

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTATION

Executive Summary

Trilateral Task Force on North American Collaboration
in Higher Education: Discussion Paper

The Wingspread conference established the Trilateral Task Force to develop a strategic plan to guide the development of concerted trilateral collaboration in North American higher education, research and training in key issue areas. The Task Force mandate included organization of the Vancouver Symposium, provided that sufficient progress in developing the strategic plan had been made by June 1993. The symposium offered participants the opportunity to share in the reflections and conclusions of the Task Force, and to join in the process of defining and implementing actions and policies that will contribute to developing a North American dimension in higher education, research and training.

Economic, environmental and technological forces are creating rapid changes within our countries and in their relations with each other. In this context, educational institutions must enable us to sustain our distinct and diverse identities and to enrich our mutual understanding. At the same time, they must produce a workforce capable of high-quality productivity in a highly competitive environment.

Trilateral cooperation in higher education, research and training will not only enhance our ability to meet these challenges within each country, it will also contribute to the conscious development of a North American perspective and the consequent enrichment of our various distinct cultures.

All stakeholders in higher education, research and training – universities, colleges and technical institutes; business and industry; labour, professional and nongovernmental organizations; foundations; and governments – must be partners in trilateral initiatives. Severally and collectively, they must engage in five types of activities to ensure effective trilateral collaboration:

- strengthening our postsecondary institutions;
- encouraging and facilitating the mobility of students, faculty and administrators;
- using new developments in telecommunications and computer technologies to reach across national boundaries;
- establishing and developing strategic alliances among higher education institutions and between higher education and other sectors; and
- raising funds and leveraging resources.