>24</sup>

College management, faculty, staff, and students were also encouraged to engage in reflective practice to build resilience and were provided with tools and financial support to do so. Ann Buller would say: *We need to build resilience so that if something goes wrong, and it will, we can learn from it and move on*”. Dr Marilyn Herie, VP Academic and Chief Learning Officer, documented such practices, with other contributors, in a series of articles and guides for chairs and faculty, available to all.<sup>25</sup>

- ✓ **A Partnership and Contract Framework Document** – One of the major challenges in this period involved an international partnership. An institution closely related to high level officials and other investors in the country in question proposed to Centennial College an extraordinary vision and plan to build a unique Canadian Academic Village in the country: one huge campus with an early childhood education center, a primary school, a college, and a university. They were willing to put up the money for Centennial to bring its curriculum, organizational structure, and student services system.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.centennialcollege.ca/studenthub/get-involved/centennial-college-sloan-leadership-academy/leadershape-at-centennial/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.centennialcollege.ca/programs-courses/schools/school-of-advancement/programs/stackable-credentials/inclusive-leadership-practices-certificate/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.centennialcollege.ca/centres-institutes/teaching-excellence-and-academic-quality/academic-leadership/employee-leadership-passport-elp/>

<sup>25</sup> Wells, Sue and Herie, Marilyn. (2017) *Academic Leadership: A Reflective Practice Guide for Community College Chairs*; and Wells S., McCaie L, Barker M. and Herie M. (2018) *Faculty Leadership: A Reflective Practice Guide for Community College Faculty*

This was the first larger partnership project for a relatively new Executive team at Centennial College. It was attractive, and the College liked the possibility of an ongoing revenue stream. The project ended up requiring a substantial amount of energy and capacity to work with partners thousands of miles away. Also, at a final meeting, it became evident that partners and investors were only interested in a university level program, and that their objectives and values were not aligned with those of Centennial's. Lessons from this experience informed the approach to future international partnership initiatives by Centennial college (see box below), and key elements of a Partnership and Contract Framework Document to assess viability and alignment of potential international partnerships. They also offer a cautionary tale on the risks of going after 'shining objects' and valuable insights on elements of a rigorous approach to international partnerships in the future.

## Lessons from Experience to Inform Future International Partnerships

- Understand deeply the environment in which the College will be working.
- When working with another government, research the business, legal and financial aspects using lawyers in country who know the systems and the rules. This helps level the playing field in terms of contract language and issues to consider.
- Be sure the vision and values align. Just saying it out loud does not make it so.
- Never use Canadian Taxpayers or any of the college's own money to build a campus infrastructure. Focus on contributing intellectual capital.
- Whatever time frame you have in mind does not necessarily matter to partners.
- If at any given time in the institution, the amount of energy and institutional capacity required for the partnership is too great, consider walking away

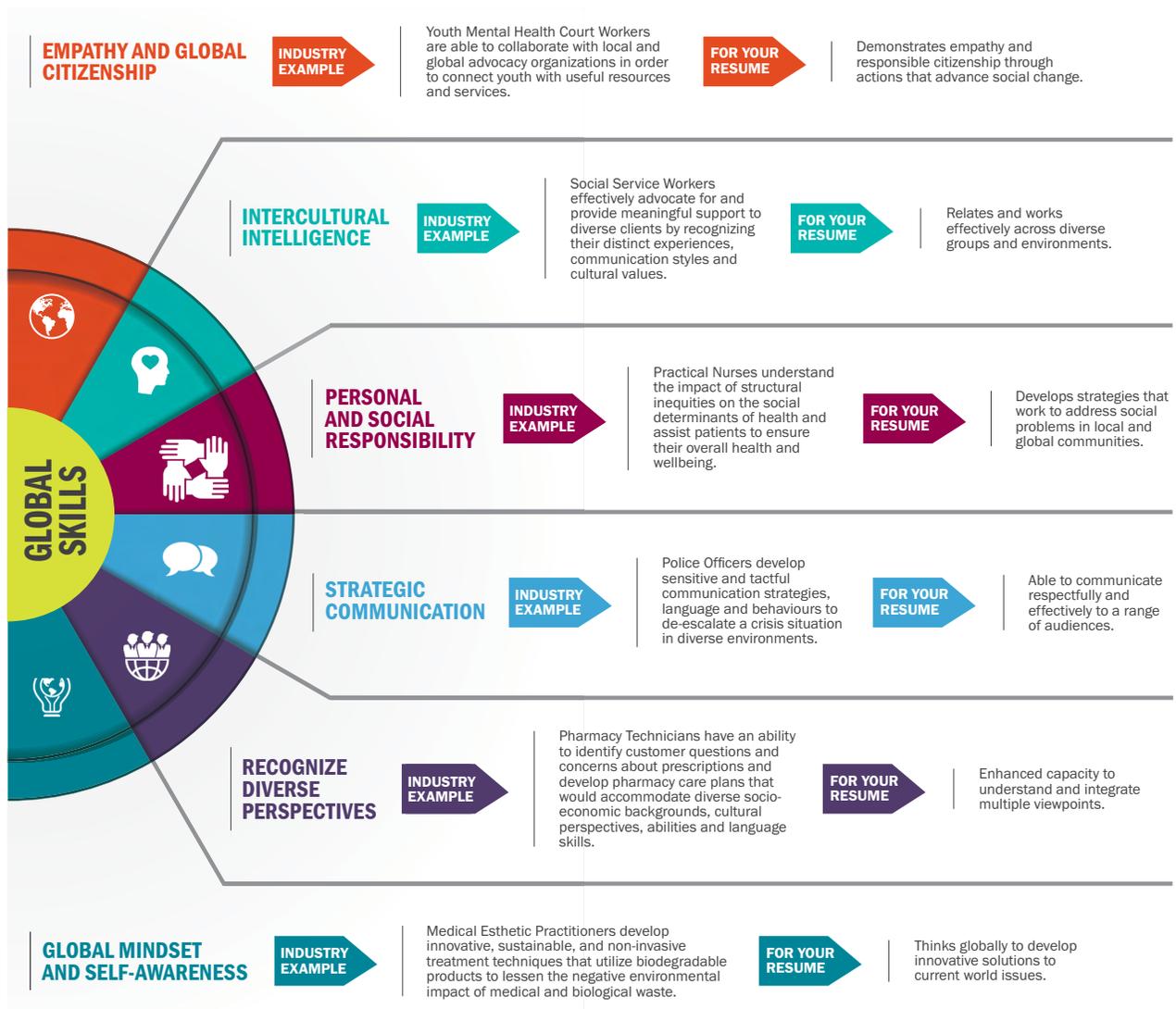
**Any future international partnerships had to be looked at through three lenses: financial, reputational, and human rights.** College leadership, Faculty and in some cases Board members traveled and contributed to assessment of viability and risks of partnerships, and of the realism of undertaking joint or articulated programs. The following is an example of one of those potential partnerships, in China:

## Example: Partnership for a 2+1 program in Automotive in China

The international office suggested that the Dean and Faculty at the School of Transportation explore a potential partner in Shenyang. The Chinese college has similar corporate partnerships and a similar profile to Centennial: three-year programs for high school graduates and 2500 automotive students. The Chinese VP in charge said in a polite way: *"If what you are looking for is numbers, it is not going to work. We want our students to succeed – and to see that they get what they are looking for. It is going to take time. It will be small at the start, but this is the only way I can see this work"*. That signaled that the college was working with a partner focused on quality and not just looking for fast revenue and numbers. Centennial worked out a 2+2 where students do two years at the Chinese institution, and bridge into the 2nd year of the motive power technician program at Centennial.

## 2.2.8 Innovations in Internationalization, Equity and Diversity – Phase 2

- ✓ **Integrating intercultural and international competencies into curriculum:** To reinforce the message on the importance of teaching and learning the new essential skills for success in a global world, the *Center for Global Citizenship and Inclusion* engaged many faculty and curriculum experts to develop a series of brochures linking GCE learning outcomes to employability:
  - **Global Citizens Get HIRED: Are you prepared for the global economy?** Sections included: Global citizenship skills I can highlight to employers; 4 ways GCE can get me a job; constructing a digital portfolio; how to get involved (grant for Social Action Fund, Global Academy, GCE workshops); articles for the Global Citizen Digest; volunteering; becoming a Global Citizen Ambassador.
  - **Global citizenship and equity skills that prepare you for career success:** 6 brochures, one for careers in each of the six Schools, highlighted the GCE Learning Outcomes, how they translate into industry specific examples, and ways of articulating these skills in students' resumes. Part of one example from the information technology programs is featured below:



The challenging issues of how to integrate internationalization in the curriculum in increasingly meaningful ways were addressed in training, coaching and materials provided by the Center for Organizational Teaching and Learning. For example, the **GCE Curriculum Integration Faculty Manual** provided a step-by-step process and templates for integration of GCE learning outcomes in programs and courses, including assignments and assessment, as well as GCE Portfolio development. GCE Learning Advisors were named to support and collaborate with faculty and students throughout the integration process and deliver presentations in the classroom at faculty request. Integration and assessment of GCE learning outcomes were also baked into orientation and into the comprehensive program quality review processes. This was critical because it stimulated action and allowed measurement of outcomes, which focused attention. Centennial invested in concrete supports rather than just talking about principles.

- ✓ **Global Citizenship and Equity Learning Experiences (GCELEs).** A new type of opportunity to make it easier for students to have relevant learning experiences abroad. These fully funded service-learning opportunities in diverse local and global communities for students and staff to develop leadership skills and contribute to positive social change in an inter-connected world. The goal of these learning experiences was transformational, increasing awareness and engagement as global citizens in local and global communities. These were always planned and implemented with local educational and NGO partners and most lasted for a few intensive weeks.

The following are a sample of some of the GCELEs organized in 2013-14 alone<sup>26</sup>:

- Water management and environmental sustainability in Costa Rica
- Empowerment of young girls in poorer minority regions of China
- Broadening access to Early Childhood Education in Ghana
- Social enterprise in the coffee supply chain in the Dominican Republic
- Indigenous rights and protecting the environment in Ecuador
- US-Mexico border issues and differences on both sides of the border around Arizona

Administrators and staff were also given opportunities to participate in GCELEs, which was quite unusual in the system. It allowed them to learn about development issues as well but also to reconnect with student needs and concerns.

*My group of students were from different cultures and quite a few were international students. How could we optimize their experience? I try to remember what I learned from them. For example, they shared that class assignments came all at the same time and caused huge stress. I am responsible to write the assessment policy and reflected on how it could be adjusted for better scheduling. This has helped me to always think about the students, in every decision I make.*

#### **An administrator that accompanied a GCELE group to Peru**

One of the unique destinations was a 'local' GCELE with indigenous communities. Three groups of students went to Walpole Island to spend time with indigenous peoples. They were introduced to indigenous history, learned about first nations in Canada and interacted with indigenous ways of knowing. International students enjoyed this because they had heard of this Canadian priority and wanted to learn more about it.

- ✓ **Faculty led international projects (FLIPs):** faculty and students international learning experiences related to specific courses and learning outcomes. Usually two to three weeks long, they had to be closely aligned with students' career and life goals. International Education and GCCI teams helped faculty through the development process, from proposal and budget to evaluation methodology.

<sup>26</sup>Evaluation of GCELEs at: <https://www.centennialcollege.ca/centres-institutes/centre-for-global-citizenship-education-and-inclusion/research-publications/global-citizenship-and-equity-learning-experiences-evaluation/>

All of these included a pre-departure program for students to make sure they had the foundation to make sense of their experience, the on-the-ground component done with an academic member, company and NGO visits, actual assignments that had real-life applications, and at least one deliverable attached to the FLIP. These would allow students to either get credit for one less assignment, or replace an exam, or in the case of the Business School, the equivalent of a course grade. This answered a strong limiting factor to participation for many students, recognition of the learning and not lengthening their program.

These types of experiences abroad became increasingly attractive to students and were mentioned in both international and domestic student recruitment processes. However, the downsides identified by faculty were getting release time, the paperwork and the organization required. The administration encouraged them and provided more support and funding and less bureaucracy in response to feedback.

Centennial even had tri-county FLIPs. For example, in the Tourism and Hospitality School, the college partnered with a business schools in Denmark and Belgium to develop better marketing strategies for local craft beers. This helped students understand regulations and develop appropriate marketing strategies in different countries. The curriculum was developed by faculty from all three institutions, and students from all three institutions worked together and got to visit breweries while in the field.

- ✓ **Funding Canadian Students to go Abroad.** Encouraging Canadians to study or do their internships abroad has always been a challenge for colleges, and indeed for Canadian students in general. A 2012 ACCC national report on Study Abroad concluded that approximately 1.2% of college students did take part in some form of study abroad. This compared badly to rates ranging from 4 to 8% and rising in other parts of the developed world. The study pointed out that lack of financial resources was the main obstacle to more going abroad, as well as lack of recognition of the experience upon return. In addition, college students often held part-time jobs and had more family responsibilities, also limiting their mobility. Finally, as education is a provincial jurisdiction, there was no national scholarship fund to support and encourage such mobility, only a few provincial funds now and then. Centennial decided to attack this head on.

Centennial decided to take 1% of all international revenue to set up a permanent Endowment Fund to ensure that finances did not prevent students from internationalizing their learning experiences through GCELEs, and other study and work abroad opportunities. This did not mean a few scholarships students would have to compete for, but rather a commitment to funding any student who wanted to engage in study or internships abroad. When funding was not sufficient, additional monies were made available from the operational budget. One year that amounted to \$600,000. The monies for such never ran out according to the CFO. At the time, and still today, this was very innovative for the college sector and was a serious commitment to equity and inclusion.

- ✓ A **Study Abroad Portal**<sup>27</sup> was also set up to inform and attract more students, domestic and international, to take advantage of the funded opportunities for international learning experiences. It allowed them to apply and obtain pre-departure preparation more easily. The portal also served to track students and manage risk while they were abroad. Post-return programs to help students understand and leverage their experience for job search were added later as well.

<sup>27</sup> <https://sage.centennialcollege.ca/>

- ✓ **A collaborative approach to develop a Canadian Brand and more recruitment.** Centennial helped smaller colleges who did not have as much knowledge, international presence, or financial capabilities to grow international student recruitment. Centennial went to some of the smaller colleges it had a good relationship with (Confederation, Fleming, Loyalist, Northern and Sault) and invited full-time recruitment officers from those colleges into their offices overseas at marginal costs. Staff from International Education also provided coaching and shared templates and tools. In some cases, if Centennial projected that it would get more students than anticipated, it worked with other colleges that offer similar programs to explore if they were interested in those students being referred to them. It involved seeing that all benefit from a more Canadian approach.

*At that point, it was extremely competitive, and Canada was not the highest destination for international students. We thought we could do better together because when you sell, you are selling Canada...Doing business together is good for Canada...it gives all colleges more opportunities and grows the pie for all.*

**Virginia Macchiavello, Director of International Education**

This was innovative, particularly within the Ontario Province context, as most colleges were in a highly competitive context for students at home and from abroad, which did not lend itself to collaboration. It took a higher vision of how all would benefit by collaborating to even consider this and then make it happen. Several colleges in Ontario such as Fleming, Fanshawe and Confederation benefitted from this innovative strategy.

*Ann was a positive influencer around taking a broad view, versus the 'all about numbers, enrollment and money' approach. What came from Centennial as well was the distinction between an international growth plan and an internationalization plan. Ultimately it must be around internationalization, involve curriculum, faculty expertise and experiences for domestic students.*

**Tony Tilly, President of Fleming College and Chair of the Ontario Council of College Presidents at the time**

# PHASE 3

## 2.3

### **Managing Growth, Equity, and Inclusion** (2016-2019)

## 2.3 Managing Growth, Equity, and Inclusion (2016-2019)

By 2016, the international student population had reached 50% of total enrollment. This exponential growth was in good part due to the entrepreneurial and data-driven recruitment skills of the International Education team. The College had students from over 30 countries, including hundreds of students from newer source countries like Vietnam, Philippines, Panama, and Mexico. Total international revenue was \$150.9 million for the 2017/2018 fiscal year, representing a 134% growth over the previous 5 years. Was it too much of a good thing?

*You reach a point where the money is tantalizing and that is when it is fair and appropriate for people to question your values and whether you are jeopardizing your local community access. Recruiting massive numbers of international students too quickly leads to growing pains and challenges, unanticipated consequences, and renewed resistance.*

**Ann Buller**

There was an additional problem of the continuing growth in the proportion of students coming from India. Some classes were almost entirely composed of Indian students. Academic Chairs were opening new sections, scrambling to find faculty to teach with minimal time for vetting, orientation, or preparation. Limitations on classroom and lab space were affecting workload and schedules, with students having to travel to multiple campuses or to take classes after 6 pm and on weekends. And you could even see it in the school cafeteria where students from the same country tended to sit together most of the time.

The large number of students was making field placements difficult, as the industry could not absorb them. Increasingly diverse students in the classroom and some challenges of low levels of English added pressure on faculty to develop competencies to manage their even more multi-cultural classroom while having to integrate new content. Schools were increasingly concerned about the impact of this growth on the quality of all students' experience in the classroom, including the international ones.

*The fact that the international population grew so fast is part of why there is now a stigma and some resistance to it. One, two or three domestic students with 30 international students in one class – they are studying in their own country and feel a bit like an outcast.*

**International Student**

The College was now operating two sets of student service units of relatively equal size – a regular Student Services for domestic students and an International one. There was evidence of contradictory messages arising, growing duplication and more importantly, international students were not getting the services they needed as numbers were too large. For example, while there were seven counters for domestic students to get their registration and admission sorted out, international students had only one - they were facing lineups 4-5 times longer than domestic students, which irritated them.

*We continue to experience such exponential growth that as much as we try to do our best, we are almost buckling under the pressure and weight of students coming in. To move to the next level of students' services, we needed to understand the outcomes we wanted for these students, to backtrack and figure out – how do we scale up what we do without losing the personal touch?*

**International Student Service Administrator**

With the growing scale, visibility, and funding that international represented, more people also wanted to own it, claim it, and lead it, or at least parts of it. Some tensions began to arise around delineating roles and responsibilities re: recruitment, students' services, academic quality, partnerships, and risk management. An intervention was needed.

### 2.3.1 Focusing on the Quality of Student Experience for All

The challenge facing Centennial's leadership at that stage was: How to move to another level of internationalization while building sufficient institutional capacity and maintaining the quality of students' experience? The President affirmed that the college had to stop celebrating exponential growth of international students – that this was not necessarily always good and that it had some negative consequences on the institution. There was a need to slow growth, diversify source countries, while regrouping to build institutional capacity to maintain a high-quality student experience for all.

The leadership team identified key issues and mobilized management and staff to address them. There was a clear expectation that the executive and management team would engage in collaborative problem solving.

*If one of us has an issue in a School and brings it to the Executive team – we all carve out a part of the problem and see how we can contribute to the solution. Our CFO is the first one to make the pitch for financial investment... for the benefit of students. I look at what we can do for faculty and support staff, and we divide the work to make it work.*

**VP Human Resources**

### 2.3.2 Managing international students' enrollment – a collaborative effort

One of the key challenges during that phase was better enrollment management. Managing growth between domestic and international students is a delicate dance. It required a collaborative process to set targets by program and country. The divisions of International Education, Registrar, and of Research and Corporate Planning convened every department in the same room and worked with each school to set country and program targets that would balance domestic and international enrollment.

To provide some breathing space to Schools, faculty and staff, the college chose to cap international student recruitment, tighten admission requirements, and invest in ensuring the quality of all students' experience. Concerned that the current model may have reached its limits, the Executive also commissioned an external institutional audit of International, a form of evidence-based review which was to be student-centered and participatory, to assess Centennial's structures and internal processes for securing quality and standards. The external study pointed out that with the recent expansion there was a need to restructure and offered recommendations for aligning its systems and processes with the scale that international had reached. These included leveraging the power of technology.

### 2.3.3 Restructuring for greater integration of students' services.

The college decided to move towards re-integrating most services provided to international students into mainstream student services, except for international student recruitment and global partnerships. Consultations and data gathering were done to create a data-driven common understanding of students' needs for support and services, leading to reorganization of work to meet those needs at each point in their Centennial journey.

*We developed learning outcomes for students based on their transitional phase: 1. pre-arrival, transition into, orientation, and first month; 2. transition through the bulk of their regular program, and 3. transition out, to work or home. We also reorganized the work of international student advisors dividing their time in thirds: 1/3 advising students; 1/3 advising faculty and staff; 1/3 working with stakeholders to enhance programming.*

**International Student Administrator**

### 2.3.4 Reinvesting financial resources

The college reinvested resources into student services, increasing the salary budget by \$4 million dollars from 2014-2019 for student and community engagement – larger than the enrollment growth. In 2016, \$1 million was invested in hiring more student advisors, so that every student could have an advisor they were linked with, could reach out to, and develop a relationship with. More specialists in the various services and stages of transition were also hired.

### 2.3.5 Hiring and training faculty with required new skills

*The classroom is different now. I must be so careful, even with my jokes. When you give them a test, you feel so bad when marking, because a lot of international students are getting the same items wrong... they did not understand the Canadian context. There are a lot of these things you learn over time.*

**Faculty Member**

Managing growth and greater diversity inevitably required new staff and new skills:

- In Academic departments, this required hiring new part-time faculty, expanding orientation to all new faculty and PD for existing faculty including more sharing between experienced ones and newer recruits, be they part-time or full-time;
- There was a need to ensure that all staff in the new integrated student services be trained to deal with international student services. This involved training in inter-cultural fluency and communication, as well as equity, diversity, and inclusion. This had to be done extremely well to ensure rapid implementation and to preserve quality and brand;
- The college continued to encourage ongoing learning and professional development for all. This included partnering with Durham College to enable global networked learning with professionals in other countries in the newly established Collaborative Learning Center on the border of Scarborough and Oshawa.

### 2.3.6 Innovations in Internationalization, Equity and Diversity

#### ✓ **2017-2018 International Enrollment Diversification and Management Strategy.**

Diversity by program had, in most cases, not been managed to this point. Meetings were held with departments to assess what should be the right mix of domestic to international students and the right balance of countries of origin per program in the future. With a focus on the quality of the learning experience of both domestic and international students and an eye on risk management, a recruitment process was developed to issue letters of offer and track applicant conversions by country, by program, by type of application, by agent and by pathway.

Another challenge was monitoring targets in real time. Every Monday International Education teams met to monitor and analyze numbers by country, school, and program. Decisions were made then to shut down acceptance of international applications in certain programs, or to increase applications from newer source countries. The model was implemented manually in the Fall of 2018 and a new Student Information System (SIS) was implemented as a pilot in the Fall of 2019.

Some courses and programs have multiple sections and students from the same country tend to register in the same sections to be more comfortable and help each other out. Because the college mission is global citizenship and inclusion, diversity in the classroom is important. The leadership recently decided to go one step further and set targets all the way to the classroom and section scheduling level. The new recruitment model and SIS was expected to take diversity to this next level in 2019.

#### ✓ **Inclusive internationalization tools and knowledge building.**

In 2017 the *Centre for Global Citizenship Education and Inclusion* developed new tools to expand the notion of global citizenship and to make it easier to integrate internationalization into all College programs, services, and documents. These included:

- » **Internationalization in a Box** – A toolkit for Faculty that included teaching tools such as a framework on how to internationalize the curriculum, innovative pedagogical tools and how to build inclusion among diverse student populations in the learning environment;
- » **Internationalization Case Studies** – Real examples that demonstrate how to effectively develop discipline specific assignments and assessment strategies related to the internationalization learning objectives in specific disciplines;
- » **Internationalization Assessment Tool** – Suggested tools to assess progress in achieving the learning outcomes, developed in collaboration with the Center for Academic Quality, Corporate Planning and Institutional Research;
- » **Internationalization Library Guide** – A curated list of resources to support students and faculty building internationalization into their teaching and learning.
- » **Head Start Program for International Students** – In 2018 An online portal was developed to provide international students with orientation resources up to 10 weeks in advance of their arrival. It was meant to provide them with access to resources and tools to help them prepare personally, academically, and professionally for Day One at the College. The academic and professional pages were customized to the specific program the student would be coming to and were prepared in collaboration with faculty and career counselors from each program. It was meant to deal with the deficits between international and domestic students in the classroom in the first semester.

Recent surveys of international students who took the Head Start program before arriving at Centennial showed that the vast majority (96%) felt the program to be “useful and relevant to my preparation”, and 92% felt that it had helped them integrate into the Centennial college community much faster.

- ✓ **Applied Research Abroad Projects (ARAP)** – The college provided funding to support the travel component for students and faculty to run applied research projects abroad. For example, the Baking Arts faculty and students undertook some applied research into more sustainable cacao production in Madagascar and then returned home to pursue the issue and do a final practical report. The IT Program partnered with an Indian NGO, my Oral Village, and sent domestic and international students to do field research in rural parts around Bangalore (India) to explore how the community was working with a mobile app to enhance the financial literacy and productivity of small entrepreneurs. Graphic Design students helped to redesign the wire frame for the application to make it more user-friendly.
- ✓ **Enriching international partnerships – Multi-country delivery**

*Leading colleges have all been growing international enrollments. What made us different were our partnerships. We do different levels – not only institution to institution, but high-level country to country with government. We do faculty, administration, and leadership training, and have institution to institution 1+2, 2+1, 3+1 programs in Korea, Vietnam, and China.*

**Virginia Macchiavello, Director of International Education**

Centennial partnered with other institutions to articulate curriculum, and deliver dual or triple credentials, as many other colleges and institutes do, but also including some tri-country programs:

- ✓ Two tri-country programs that allow students to study one semester of their program in Canada, one in Panama and one in China, or the same split between Italy, India and Canada;
- ✓ A joint International Business Management program offered in partnership with institutions in China, Panama and Centennial College. The final semester includes an internship placement in China delivered by the partner institution;
- ✓ A global network of incoming and outgoing pathways and credit transfer agreements with partner institutions including 398 international pathways.
- ✓ **Centennial College Campus in Suzhou, China** – Further to an existing collaborative venture with a Singapore firm which had a campus in Suzhou, Centennial was able to establish a Centennial Campus in that growing city of central China without investing in land or buildings and develop it into an experiment that could be replicated elsewhere if it went well. It was the first such fully international college campus approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education.

Suzhou is a city of approximately 10 million people with 93 of the world's top 500 companies having offices or plants there. In addition, it is one of the three jewels of Chinese tourism, as per the Chinese themselves.

Programs to be offered were Canadian programs meeting all the standards set by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development of Ontario and graduates were thus able to obtain a Centennial College credential. The innovation was that all students would have to follow the GenEd course on Global Citizenship and Equity, as well as the global skills competencies embedded in the technical courses.

Classes are given in English, and introductory Mandarin Chinese and Chinese culture classes were offered to non-Chinese students. The aim was to recruit English-speaking students from China, but also students from other parts of the world, a priority for China. Located in the Suzhou Industrial Park, linkages to industry and businesses were quite easy to set up and internships were negotiated using a "Chinese-foreign joint training model" to make things easier. One of the first companies to come on board was the Crown Plaza Hotel in the Park. Others soon followed thus ensuring the applied nature of the learning.

The advantages for students were clear from the beginning. Centennial students could easily complete an internship, a full semester or year in their program in China, whilst Chinese students could complete their program at Centennial in Toronto. Third-country students were considering studying in both countries. The campus is still quite new, so numbers are not huge, but they do already include some students from Canada and other countries like Panama and South Korea. Craig Stephenson, then Centennial's VP for Student Services<sup>28</sup>, visited the new campus to help set up student services there and commented:

*I was at our Campus in Suzhou and saw tremendous opportunities for our students. You have a city dedicated to biotech, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence. This tells me we must get our student placements, internships, and experiences in those industries. The Chinese have made such leaps in technology that we can learn from them and capitalize on that.*

The setting up of the campus benefitted from the lessons learnt by Centennial in the Middle East earlier on. Care was taken to ensure the integrity of their programs and the quality of their partners. Of course, events can always change the context for such an international initiative and so it is a program that the Board and Executive are keeping an eye on. The ultimate objective is to have more international students take Centennial programs in their own countries, thus reducing the number and length of stay at the Toronto campuses.

<sup>28</sup>Dr Stephenson has since been selected as the new President and CEO for Centennial College

# 3

## Transformational Results at Institutional and Individual Levels

Beyond the program and institutional outcomes highlighted in the study so far, the impacts on individual students, faculty or staff were significant. Interviews carried out for the case study revealed compelling stories of transformed perspectives and lives that need to be illustrated. Some of these results are reviewed below.

### 3.1 Active global citizens and inclusive leaders with value-added competencies for employability

By 2019, 92% of programs had integrated at least one or more Global Citizenship and Equity learning outcomes into 422 course offerings, whilst 80 programs had introduced the highlighting of GCE skills in learners' portfolio development. Over 5800 students were enrolled each year in the core course of Global Citizenship: From Social Analysis to Social Action (GNED 500).

Beyond the numbers, it is the stories that speak to the transformative effect of integrating global citizenship and equity in the curriculum. At a graduation ceremony, a parent whose son had participated in the HYPE program<sup>29</sup> and taken the Global Citizenship course came up to the President and shook her hand, saying:

*I think you saved my son's life. Post 9-11, he was an angry young Muslim man listening to voices that could have led him to a dark path. He came home one day and said that he was enrolling in Centennial. While we would have preferred that he attend a university, we thought college was better than nothing. He then took the Global Citizenship course where he learned how to channel his anger into community activism and engagement. He saw how he could now lead a successful life. I am so grateful.*

*The flow of refugees from Central America to the US border...no one knew what was going on – the caravan was the only narrative. When we looked into it more, it is a story about economic deprivation and escaping violence. It expanded my frame of mind and thinking.*

<sup>29</sup> Helping Youth Pursue Education Program (HYPE) helps to get at-risk youth from less well-off surrounding neighbourhoods into college programs. The HYPE Program provides a six-week on-campus, tuition-free learning experience, including learning materials, transportation, and meals. The program was created for youth aged 17-29, living in underserved neighborhoods of Toronto. 47% of the 600 young people who participated in HYPE so far went to Centennial and 22% graduated.

While some international students had similar laudatory comments on the impact of the *Global Citizenship, Equity, Diversity* learning activities, some were critical about how the course was taught in certain classes:

*I loved the Global Citizenship course...My teacher's explanations of communications barriers were great... we had a truly diverse group, and she taught the material in a way we could understand. She ensured we were in groups with students from different countries.*

*I am a business student. I don't dare say anything crazy. At times, I am outspoken and will voice my opinion, but I often don't dare bring up my opinion for fear of failing the class, so I keep quiet...it could affect my marks otherwise.*

*I was excited to take the course but disappointed in how it was delivered. The faculty went through the slides and mind maps and stuff... And even though he engaged the class by asking questions, it was not an open discussion... which that type of class needs to be.*

### 3.2 Transformative learning through inclusive access to experiences abroad

Since the first GCELEs in 2010, nearly 650 students and 150 faculty participated in 56 projects around the world focusing on issues as diverse as sustainable farming in Cuba, community health support in Honduras, early childhood education in Ghana and work with indigenous groups in Ontario. The world map below summarizes the statistics on participation by mode:



A Study on the Impact of the 2013-14 GCELE experiences<sup>30</sup> revealed that:



An international student spoke of the added value that an overseas learning project provided for her:

*We left Canada as total strangers – 9 students all from different countries – for Shanghai. It was well planned; we had a schedule and contacts – international did a good job. We had two Chinese buddies that spoke English. Faculty led the international program. Most of us were business related and we visited Samsung and e-commerce companies there... We were to do a marketing plan for entry into the Chinese market and we each focused on researching one company. We had to present our plan in Suzhou and were graded for it. It was the best learning experience of my life.*

One of the stories that Ann Buller tells is of a recent landed immigrant from South Asia who gained an important new insight on herself while abroad with Centennial:

*Centennial should be **an institution of nation building** – this is absolutely what it is. One woman of (third world country) origins took part in a GCELE experience in the Dominican Republic helping people there with health issues. Upon return she explained to many others that: ‘Here I was in the Dominican Republic with our team helping them out, and for the first time I felt like a true Canadian.*

A senior administrator at Centennial summarized a key learning for all, students, and staff:

*This is how you break through the resistance that people have, barriers people have around diversity and internationalization, you make multi-culturalism your friend and you make it pay off. People come back and they were transformed. And we no longer see the person as the hijab, you see the person for who they are.*

To share these experiences more broadly and learn from others, Yasmin Razack, Director of the Director of the Centre for Global Citizenship Education and Inclusion, and her team organized the first summit in Canada on *Inclusive Internationalization* in 2018. Experts on the topic from other countries were joined by those at Centennial and other colleges and universities to brainstorm what should be the next steps and challenges to take on to move the agenda forward.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Razack, Yasmin and Arman, Shaila. *Examining the Impact of Global Citizenship and Equity Learning Experiences (GCELEs)*. In *A Closer Look*, Centennial College 2015

<sup>31</sup> See <https://www.centennialcollege.ca/centres-institutes/centre-for-global-citizenship-education-and-inclusion/inclusive-internationalization-summit/>

### 3.3 A sustainable financial mechanism that supports inclusive internationalization

Two Canadian students highlighted the importance of the financial support that the college provided and the effect on one's view of other countries:

*We went to Belgium on a tourism and hospitality management program, doing a project for a beverage company. We were students from 3 countries, the profs were amazing and the classes really good. Centennial covered 90% of the cost, which allowed me to take part. Imagine me studying in Belgium!*

*When we came back from a GCELE in Kenya, we understood Kenyan people better and we will never interact with somebody from that region in quite the same way again. Considering the depth of anti-black racism, you can't quantify that – it is transformational.*

Despite increasing numbers of domestic and international students taking part, only a bit over 2% are benefitting from going abroad, and the available budget is often not completely spent. In 2019, the College set a goal of reaching 10% of its students going abroad during their studies and figuring out ways of promoting the value of such an experience. This also confirms why global competencies are now integrated and taught to all students in more campuses in Ontario, as many will never have such opportunities, even if they are made easier with the college funding available.



## Centennial College Wins Awards for Excellence in Internationalization

Centennial College won the top prizes for Excellence in Internationalization from Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan), from the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) and from the World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics (WFCP).

# 4

## Conclusion: Lessons Learned and Implications for Practice for a New Era

In looking at these fifteen years of practice at Centennial, what lessons continue to be relevant in an era of pandemics, closed borders, and anti-racism protests around the world? This section reviews key insights and lessons and their implications for the practice of post-secondary institutions in Canada as they move forward with internationalization at home and abroad. They are grouped in four main themes:

- Implementing courageous, inclusive, and distributed leadership;
- Improving the quality of learning for all students with an unrelenting focus;
- Internationalizing the institution in a more comprehensive and inclusive manner;
- Preparing learners to become global citizens who can meet the challenges of this new era.

### 4.1 Implementing Courageous, Inclusive and Distributed Leadership

Board and leadership team members, faculty, staff, and students alike attributed its institutional transformation and successes so far in large part to the type of leadership adopted. This can be characterized as a leadership style that is courageous in its objectives and implementation, inclusive in its values base of social justice, equity, and inclusion, and distributed in the constant efforts to engage all staff and students at all stages of the process. As Ann Buller would put it in her keynote speech on leadership at the World Congress of the World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics in 2012:

*Leadership for me is all about embedding the values that let you think critically, act courageously, and being relentlessly optimistic, while having both feet firmly planted on the ground... Leadership is always a team sport.*<sup>32</sup>

Envisioning a new “Signature Learning Experience”, based on global citizenship, equity and inclusion was not an obvious strategic leadership goal fifteen years ago. It was a leadership choice based on a profound aspiration to motivate the community, give them pride and help all move forward to achieve their full potential. The fusion of internationalization at home, equity and inclusion was innovative and leading-edge before it became the imperative that so many institutions are now grappling with. It also built up institutional capabilities of the college to engage meaningfully and productively in addressing inclusion and social justice for indigenous populations of Canada as one of its newer strategic priorities.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Speech at the 2012 WFCP World Congress held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada with close to fifty country delegates attending

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.centennialcollege.ca/indigenous-education/indigenous-strategic-framework-pillars/>

<sup>34</sup> How Colleges Change: Understanding, Leading and Enacting Change by Adrianna Kezar. Routledge Publishers, 2014.

In addition to having a recognized dynamic, courageous, and inspiring leader, the transformation at Centennial would not have happened without the enthusiastic buy-in and innovative implementation of the vision in all corners of the institution by individuals assuming leadership at all levels. As the case study documents, staff, faculty and students were engaged in co-creating the vision through their participation in the *President's Task Force on Learning sub-committee*. Spaces for constructive dialogue helped to establish a solid foundation for ongoing engagement of the college community to co-create new learning objectives and programs.

While a shared vision, values and principles are critical, Centennial showed that it takes courage, determination, and concrete actions to put them into practice in an effective manner. Having both feet firmly planted on the ground required a data-driven mindset, metrics, structures, management systems and processes that were aligned with the vision for internationalization and the values espoused by the college and that could more easily inform action.

Adrianna Kezar in *How Colleges Change*<sup>34</sup> reports that the main drivers of successful change in colleges and universities is the degree to which staff believe that their leadership is both principled and determined to make change happen, along with the adoption of a participatory and flexible approach to change. This is not the case in 70% of the institutional transformations that she and others have reviewed. Centennial is among the 30% that did succeed, in the main. Through concrete actions to acknowledge and address challenges faced in implementing the vision, all could see that leadership was committed, walked the talk and was going to be there to support all to assume their part in making change happen.

As the recent “Black Lives Matter” protests around the world have clearly shown, the new generation is not interested in empty declarations or in repetition of nice promises but in the achievement of results that reduce inequities and systemic racism, and that allow all to achieve their full potential. The learners of the new era demand and expect this type of leadership, and internationalization without it is doomed to fail.

## 4.2 Improving the quality of learning for all students with an unrelenting focus

At the core, the approach to internationalization was anchored in an unrelenting focus on improving the quality of learning for all students, and especially those from the diverse and historically disadvantaged community served by the college. It began with an analysis of the community, both inside of the institution and surrounding it, to truly understand the needs, wishes and dreams of those communities. While this may sound obvious, it often is not. Too often, colleges can lose their way and let issues of prestige, budgets and politics drive their priorities and decisions, according to many interviewed.

The original analysis of issues in the beginning revealed that there were serious issues of inequity among students that would lead to varied results in terms of success in the classroom, completion of studies and obtaining employment afterwards. They had comparatively very low results in all these aspects.

Centennial's “*Signature Learning Experience*” helped to focus attention on improving the quality of learning and services for all students, as it was internationalizing abroad and at home, providing multiple points of individualized support along the way. These were sometimes differentiated between international and Canadian students, and later integrated whenever possible. Students were also hired to provide orientation and mentor new students, often the best kind of mentoring possible. The Signature Learning Experience gave permission to all to raise concerns when the reality in the classroom did not meet the stated objectives of the college and have those addressed.

Supporting faculty in the classroom was critical. To that end, the college set up dedicated structures like the *Centre for Global Citizenship Education and Inclusion* and the *Centre for Organizational Learning and Teaching* to provide just-in-time coaching and training on how to integrate equity and global citizenship components in all programs and curricula, including how to adapt pedagogy to the new diversity realities. Faculty were also provided new opportunities to research, share, and explore these issues in other countries and in relevant conferences. Without faculty engagement this would not have gone far at all.

Institutional transformations are rarely achieved in just a few years. It requires persistence, adaptability, and constant innovation, as seen in the study. This unrelenting focus on student learning at the core was maintained as the institution changed in nature, and went through the various stages of its institutional transformation: from establishing a foundation, to institutionalizing a new culture and then managing growth in a principled manner.

### 4.3 Internationalizing the Institution in a more Comprehensive and Inclusive Manner

Internationalization of post-secondary institutions has been a buzzword for over two decades now, reflecting the globalization of the economy and growing levels of exchanges and partnerships between institutions. However, it rapidly focused on the growing phenomena of international student recruitment paying higher fees to generate needed revenue no longer being provided by governments.

The Centennial case study provides an example of an institution making decisions to ensure that internationalization benefited all their students and was not being reduced solely to the recruitment of international students. Both domestic and international students benefitted from a mandatory general education course on other cultures and inclusive values and from the integration of global citizenship and equity learning outcomes into an increasing number of technical course curricula. New programs were funded to allow students and faculty to go abroad for shorter and intense periods to experience other cultures and learn in a more reflective and intense manner, while being credited for such in various ways.

Centennial did focus on international recruitment and saw the most rapid increase in numbers and percentage of international students on their campus in the system. They did so in a researched and professional manner and reacted in a timely manner when inevitable problems arose from the rapid increases in numbers on campus. This included controlling percentages of students allowed in programs and courses to ensure some balance in types of students, ensuring that international students received the support needed to succeed despite differences in study habits and culture, and supporting them to understand Canadian culture better, including funded educative weekends on indigenous reserves.

Putting its “money where its mouth is”, Centennial has established an easy-to-access permanent endowment fund from international student fees to support internationalization activities and projects at home and abroad for all students and faculty at Centennial. Faculty and administrators were also supported to engage in research and learning on these complex issues and to become more knowledgeable and innovative in internationalizing their academic program and curricula.

In the post-COVID higher education world most experts are predicting a drop in numbers of international students for a period of two to five years, which will cause revenue challenges for most institutions in Canada.<sup>35</sup> This has challenged some practitioners to now focus more on how to develop an Internationalization@Home, approach, referenced earlier in the study (ref. page 5).

Centennial College, and a few others, were doing so early on and are well placed to act as a locus of experiences, programs and resources that can benefit other Canadian colleges and institutes. As Centennial has always been very willing to share as we have seen, there is no need to reinvent the wheel elsewhere, but rather gain time by learning from others on challenges like internationalizing curricula.

<sup>35</sup> See recent issues of University World News: The Global window on Higher Education for such articles.

#### 4.4 Preparing Active Global Citizens for a new Global Context

As the current economic globalization is slowing down due to protectionism and the rise in inequalities that it caused, as borders close due to the coronavirus and as a new Cold War seems to be developing between China and the USA, why continue to emphasize preparing Global Citizens?

The answers can be found in the students' voices cited in the previous section of this study and in the interviews with young activists marching around the world for climate action and social justice.

Learners at Centennial college stated that they are better equipped to understand and value diversity as an asset. Having encountered and engaged with different cultures and points of view, and having learned to respect them, they have developed reflective mindsets and action-oriented skills to affect social change in their workplace and communities. They have developed networks of young people from around the world who can exchange and even work together on some of the intractable challenges they must face together to survive.

The image of students from Canada, China, Panama, Brazil and elsewhere studying together in a Centennial College classroom located in Suzhou comes to mind as an image of how to prepare all to become global citizens, as do the words of the recent immigrant to Canada who reported that the first time she truly felt Canadian was when she was working together with other Centennial students to help poor farmers in the Dominican Republic.

College students are rightfully concerned about what the future holds and about securing employment in a post-pandemic era that struggles to recover from an economic downturn and systemic inequities. Now and in the foreseeable future, employers in the European Union and Canada confirm that with equal technical competencies, they will give preference to graduates who have proven cross-cultural skills, analytical skills capable of dealing with the many angles of a question and the other soft skills that are often nurtured in more challenging situations.<sup>36</sup> Looking ahead, the world of work is increasingly more diverse in Canada and around the world, so a formal certification that a graduate has followed a learning path to become a global professional and citizen is likely to remain a strong asset for their future careers.

For all these reasons, it is incumbent upon colleges and institutes in Canada to prepare all their learners to become global professionals, global entrepreneurs, and global citizens. Centennial's story and lessons from their experience can hopefully provide food for reflection and inspiration for other leaders, faculty, and staff of post-secondary institutions to pursue their own journey of transformation to more inclusive education and more comprehensive internationalization.

<sup>36</sup> See research undertaken by the EU and its Erasmus program, research conducted by Centennial and by the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) on this topic.



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