CEC Network
Réseau des CÉC

Canadian Education Centre Network
Réseau des Centres d’éducation canadiens

bringing Canadian education to the world
l’éducation canadienne sur la scène mondiale
International Student Admissions: Opportunities and Challenges

A presentation by
Gardiner Wilson, Director, Public Policy & Research, CEC Network to the
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CECN- Background

• Why a CECN? Canada traditionally popular but international competition sidelined us
• 1994 “partnership” with DFAIT, CIDA and CIC
• Objective: establish/re-establish Canada as a leading education destination
Value of International Education

- Student and academic exchanges
- Development cooperation
- Joint collaboration/research
- Diversity and intellectual stimulation in the classroom
- Globalization
- Revenues- for research, better facilities, scholarships, additional capacity
CECN- Focus

• Working with Canadian schools in support of revenue generation

• April 1, 1995: CECN launched Canadian Education Centres (CECs) in Kuala Lumpur, Seoul and Taipei with 70 Canadian clients
Who is CECN?

• Private, independent nonprofit company
• Model varies from quasi-governmental models like the UK, Australia and France
• Domestic network: 260+ Canadian clients engaged in student recruitment, education projects
CECN Clients

• Universities
• Community colleges and CEGEP
• Publicly funded secondary schools and boards
• Private secondary schools (profit and nonprofit)
• Publicly funded language schools
• Private language schools
• Career colleges
• Summer camps
About CECN

• User-based rather than a membership organization
• Currently represent 43 community colleges and 45 universities/university colleges
• Canada offices: Vancouver (HQ), Toronto and Montreal
• Overseas network: 20 offices in Asia Pacific, Latin America and Europe
• 21st overseas office opening in Russia in 2004
What does CECN do?

• “bringing Canadian education to the world”
  – International Student Recruitment
  – Canadian Cultural and Language Institutes: branding, positioning, pathway, revenue
  – International Education project management: ESL teacher recruitment
What do CECs do?

• Information resource centres and counselling services for international students
• Local market intelligence for Canadian clients
• Platform for Canadian schools to do direct promotion
What do CECs do?

• Branding, outreach, tailored promotional workshops/seminars
• Tailored products and services specifically for the college/university sector
• Identification of project opportunities
Overseas Opportunities Abound

• Growing demand for study in Canada at all levels and in every program
• Despite challenges, steady increase in the number of international students to Canada
• More than doubling international students since 1998
Overseas Opportunities Abound

• As of December 1, 2003, CIC counts 151,000 study permit holders in Canada
• As many as 100,000 per year short term (less than 6 months) students
• Student numbers growing- about 10% per annum although more slowly recently
• Economic impact of international students at least $4 billion annually
Overseas Opportunities Abound

• International student revenues are important funding source for schools
• International education is competitive and challenging
• Limitless opportunities for Canada but we must be efficient and competitive
• September 2002 Throne Speech to position Canada as choice destination for top students
• CECN sees growing interest amongst policy makers
Identifying the Challenges
International Student Recruitment: Keys to Success

• Ensure campus-wide buy-in to the international program
• Know your objectives and have a sensible, strategic business plan
• Make necessary investment- large startup costs must be sustained until the revenues start
• Make necessary HR investment- marketing and admissions staff
Keys to Success, cont’d

• Create self-sustaining infrastructure, i.e. reinvest international student fees into program
• Ensure cross-campus coordination- recruitment, admissions, languages support, housing
• Market aggressively in chosen markets with 2 objectives:
  1. Brand recognition for your institution and Canada
  2. To directly recruit students
Keys to Success, cont’d

• Ensure students are well looked after; best advertisement is positive personal feedback
• Review/benchmark admissions procedures against Canadian universities and offshore competitors
• Look for potential deterrents to the recruitment of high quality students and fix them
• Streamline admissions procedures to ensure both speed and flexibility
The Admissions Challenge

• November 1988, ARUCC, AUCC and CAGS “A Warm Welcome- Recruitment/admission of International Students to Canadian Universities- Policies and Procedures and Capacity”

• Report concluded that “Canadian universities have begun to recognize the importance of an effective strategy for the recruitment and admission of international students…”
The Admissions Challenge

• Report contained an outline of good practices being undertaken by a number of institutions

• Report concluded that “many challenges remain…” largely because of reduced resources
The Admissions Challenge

• Considerable progress has been made— institutions to be congratulated
• CECN has recognized desirability to expand admissions knowledge and expertise
• Admissions stream was added to CECN’s International Education Conference (IEC) (Halifax and Winnipeg)
• Admissions will be major focus of IEC this year in Montreal
A View from the Field

- CECN Managers’ perspective and student enquirer’s feedback
- Important to convert the initial enquiry into an application
- Consequently converting that application into a registration
- Must ensure that we ultimately keep this student for Canada
- Australian figures show 4 Letters of Acceptance for each registration
A View from the Field

• International students are “potential customers” - need customer relations mentality
• Many dollars spent marketing and promoting but…
• Sometimes a disconnect between marketing and admissions/registrar
• Our competitors provide seamless service from the initial enquiry to letter of acceptance
• Australians have enviable reputation in this regard but have perfected over last 25 years
What Students Want

International students have 2 priorities:

1. Speed
2. Flexibility
International Students Tell Us…

• They are shopping for information from a number of different countries
• Sometimes no reply; sometimes no response to questions asked
• If reply late, they may have signed up with faster response competitor country
• If possible, email or fax acceptance letter with original by mail
International Students Tell Us…

• Singapore: students will often go with the first institution that replies to them
• If no quick response to first choice they very quickly enquire elsewhere
• Overall impression of institution judged on speed of response
• New Delhi: most Indian students interested in Canadian university studies; however, visas higher amongst community colleges because they respond more quickly
Flexibility

• Maximum flexibility is crucial re: credentials, qualifications and local idiosyncrasies
• Rolling admissions serve international students well
• Recognize credit transfer
• Provide conditional acceptance if possible
How to Improve the Admissions Procedure

• In a perfect world…
• Revenues generated by international student fees reinvested into admissions
• Compelling website crucial- view as foreign student operating in second language
• Ensure website is as easily accessible and user friendly as possible for offshore students
• Separate information and admissions/registration stream for international students
Improving Admissions, cont’d

• Dedicated and trained staff who can become familiar with international education
• University College of the Cariboo: 3 totally dedicated admissions, 6 multilingual student advisors
• Institutions must respond to enquiries within 48 hours- this is industry standard
• Have system to allow international students to track their applications electronically
Improving Admissions, cont’d

- Advise CEC Managers of contact information for international admissions staff
- More flexibility on conditional acceptance, start times, documents acceptance, credit transfer
- Admissions staff at recruitment events with ability to offer on-the-spot acceptance
- Customer relations approach while maintaining institutional standards
How can CECN help?

• Counselling and promotion at 20 offices in 17 overseas markets; adding Russia soon
• Branding Canada- 70% choose destination based on country
• Niche based marketing support to individual institutions and sectors
CECN Products for Colleges & Universities

- Alumni events
- Scholarship administration
- Proctoring exams and onsite CAEL language examination
- Certify and endorse academic and other documents
- Due diligence interviews in high fraud markets prior to letter of acceptance
CECN Products cont’d

- Advice on reputation and reliability of local institutions
- Advice on reputation and reliability of local education agents
- Competitor countries information
- Canada-based Marketing and Client Service teams can assist in marketing plans
- Market intelligence including immigration advice
CECN Products cont’d

• School visits and outreach visits to help establish local education contacts
• Completed Application Program to fast track rigorously pre-screened applications
• Student seminars, workshops, targeted outreach visits
• Of course, our 35-40 annual Canadian Education Fairs
International Education Conference

• Professional development opportunity for international educators
• Unique networking opportunity- meet overseas CEC Managers
• Admissions one of key streams in our annual Conference- this year in Montreal
• Last year looked at: Russian credentials, credit transfer/advanced placement, new technology
• Previous years: Indian credentials, Chinese credentials, language testing
Other CECN Tools

- StudyCanada.ca website- now 12 and soon-to-be 14 languages
- CECN participation at NAFSA conference in US
- CECN participation with AUCC at National Association for College Admission Counselling (NACAC)
Other CECN Tools

- CECN Go Abroad Fair in Toronto- October 1,2- www.goabroadfair.ca
- International Education Conference in Montreal- November 22, 23- www.cecnetwork.ca
- Annual Agent Fair in Montreal- November 24, 25- www.cecnetwork.ca
Final Note

• Incoming ARUCC President Yves Jodoin (UQAM) has been tireless advocate for registrars

• He will serve your organization well