



ASSOCIATION OF
ATLANTIC
UNIVERSITIES

ASSOCIATION DES
UNIVERSITÉS DE
L'ATLANTIQUE

Response to the
Report of the
Atlantic Growth
Strategy
Subcommittee on
Innovation:

***A FASTER, MORE AGILE
AND CERTAIN ATLANTIC
CANADA***

Prepared by the
Association of Atlantic
Universities (AAU)

July 20, 2017

The Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) response to the Subcommittee’s Report (the Report) is prepared in the context of the Report’s desire to get **More from Post-Secondary Education Institutions** (pg.23).

The AAU’s member universities will fulfill that objective in the context of the Atlantic Growth Strategy’s (AGS) five pillars: Skilled workforce and Immigration; Trade and Investment; Innovation; Clean Growth and Climate Change, and Infrastructure, by addressing the Subcommittee’s Report Recommendations.

Our response builds upon the feedback from university representatives to the Subcommittee during the Stakeholder Engagement process.

Recommendation 1 – Support throughout the Innovation Lifecycle

- In addition to incorporation of “entrepreneurship” into the curricula of the region’s provincial flagship universities (e.g. Dalhousie University (Dal) - Starting Lean program; University of New Brunswick (UNB) - Technology Management & Entrepreneurship (TME); Memorial University of Newfoundland (Memorial) – Centre for Entrepreneurship) – it’s also finding its way into academic programming across the region’s “teaching universities”
- “Incubators or accelerators” are also emerging on university campuses (e.g. Momentum Initiative at Cape Breton University). Another initiative in Nova Scotia, the Sandbox Project, is a joint project hosted by Nova Scotia’s universities and the NSCC which brings together students, mentors, and advisers to take business and social concepts from idea to execution. Nova Scotia’s Sandboxes are at the pre-incubation level

Recommendation 2 – Expand or Improve Existing Government Supports

- Atlantic Canada’s university leaders strongly support the recently released report of the Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science, *Investing in Canada’s Future: Strengthening the Foundations of Canadian Research*
- Our universities endorse the Panel’s primary recommendation that annual Federal spending across its four main research funding agencies be increased from approximately \$3.5 billion to \$4.8 billion (and maintain a rebalancing of federal research funding towards investigator-driven research projects across the full diversity of disciplines and areas)
- The Panel’s recommendation to better coordinate efforts, processes and programming across the major Federal funding agencies aligns with our universities commitment to inter-institutional R&D collaboration, locally, nationally, and internationally to fully leverage the diversity and vitality of the research ecosystem in our region. Our commitment to collaboration and coordination is best demonstrated by Springboard Atlantic, a university-led research commercialization network
- Research excellence is found in universities of all sizes – an important principle for the AAU. We strongly support the idea that fundamental scientific research in Canada must be a level playing field for awarding funding to universities regardless of their size
- Our universities believe that if the Government can take the steps to implement the Advisory Panel’s recommendations, the R&D enterprise at all Atlantic Canada’s universities and the research ecosystem in our region will benefit. It is important that our universities secure regional, national, and international industrial and government agency support for research that leads to commercialization opportunities, innovation, economic growth, and social development across the region
- It is essential that our universities and region fully-capitalize upon and succeed in the most significant federal research competitions and opportunities, specifically: CFREF; CERC; CFI; CRC; all Tri-Agency programs
- Overall, our universities support mechanisms, processes and institutional supports which bridge research and development and commercialization

Recommendation 4 – Support for Clusters

- Universities are enthusiastic about the federal government’s May 24th announcement of its “*Innovation Super Cluster Initiative*” to “jump start innovation in high growth sectors” such as oceans, energy, clean technology, and bio-sciences
- Atlantic universities have demonstrated a strong commitment to collaboration that enhances Canada’s economic productivity, most recently in the context of an oceans research supercluster that networks UPEI, MUN, DAL, and UNB
- Funding for “super clusters” will promote and encourage vital partnerships between academia and industry with potential benefits for middle class Atlantic Canadians

Recommendation 5 – Support for Social Enterprise

- Public engagement is a priority for universities, with an increasing emphasis on growing community capacity for social innovation and social entrepreneurship. This activity mobilizes people and knowledge in the service of communities, strengthening the social fabric of our region, and supporting participation in the economy. Universities recognize that governments alone cannot address the challenges facing our region. Through collaboration, new insights, and policy options, universities are helping to create the ‘smart and sustainable’ social infrastructure needed for a more prosperous and democratic society
- Social sciences and the humanities (the liberal arts) taught at many of the region’s universities are evolving and vital to Atlantic Canada’s future prosperity and social development
- Many of the region’s universities have vibrant social enterprise activities that engage students and, focus on social enterprise (e.g. Mount Saint Vincent and Saint Mary’s universities and Nova Scotia Community College Sandbox) and, on social innovation (e.g. the CLARI project at Saint Mary’s University in partnership with Mount Saint Vincent University)
- The “soft skills” most often listed as desirable by employers include relationship building, communication and problem-solving skills, analytical and leadership abilities – attributes developed and honed through studies in the social sciences and the humanities
- A key component of universities’ missions, along with teaching and research, is “community service” which significantly contributes to the growth of social enterprises across the region

Summary

The Report makes clear the “need for a collaborative regional approach” and concludes that “PSEs also demonstrate an understanding of the need to work regionally....”

To that end, university and community college leaders will meet this summer in Charlottetown with Henry Demone, Chair, Atlantic Growth Strategy Advisory Committee, to consider the ways and means for even greater inter-institutional regional collaboration to help fulfill the objectives of the Atlantic Growth Strategy.

AAU Members

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