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Silke Klenk

Re-Making a Campus

The Internationalization of UNB Saint John

Saint John is Canada's oldest incorporated city, and the vast majority of its 75,000 residents have Irish or British ancestry. Known as "Home of the Loyalist" and "Canada's Most Irish City", it is not known for its multiculturalism. Given both the size of the campus and the homogeneous make-up of the city, the idea of incorporating an internationalization policy at the local university was a tall order, and it proved to be a formidable challenge. The process of internationalization at UNB Saint John started in 1995 with the adoption of an internationalization policy based on AUCC's Statement of Internationalization, which encourages Canadian post-secondary institutions to integrate an international and intercultural dimension into teaching, research and community service.

With 95% of UNB's students coming from Saint John and surrounding communities, the objective of the university's internationalization policy was to recruit students from overseas, foster international growth on campus, and equip both Canadian and international students to effectively work and live in an increasingly global society.

As a result of this policy, UNB Saint John has undergone many changes in the last eight years. The number of international students has increased significantly. Today, over 25% of the campus body consists of international students, from approximately 35 countries, who are registered either in full-time academic courses or in the university's ESL program to improve their language skills. Prior to the introduction of these new initiatives, almost all the students came from local communities or other parts of New

Brunswick. To support the recruitment of international students, the university has established a recruiting office in the United Arab Emirates, implemented an international studies program in Arts, instituted an international MBA program, participated in four CIDA-sponsored international development projects, and formed partnerships with foreign institutions to implement joint initiatives that enable the internationalization of curricula and the overall educational experience of UNB students. In September, 2002, AUCC and Scotiabank named UNB Saint John winner of the "Award for Excellence in Internationalization", which honours initiatives that promote cooperation with local, national and international partners to enhance an institution's overall internationalization efforts.

The development of the university's Modern Languages Centre, which teaches English to international students who have been accepted to UNB Saint



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John, but who need to improve their English skills in order to carry full academic course loads, allows students to live and study with Canadian peers in an integrated academic environment while they are improving their language skills. Once they complete the ESL program or obtain the required score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), they can register for full-time academic studies.

Since 1995, many aspects of campus life have taken on an international flavour. The introduction of international

soccer and cricket teams, multi-ethnic campus radio programs, international film festivals, the establishment of a local chapter of World University Services of Canada (WUSC), and the celebration of multi-cultural religious and cultural holidays are just a few examples of opportunities for international students and members of the local community to meet and experience each others' cultures.

The influx of international students has impacted both the curriculum and the classroom environment. For example,

the presence of Chinese students prompted the university to offer an introductory credit course in Mandarin. One-third of the students registered in the course were local residents who wanted to learn more about the Chinese language and culture. In addition, international students enrich the learning

environment. The university recognized that the tremendous influx of international students to Saint John could easily have led to misunderstandings and confusion between international students and members of the local community. Therefore, in an attempt to prevent possible cross-cultural misunderstandings,

issues and has helped to develop a greater awareness of, and sensitivity to, cross cultural dimensions. In turn, it has given the participants an opportunity to widen their understanding of themselves and other cultures and begin to realize the inter-connectivity of the world.

On the surface, cultures are distinguished by such things as dress, food, architecture and music, but these are just manifestations of a person's values and beliefs. The cultural events organized by the students for the wider community bring this to light and foster an awareness and appreciation for all mankind. International potluck dinners and cultural talent shows have drawn audiences in excess of 350 people from the community and have gone a long way in fostering cross-cultural understanding. The success of the cultural events and outreach can be measured not only by the record attendances, but also by the positive comments and feedback from the community.

Because the established multicultural community in Saint John is small, the

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experience for all students by bringing their unique cultural perspectives to the classroom. These cultural perspectives are reinforced by professors from UNB Saint John who have lectured at overseas partner institutions and received first-hand exposure to another culture. They return to Saint John to share their experiences with their students, the university community, and local residents.

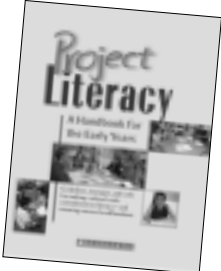
Social life at UNB Saint John has also gained a new dimension. The university introduced a Buddy System, in which a Canadian student is paired with an international student to meet on a regular basis for one or two hours each week to share experiences, practice English, and learn from each other. This is an excellent way of establishing friendships with students from other countries and a way for Canadian students to internationalize their education without leaving home. At the same time, a Homestay Program, which includes both student and host orientation, has grown to involve 80 homes in Saint John. The program caters to international students whose level of English would make it difficult for them to function on their own in the city. The program enables an international student to live in a Canadian home while studying at UNB Saint John. In many cases, students become like members of the family and long-term friendships are developed. For Canadians, it serves as an unforgettable international adventure without leaving the comforts of home.

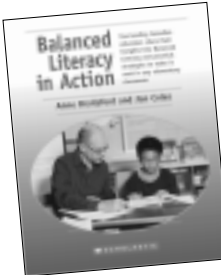
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it planned activities to bring international students and citizens of Saint John together in organized events to facilitate cultural exchange. International students have been encouraged and empowered to be ambassadors for their home countries; students give presentations and organize events on campus as well as at local elementary and high schools, senior citizen homes and community centers. This initiative has helped raise campus and community awareness of international education and global

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Au cours des trois dernières années, l'Université du Nouveau-Brunswick à Saint John, a réussi à devenir le campus le plus international au Canada et à établir une ambiance cosmopolite dans une petite ville habitée en majorité par des gens de souche anglo-saxonne et judéo-chrétienne. L'augmentation phénoménale de la population étudiante et son impact sur la ville ont aidé les étudiantes et étudiants locaux à devenir plus sensibles aux autres cultures et pays, tout en les préparant à vivre et travailler avec succès dans une société mondiale.

diverse ethnic services found in large urban centres, including restaurants, supermarkets, and places of worship, are not available. As the number of international students grew, the university approached local grocery stores and restaurants about selling a greater variety of international goods to make the students feel more at home. As well, to accommodate the needs of a growing Muslim population, the university established a Muslim prayer

room on campus. The university has also taken on the initiative of providing cross-cultural training and support to local service providers such as banks, police officers and health care providers.

Beyond the university, the community has responded enthusiastically. Saint John's business community is working on initiatives to support and retain international students. Government and

to permanently reside and work in New Brunswick once they graduate.

Internationalism is a two-way street. To help Canadian students experience other cultures, UNB Saint John has also launched its Study Abroad Program, which aims to give 25% of UNB Saint John students the experience of studying and living in another culture for a term. Student enthusiasm for this program

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business are collaborating with the university in an effort to provide services for the international students, who contribute approximately \$20 million to the local economy. As well, the provincial government has developed a program that will enable internationals

can be partially attributed to the success of the international student program, which has led to promotion of other cultures in the city and international partnerships, as well as a large international student body on campus. UNB Saint John sees facilitating opportunities for students to study overseas as a natural extension to its commitment to increasing its international student population and ensuring an enriched university experience.

Over the past three years, UNB Saint John has succeeded in becoming the most international campus in Canada and establishing an international atmosphere in a small city where the majority of residents come from an Anglo-Saxon, Judeo-Christian heritage. The tremendous increase in the number of international students and their impact on the city has helped local students develop a sensitivity towards other countries and cultures, preparing them to successfully live and work in a globalized world. It has also helped them see life from a broader world perspective. The university will continue to develop innovative approaches to integrate an international dimension into its teaching, research and community outreach activities. 🌍

Silke Klenk is International Projects Coordinator at UNB Saint John.

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