

FOREWORD

Strengthening North American Cooperation in Higher Education, Research and Training

In 1991, the United States invited Canada and Mexico to explore benefits of closer North American cooperation in higher education. Upon acceptance of the invitation, each country named a senior official to a Steering Committee created to guide the process.

The Steering Committee helped to organize a meeting at the Johnson Foundation's Wingspread Conference Centre, Wisconsin, September 12-15, 1992, under the theme *North American Higher Education Cooperation: Identifying the Agenda*. The Committee invited senior representatives of higher education institutions, foundations, business and government. Sixty representatives developed an agenda to increase North American cooperation in higher education, research and training, which found its expression in the *Wingspread Statement*.

Issued at the end of the conference, the *Wingspread Statement* (see Extracts, Appendix I) is a consensus document that sets out principles and objectives for collaboration in higher education, research and training. It called for the creation of a Trilateral Task Force subsequently comprised of 18 members, six from each country, to carry the process forward to a major symposium to take place in Vancouver within the year.

With the assistance and concurrence of the Steering Committee, the Task Force developed a strategic plan; supported and monitored progress resulting from the adoption of the *Wingspread Statement*; initiated research papers; recommended specific action plans; and organized the Vancouver Symposium.

The Task Force focused on means to reinforce national efforts in support of innovation and human resource development, identifying five interrelated issues of common interest:

- mobility of students and faculty;
- networking and the impact of information management technologies on human resource development;
- strategic partnerships;
- faculty and institutional development; and
- leveraging of resources.

Task Force deliberations were presented as a *Discussion Paper* (see Summary, Appendix III.i). The paper served as a starting point for the *Vancouver International Symposium on Higher Education and Strategic Partnerships: The Challenge of Global Competitiveness from a North American Perspective*, held September 10-13, 1993.