

INTRODUCTION

The Vancouver Symposium: Implementing the Agenda

At the time of the Vancouver Symposium, profound forces affecting relationships between Canada, Mexico and the United States were at work. These included the North American Free Trade Agreement, the growing impact of new information management technologies in higher education and unprecedented international competition in the context of global knowledge-based economies. These forces were recognized as placing unprecedented demands on higher education, research and training, obliging business, government, labour and the academic community to develop new partnerships to respond to and shape developments.

In this context, the Vancouver Symposium was designed to enhance North American collaboration in higher education, research and training. It identified a series of initiatives to carry out the agenda outlined in the *Wingspread Statement*.

Some 300 leaders from Canada, Mexico and the United States attended. They represented business, universities and colleges, professional associations, private foundations, national/provincial and state levels of government. Representatives from Europe and Asia were invited to participate and share their experiences. The Symposium, underpinned by a strong local organizing committee, received full support from the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University, the government of British Columbia and the three

national governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Participants reached a consensus during their two-and-a-half days of deliberation. The resulting *Vancouver Communiqué* recommends nine actions for enhanced collaboration. They cover a range of issues from the establishment of a North American Distance Education and Research Network (NADERN) to programs that support intensive trilateral exchanges, research and student training. The full text of the *Vancouver Communiqué* is presented in the second section of this report.

The Symposium was a forum for discussion and contacts among participants of varied backgrounds. The program favoured exchanges and involved participants in activities planned by the North American Task Force. These activities included keynote addresses, workshops and four thematic plenaries. Panellists invited participants to engage in the development of an approach to trilateral cooperation in higher education, research and training. Extracts from participants' contributions are presented in the section of this report entitled *Symposium Highlights*.

For the benefit of those who did not attend the Symposium, background information and documentation distributed to participants are appended.