AUCC’s advocacy program continues in full force – following up on Budget 2013 commitments; focusing our pre-budget priorities for 2014; and continuing to work in partnership with others on longer term goals, including internationalization and aboriginal inclusion.

In recent weeks I have participated in the Governor General’s mission to Africa; spoken at the Lloyd Barber Summit on Aboriginal Post-secondary Education; been a panelist at the Mitacs policy conference; and moderated a session on university-private sector collaboration at a national meeting of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce; and spoke at Congress in Victoria on campus-community collaboration and on campus internationalization. Later in the month, I will be attending the Canada-Mexico Roundtable on Aboriginal Higher Education.

I am particularly pleased that faculty and staff at member institutions have found our quick facts on jobs, skills and income useful and are using them in op-eds, convocation addresses and Board meetings. As noted below, we are starting to see a shift in public commentary.

Advocacy update

AUCC’s Board of Directors will meet June 19 to sharpen the focus of our pre-budget advocacy for 2014. As reported in the May 9 AUCC Update, our advocacy this year will concentrate on...
strengthening the research enterprise at universities, through funding for granting councils, research infrastructure and a new approach to the institutional costs of research.

Since the Board and membership meetings in April, AUCC staff have been meeting with Parliamentarians and federal government officials to gauge the government’s views on 2014 priorities, and to begin making the case for strengthening university research.

AUCC’s presentation on jobs, skills and income is helping to shape these policy discussions. The focus on the talent produced by universities – and the contribution university graduates make to innovation and competitiveness in Canada – is an important foundation for our arguments to enhance university research. Making the link between the research environment at universities and the skills graduates gain through their exposure to innovative faculty and hands-on research experiences will underpin our advocacy for 2014. Further details on how AUCC staff have been sharing the facts on university graduates’ jobs, skills and income in the next item in this letter.

Staff have also been following up on key elements of the 2013 federal budget. We understand that the design of the Building Canada fund, which was announced in the budget, has not yet been determined by the government, and no decision has been made yet on whether there will be a section of this fund specifically designated for university projects undertaken with municipalities or provinces. It is anticipated that the program design of this fund will be considered by Cabinet in the fall. You will also find in this letter (see page 5) information on consultations being undertaken by the government on the Canada Job Grant program. Again, it has not yet been determined whether some university programs could be eligible for grants under this program.

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance has launched its annual pre-budget consultations on the 2014 budget this month. Input to the online consultation is due August 15, 2013. We will share key messages with member institutions to help ensure alignment of views in the university community. AUCC will participate in the online consultations and will prepare its annual submission to Parliamentarians on pre-budget priorities this fall, followed by providing more specific details on universities’ priorities to the Minister of Finance in November.

Busting myths and sharing the facts on jobs, skills and income

The effort by AUCC member institutions in dispelling myths and disseminating facts around university graduates and labour market needs is yielding results. Action on the jobs, skills and income debate continues to be a Board-directed strategic focus for the Association.

Media relations has been a major component of this campaign and universities shared efforts have helped pivot the national debate in the post-budget period to greater questioning of the so-called “skills gap.” On May 21 and 22, an AUCC op ed on universities as an economic asset that addresses labour market needs was published in eight major dailies across Canada. We are increasingly seeing AUCC data used in media stories related to skills and education, including information distributed to members and media in our fact sheet, Canada’s skills gap: Reality Check. The leadership of Canada’s university presidents through speeches and commentaries on this topic in local, regional and national media has been very helpful in shifting and expanding the discussion. A good example is the May 17 Macleans OnCampus story, The myth of the unemployed university graduate.
We are ramping up our use of social media – including Twitter and YouTube – to correct misleading information and promote the facts around higher education and university graduates.

The jobs agenda is also a strong focus in our advocacy efforts. AUCC staff have led a number of presentations and briefings on this topic with Parliamentarians, PMO staff, industry leaders and member institutions. We will soon expand upon our data-driven efforts with a new video testimonial campaign where graduates will share their personal stories on university leading to rewarding careers and other opportunities. We are working with universities directors of communications and alumni directors to identify candidates for these short videos, which will be launched as part of our upcoming “back-to-school” communications campaign (see next item for more details on this campaign).

AUCC is also collaborating with major private sector organizations that are tackling the skills challenge. We will be working with the Canadian Council of Chief Executives on its new multi-year initiative on issues related to jobs, skills, opportunities and income. This project will culminate in a national conference in fall of 2014. We are partnering with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce on its ongoing skills initiative (see item on page 4 for more details).

“Back-to-school” 2013

AUCC is gearing up for our annual “back-to-school” communications campaign. Last year’s campaign saw op-eds published in the Globe and Mail, Toronto Star, The Hill Times and Research Money, and our data being quoted by dozens of media outlets. The 2013 effort will focus on the value of a university degree. This relates to both the personal and family decision to invest in university education, as well as government support of universities. Of course, the “jobs, skills and income theme” outlined above will continue to be a strong focus for AUCC’s work.

The national media relations component of our fall back-to-school campaign will include a new “quick facts” document related to employment and income.

Over a six-week period beginning in mid-August, we will pursue individual stories with media contacts and aim to place op-eds relating to this theme in national print media.

To support member institutions’ back-to-school communications in local/regional media markets, we will provide suggested storylines, key messages and related statistics in early August.

Canadian Chamber of Commerce reaches out to universities on skills agenda

As noted earlier, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce is focusing on enhancing Canada’s competitiveness and prosperity through skills development, with AUCC as a partner. The Chamber launched an outreach activity this month which calls for local chambers and boards of trade to expand their connections with their local secondary and/or postsecondary institutions. The Chamber has identified the skills shortage as the number one barrier to competitiveness in Canada –
and this campaign to enhance linkages between educators and employers aims to help resolve the imbalance between supply and demand in local labour markets.

The Chamber is encouraging its members to establish relations with universities in a variety of ways, including participating on a workforce planning board; serving as an intermediary for co-op placements with businesses; introducing the business community to faculty members to inform them of local labour market needs; and initiating other partnerships or arrangements to close the skills gap in local communities. This is a timely opportunity for universities to work with local Chamber members as part of AUCC’s new narrative commitment to cultivate and engage in partnerships and to continue our strategic efforts to broaden the public narrative on the jobs, skills and income agenda.

For more information, please contact Sarah Anson-Cartwright, the Chamber’s director of skills policy, at sanson-cartwright@chamber.ca or at (613) 238-4000, ext. 236 or Greg Fergus, director, public affairs, at AUCC at gfergus@aucc.ca or ext.229.

---

**NRC transformation redirects focus**

Earlier this month, The National Research Council announced in May its much anticipated transformation into an industry-focused research and technology organization. The transformation is redirecting the NRC from its recent emphasis on basic research activities. It will now focus much more on the identified research needs of Canadian businesses, through a research contracting model that is similar to Germany's Fraunhofer Institutes. This shift is designed to assist Canadian businesses address the gap between early stage R&D and commercialization.

Gary Goodyear, Minister of State (Science and Technology), has stated that the restructured NRC will focus on providing Canadian industry with access to strategic research and development, technical services and specialized scientific infrastructure in order to build a more innovative Canadian economy.

The impact of NRC’s transformation remains unclear as details on the specific changes to programs within the organization have not yet been released. AUCC will continue to monitor this issue and will keep member institutions apprised of developments.

---

**The Canada Foundation for Innovation launches community consultations**

The Canada Foundation for Innovation has launched a community consultation on potential adjustments to its core funding mechanisms: the Leading Edge Fund/New Initiatives Fund, the Leaders Opportunity Fund, the College-Industry Innovation Fund and the Infrastructure Operating Fund. The purpose of the consultations is to:

- identify opportunities for better alignment with institutional and community needs;
- make adjustments to the design of CFI’s funds to address evolving priorities; and
• provide an important means for the CFI to generate high quality research infrastructure proposals that will contribute to enhancing the capacity of institutions and their researchers to conduct world-class research and technology development.

The consultation process will take place at various locations across the country – with dates and locations yet to be released. To guide these discussions, CFI has developed a consultation paper. Members of the university community who are not able to attend an in-person consultation will be encouraged to submit written comments to CFI’s programs and planning team by July 15, 2013.

AUCC staff have met with CFI to discuss the consultations, and will continue to work with officials to gain a clear understanding of how potential new investments in CFI could be used to enhance various research needs in the university community.

CFI is also launching an online tool to help connect the private sector with interested CFI-funded labs and facilities at Canadian universities. In the coming weeks, some institutions will receive a request to register their facilities and labs through CFI’s new online listing. The registration process will be voluntary, but CFI hopes that universities will embrace this opportunity. More information will be sent shortly to the offices of vice-presidents, research.

---

Consultations held on Canada Job Grant program

Consultations on the Canada Job Grant program announced in Budget 2013 were recently held across Canada. Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Canada Diane Finley launched the consultations in Brantford, Ontario in mid-April. Sessions were held in May and early June in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Halifax, St. John’s, Montreal, Edmonton, Toronto and Ottawa. Participation at these events is by invitation only.

Despite the inclusion of universities in the consultation process, at this stage it is not clear whether universities will be included in the program as eligible training institutions, particularly since the budget stated that the grant would be short-term, and universities were not mentioned among the eligible training institutions. Businesses with a plan to train Canadians for an existing job or better job will be eligible to apply for the grant. It will provide access to a maximum $5,000 federal contribution per person toward training at eligible training institutions. This means the grant could provide a maximum of $15,000 per person or per training unit.

Final decisions on the program parameters – including eligible institutions, programs and duration of study — will be made during the negotiations with the provinces set to start this summer. Federal officials are hoping that the Canada Job Grant program will be implemented as of April 2014, when the current labour market agreements are set to expire. Input provided during the consultations will be used during the provincial negotiations.
Update on Canadian Council on Animal Care

AUCC’s Board of Directors is emphasizing the need for independent oversight of the use of animals in research – a move promoted by potential changes to the mandate and activities of the Canadian Council on Animal Care. The council is currently consulting widely on its future direction, following cuts in funding announced by the federal granting councils.

The Board of AUCC agreed that the role CCAC has played in providing an independent, third-party voice in assessing the responsible use of animals and accrediting universities, hospitals, and other agencies who use animals for research is essential, and should be part of the core activities funded by the granting councils. The Board also believes in the importance of a “made in Canada” solution, which would keep responsibility for oversight here, rather than outsourced to agencies in other countries such as the United States.

AUCC staff shared these positions at a preliminary consultation held by CCAC in early May in Ottawa.

Representatives from the granting agencies, who helped lead the consultation, expressed a clear commitment to CCAC and to preserving a Canadian system for the ethical care and treatment of animals in research. The granting agencies stressed, however, that CCAC would need to become more effective and efficient and to provide greater clarity and transparency to its stakeholders in the way it uses public funding.

Other participants at the consultation, including university vice-presidents, research, and other experts from the university community, expressed a need for greater recognition of the resources universities are contributing to animal care on campuses across Canada.

No decisions were made at this preliminary consultation. CCAC will lead further consultations with the university community and other stakeholders in the coming months. AUCC will continue to closely monitor the consultation process and keep members informed of developments.

STIC report says Canada risks eroding competitive advantage

The third Science, Technology and Innovation Council “state of the nation” report, released in mid-May, says Canada risks erosion of its competitive talent advantage if it does not make significant investments in research and education. STIC’s 2012 report, entitled Canada’s Science, Technology and Innovation System: Aspiring to Global Leadership, tracks Canada’s progress on a number of innovation indicators, from a baseline set in 2008.

The report findings are no surprise. It says that Canada continues to rank in the mid-levels as a performer in science, technology and innovation when compared to other countries. While noting that Canada can celebrate the high quality of talent coming out of our postsecondary institutions – and calling that talent a “competitive advantage” – the report signals that the country requires real improvement in other areas. It highlights as key challenges transferring knowledge to other sectors;
deploying science, technology and innovation talent to the best advantage of the labour force; and, in particular, enhancing private sector investments in R&D, which continue to lag behind many other countries.

Council members identified five key “aspirational” indicators – strategic areas for improvement – where Canada must invest to break into the ranks of the top five performing countries. They are:

- business performance of research and development (BERD) as a share of GDP
- business investment in information and communications technologies
- higher education expenditures on research and development (HERD) as a share of GDP
- science and engineering doctoral degrees granted per 100,000 population
- share of human resources in science and technology

A copy the report can be downloaded here. AUCC expects to highlight the report’s findings in our 2014 pre-budget advocacy strategy.

---

**Updates on Canada-Brazil initiatives**

AUCC, in partnership with the Canadian Bureau for International Education, completed a successful working-level visit to Brazil in late April-early May 2013. Senior representatives of 14 universities participated in the delegation which visited Recife, Natal and São Paolo. The delegation met with research funding bodies, private sector representatives and held institutional visits at the Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho (UNESP) and the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP), to advance our bilateral relationship in research collaboration and increase the number of graduate students coming to Canada within the Ciência Sem Fronteiras (Science Without Borders) program. Delegates also joined the annual meeting of the Association of Brazilian Higher Education Institutions’ Offices for International Relations (FAUBAI).

The visit helped raise the profile of Canadian universities amongst Brazilian counterparts, underlining Canadian universities’ capacity to contribute to the Canada-Brazil science, technology and innovation agenda. A brief report highlighting mission outcomes and opportunities for follow-up will be forthcoming and shared with international liaison officers.

A working-level delegation from the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) visited Canada in early June. The delegation monitored progress of the Ciência Sem Fronteiras (Science Without Borders) program through visits to university campuses across Canada to discuss current program status (success to date, lessons learned and future plans) and meet with Brazilian students. They reported being very pleased with results to date.

AUCC organized a roundtable for the delegation involving representatives from Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, International Science and Technology Partnerships Canada, Mitacs and the research granting councils to discuss current and future opportunities for collaboration.
Canadian campuses advance dialogue on Aboriginal higher education

Canadian universities are demonstrating their commitment to improving Aboriginal higher education outcomes through a series of campus events across the country.

The University of Regina hosted in late May the Lloyd Barber Summit on Aboriginal postsecondary education involving more than 25 Canadian universities. I moderated a panel on best practices and strategies to encourage and support Aboriginal student involvement in postsecondary education. The summit was an excellent opportunity to advance our collective agenda by showcasing successes and lessons learned and building a network of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders for higher education.

The University of Lethbridge will host a second annual Canada-Mexico Round Table on Aboriginal Higher Education June 21-22, with 10 Indigenous universities in Mexico and 15 universities from across Canada. The first meeting was held in Mexico City in March 2012. The event coincides with National Aboriginal Day (June 21). For more information, please see here.

The University of Manitoba is hosting the second International Indigenous Voices in Social Work conference July 8-11. Called “Indigenous Knowledges: Resurgence, Implementation and Collaboration”, this international gathering of Indigenous leaders, practitioners and representatives is intended to promote Indigenous engagement in social work practice and research. For more information, please see here.

Over the summer, AUCC will conduct its first annual update of the online directory of programs and services for Aboriginal students. This searchable database reflects universities’ ongoing commitment to meeting the educational needs of Aboriginal students by demonstrating the robust variety of programs and services specifically designed to help Aboriginal students access and succeed at Canadian universities. Since its launch in January 2013, more than 6,000 unique visitors have consulted the database. The directory is designed to be “evergreen” and we will continue to liaise with your staff to ensure that any changes in these programs and services are reflected in the database beyond the annual update. You can find the directory here.

Should you have questions about this resource, please contact Aïsha Dioury, government relations officer, at adioury@aucc.ca or ext. 293.

Diversity in higher education the focus at global associations’ meeting

A recent gathering in Manchester, England of university associations from around the world focused on the growing institutional diversity in higher education, and its impact on associations and networks around the globe. The meeting was attended by representatives from university and international education associations from Europe, Australia, Africa, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Scandinavia and the Commonwealth. AUCC was represented by Gail Bowkett, director, international relations.

Participants shared experiences in how their respective higher education systems are being shaped by increasing demands – from students, governments and societies – and how university
associations are responding to these changes. In order to manage diversity within their memberships, associations must focus on identifying shared goals and common interests; build awareness of the benefits of working together while meeting the needs of various subgroups; engage a broad range of members to share experiences and learn from each other; and ensure that all members have a clear venue to express their needs within the association, conference delegates agreed.

The Global Meeting of Associations is held every two years by the International Association of Universities and provides an opportunity for university associations to share expertise and discuss shared issues of interest.

---

**Directory of Canadian Universities refocuses on international students**

AUCC has released the 47th edition of its *Directory of Canadian Universities*, which provides information about member institutions and their programs of study. The book has been redesigned to focus primarily on the interests of international students. The foreign market has become increasingly important for the print edition, with many domestic students now opting for the online edition.

The online edition of the directory will also receive a make-over and re-launch in September as [www.universitystudy.ca](http://www.universitystudy.ca). This revitalized tool will enhance our support to members looking to attract students from both Canada and abroad. The AUCC site is a natural first point of contact for many international students, and is also very popular with domestic students – our online database of academic programs receives more than 50,000 queries per month. The on-line redesign will also allow AUCC to diversify the directory's revenue base by offering advertising space on [www.universitystudy.ca](http://www.universitystudy.ca) in the fall.