Conditions for Productive University International Linkages
A case study of the University of Alberta’s historical connections with China (1979-2005)

Carl Amrhein, Britta Baron, Cen Huang & Wei Liu
Norman Bethune (1890-1939)

Da Shan (Mark Rowswell) (1965- )

Chester Ronning (朗宁) (1894–1984)
“Wheat Diplomacy” in the early 1960s
Much of Canada’s oil production is in the Prairies.

Alberta’s oil sands

And the remaining production is off-shore:

- **Newfoundland**: 11.4%
- Saskatchewan: 16.1%
- British Columbia: 1.5%
- Manitoba: 0.7%
University of Alberta’s historical connections with China
(1979-2005)
“[…]I enrolled in the honours history program at the University of Alberta starting in the fall of 1951[…] . I wanted to study the history of China[…] . However, the first-year honours program contained only one history course, on Europe[…] . I went to the acting head of the department[…] . When I told him I wanted to study the history of China, he responded, “Why? There isn’t a future in it.” (I did not have the wit to say, “But oh, what a past.”) There was little hope of Chinese history being taught in the department, nor was it likely to be taught in the near future.” (Evans 2012, p35)
UAlberta’s Historical Connections with China: 1960s

- University expanded quickly
- Many students from Hong Kong, Taiwan and other Southeast Asian countries came to study
- No international tuition fee differentials charged
- People, particularly people from rural Alberta, were unhappy about the influx of international students
- Federal government first forbade international students to work, and later only allowed them to work on campus
1974-1979 During Harry Gunning’s presidency at UAlberta

• At the federal level, diplomatic ties established with China in 1970, followed by Trudeau’s visit to China in 1973

• International tuition differentials charged in Canada from late 70s, following steps of Thatcher in the U.K. and Reagan in the U.S.

• Peter Lougheed, Premier of Alberta (1971-1985), more open international outlook

• Harry Gunning, a Chemistry professor, UAlberta President (1974-1979), worked closely with Alberta government in international linkages

Harry Gunning
UAlberta President, 1974-1979
1979-1989 during Myer Horowitz’s presidency at UAlberta

• UAlberta should be more engaged with the world

• Department of Asian Languages and Literatures

• Centre for International Education and Development

• Associate vice-president (academic) international

• International Center for international students


• First UAlberta president to visit China
1989-1994 during Paul Davenport’s presidency at UAlberta

- Davenport: Internationalization not a priority
- The position of associate vice-president (academic) international eliminated
- 1989 Tian’an’men Event: Canadian Federal government decided to offer landed immigrant status to any Chinese scholars in Canada
- President of the University of Western Ontario (1994-2009)
1995-2005 during Rod Fraser’s presidency at UAlberta

• Rod Fraser: international as an integral part of the “optimal learning environment” and of the core aspect of a truly and indisputably distinguished university

• Re-established the position of associate vice-president (international affairs)

• Visited China 40 times in 10 years

• Worked with Alberta Premiere Ralph Klein in developing a clear China strategy, actively seeking collaboration with the Chinese government

• Ministry of Science & Technology (MOST)

• ECO-China

• China Institute

• Association of Canadian Chinese Professors (ACCP)
Conditions for UAlberta’s successful engagement with China: What can we learn from the history?
1. Pursuing a liberal, transformational and collaborative goal in internationalization

Diverse goals of internationalization:
A. Idealistic & social transformative goal
B. Liberal & educational goal
C. Instrumental & competitive goal

(Stier 2004; Warner 1992)

Goals pursued at UAlberta:
A. Liberal & educational goal
B. Idealistic & social transformative goal
C. Collaborative goal
A. The liberal educational goal

Rod Fraser (UAAlberta president 1995-2005):

An Internationalized curriculum is a very important part of an “optimal learning environment”. Such an environment must “better encompass an understanding of the global world in which we live. Graduates of the University of Alberta must be able to cope with the economic, cultural, social and political realities of an international society”. According to him, “Teaching and learning programs and the campus community must become global in perspective so that each student gains a significant international experience”.

B. The social transformative goal

Myer Horowitz (UAlberta president 1979-1989):

Horowitz did not believe in international tuition differentials. He channelled the differentials back to international students services.

Rod Fraser (UAlberta president 1995-2005):

He envisioned the University of Alberta as a university “whose faculty, staff and, especially, students are active citizens of the society of which we are part”. He believes that “We must expand our individual roles so that each of us contributes directly though services to one or more of our communities, from local to international.”

Use international differential fees to fund excellent international graduate students

ECO China Project: “The Yangtze River basin is one of the most important ecosystems of the world. If one university can make a difference, let’s be that one.”
C. The collaborative (not competitive) Goal

Rod Fraser (UAlberta president 1995-2005):

“Keeping our relentless focus on quality, we must be more selective on how we allot our relatively scarce resources.” For this reason, “We must become better at building new partnerships and enhancing existing ones. We must seek partners in Edmonton, throughout Alberta, across Canada, and around the world—partnerships amongst teaching scholars, amongst researchers, and amongst other educational institutions—partnerships with the private sector, with government, with alumni and with close friends.”
During Horowitz’s presidency, he established the position of Associate Vice-President (International), and elected to this position was Dr. Evans, the Chinese historian and China expert, who served as the second Cultural Officer in the Canadian embassy in Beijing.

During Fraser’s presidency, he appointed a Special Advisor and an Executive Assistant on China. He also tapped into the large pool of professors of Chinese origin in the ACCP, the only Chinese professors’ association in Canada, in China projects.

In addition, he envisioned the only China Institute in Canada as a “go to” place for expertise on China.
Success for CIDA projects in China

One important reason behind the success of CIDA projects in China is understanding the needs of China:

China, unlike many other developing countries, was not looking for assistance in meeting basic human needs (Wilson 2001), but in building capacities.

CIDA’s approach in establishing university linkages and developing human resources meets the needs of China during that historical period.
3. Senior leadership’s commitment to internationalization

Horowitz was the first president at U of A to visit China.

During his ten and half years as the U of A president, Fraser made close to 40 trips to China for the diverse purposes of institutional connections, student recruitment, alumni associations, governments and industries.

“Ultimately a university can have success in building international partnerships if the attitude at the top of the university, the president, is positive toward internationalization and espouses the international goal together with the other goals.” (Fraser 2013)
4. Grass root support from the academics

“[…] there need to be many faculty and staff and the members of the community at large that were supporting the international work and saw their interest in pursuing a much more aggressive internationalization.” (Interview with Dr. Fraser 2013)

“Strong leadership is important, but the leaders have to involve the faculties, the deans and the professors in the international agendas. U of A has a unique advantage. We have a Chinese professors’ association called ACCP with over 120 members. Each professor has a lab, a research program. They are cream of the cream in their own areas of research. And they also have roots in China. How can we mobilize this group of leaders to become our grass root support for connections with China? They each can have a linkage in an area different from the next. The other institutions can only dream about this advantage that we have. … This group of professors are the treasure in internationalization that U of A has and nobody else has.” (Interview with the Special Advisor to Dr. Fraser on China relations 2013)
5. Involvement of governments in the universities’ international enterprise

Legacy of CIDA projects in China: the collaboration between the government and the universities at the international front;

University as a vanguard for the province and the country to internationalize their industries

UAlberta was successful in international relations when it worked closely with the Federal and Provincial governments
6. The economic pragmatic approach over the ideological critical approach

**Ideological critical approach international relations**
- Canadian response to 1989 Tian’an’men event
- Dalai Mama
- Confucius Institute

**Economic pragmatic approach international relations**
- Wheat sales in the 1960s to China despite the US government’s obstruction
- Canada’s recognition of the new China despite the negative Cold War atmosphere
- CIDA project in China: the business community lobbied the government to use development funds to support China trade (Wilson 2001)
- CIDA: Canada’s long-term interests in China depended on China’s socio-economic development (Wilson 2001)
Conditions for Productive University International Linkages:

1. Pursuing a liberal, transformational and collaborative goal in internationalization;

2. Building and relying on in-house expertise on China issues;

3. Senior leadership’s high commitment to internationalization;

4. Grass root support from faculty members;

5. The involvement of federal and provincial governments in the universities’ international enterprises;

6. The economic and pragmatic approach in the government and university’s international relations
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Thanks