

Provincial university systems

The federal government, under the auspices of the Department of External Affairs, has signed technical and cultural agreements with a number of countries which call for the bilateral exchange of students and academic personnel. Also, a number of countries such as Venezuela and the People's Republic of China have made arrangements either through the Department of External Affairs or directly with the universities for the placing of students, researchers and scholars within Canadian institutions of higher learning.

Canadian universities are, in their own right, interested in developing and maintaining relations with institutions and agencies in the developing and developed worlds. A survey of programs of co-operation between Canadian universities and foreign institutions conducted by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) revealed that, in 1976, there were at least 432 such ongoing programs established to exchange information, expertise, staff, research workers or students or to collaborate in research, teaching or other projects.

Each province has its own university system. Universities have virtually total autonomy in the areas of academic matters and internal fiscal management, but financially they are almost totally dependent upon the provinces. About 85 per cent of their operating income is received by way of provincial government grants, the remainder being accounted for by student fees and miscellaneous income.

A university system is generally composed of four elements, although every element may not necessarily be found in each provincial system. The first element consists of the individual institutions. The second is the collectivity of universities, that is the voluntary association of universities to deal with common concerns. Thirdly, all provinces, except Newfoundland and Alberta, have either individually or, in the case of the maritime provinces, collectively established some kind of a "buffer body" as an intermediary between government and the universities. Conceived as instruments to maintain a balance between public accountability on the government side and institutional autonomy on the university side, these bodies normally have government-appointed members representing government, education and community interests. Their mandate generally requires them to advise government on the development of higher education, to make recommendations regarding