

Acadia University, founded in 1838, is situated in the Annapolis Valley town of Wolfville, Nova Scotia.



Photo: Michael Hellyer

Just as in Britain, universities provide Canada with a source of highly skilled professionals. They are at the forefront of most of Canada's basic research activities and much of its applied research.

There is an increasing recognition by governments in Canada and the private sector that

investing in university research is essential to the welfare of the national economy.

'You have to have a base intellectual capacity to keep ahead of the game and that is the role of the university community. It keeps us in touch with the wider world, advancing the frontiers of knowledge', states Art May, president of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, one of three federal government granting councils for university research. 'Universities exist primarily to produce people. When we ask companies what is the greatest benefit you receive from your support of an industrial research project, they immediately say the graduates', says Dr May, who was recently appointed as the new president of Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Major business groups agree that supporting universities is critical to Canada's future competitiveness in the 21st century and the age of knowledge. Business spending on education is described by entrepreneurs as 'enlightened self-interest'. Higher education is considered the key to both individual success and national performance.

Patricia Roman, vice-president of the Corporate-Higher Education Forum, an organisation of corporate and university leaders working to develop stronger links between business and education, says one of the often overlooked benefits of academic/corporate cooperation is the opportunity for mutual education. 'We have to recognize that we must encourage both the teaching and learning processes for all parties involved. It is not enough just to develop the commercial potential of a project. We have to exploit the total human resource opportunity. We are all richer for the exchange experience'.

A survey of the participants at a recent national conference on business-education partnerships demonstrates that commitment. The conference focused on a wide range of links. IBM Canada Limited, for example, in conjunction with the University of Toronto, has established a centre for computing in the humanities. The centre has already developed new computer-assisted undergraduate courses and innovative instructional software.

Similarly, Alcan Pacific Limited and Simon Fraser University in British Columbia have joined forces to promote business through intercultural links with the Pacific Rim. The Centre for International Communication, founded by the partnership, provides cross-cultural communications and Oriental language training for the business community.

Some of the most promising opportunities lie in the pharmaceutical sector. University research labs will be among the chief beneficiaries of new federal patent legislation which requires the Canadian pharmaceutical industry to devote nearly \$3 billion to research and development over the next decade. Of that, about \$425 million is earmarked for R & D in universities and hospitals.

Ensuring the success of academic/business ventures has become a top priority of both federal

Carleton University's 62 hectare campus is located just south of Ottawa city centre by the Rideau Canal and has an enrolment of nearly 20 000 students.



Photo: Carleton University