

Global Engagement Strategy

2023–2027

**NORTHERN ALBERTA
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**



A core component of NAIT's vision is our promise to industry:

to deliver the exceptional talent and critical innovation they need to grow and compete. Internationalization plays an important role in delivering on that promise, supporting the development of a highly diverse talent pool with the competencies and skills needed to succeed in an increasingly global marketplace.

With this global engagement strategy, we commit to creating a truly global environment at NAIT: bringing more international students to our campus, fostering intercultural competence among our community of learners and staff, and creating opportunities for partnerships with like-minded institutions around the world. This strategy will serve as our roadmap, guiding our internationalization efforts — and ensuring we remain industry's most trusted post-secondary partner.



THE

NAIT

EFFECT

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

Amplifying The NAIT Effect

This global engagement strategy is designed to complement NAIT's institutional strategic plan, The NAIT Effect, which outlines our vision to support meaningful careers, vibrant communities, and globally competitive industries through transformative polytechnic education. The priorities and actions outlined in this document are key to fulfilling our four promises to learners, staff, industry, and Alberta. Specifically, this strategy will ensure NAIT remains responsive to the needs of our province and our changing world through global engagement.

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Land acknowledgment

At NAIT, we honour and acknowledge that the land on which we learn, work and live is Treaty Six territory.

This place is a traditional homeland for the First Nations and Métis Peoples, and today we are all part of this treaty land. The traditional name of this place is Amiskwaciy Waskahikan [a-mis-kwa-CHEE wah-SKAY-gun], which we also call the city of Edmonton.

There is a long history that has brought us to be on this land. At NAIT, we seek to learn from that history and the lessons that have come before us, and to draw on the wisdom of the First Peoples in Canada who have lived on this land from time immemorial.

Through this land acknowledgement, we have an opportunity and responsibility to reflect on the impacts of colonialism, historically and currently. Only through learning can we move forward in truth and reconciliation, and to a better future together.

A message from the President



Alberta's industries demand new skills and new talent to keep pace with a rapidly changing economy. Just as we've done for the past 60 years, NAIT can help meet that demand by producing work-ready graduates, delivering the kind of hands-on applied and technical education that equips students with the skills and knowledge employers want. But in 2023 and beyond, it won't be enough to look only within the borders of our own province or even our own country for those students.

With local employers struggling amidst ongoing labour shortages, more than ever, we must increasingly look abroad. In that context, we at NAIT have embarked on this important global engagement strategy. This document lays out our goals and desired outcomes related to internationalization, and will guide our efforts as we look to build a more diverse talent pool with the intercultural competence and global skills Alberta needs today and in the future.

Our internationalization efforts are threefold. First, we want to attract more people from more places to NAIT. But international education is about much more than just growing international student numbers. We must also provide international students with the right mix of services and supports, from the moment they arrive until the day they graduate, to help them stay in Canada and strengthen Alberta's workforce. Some of them may even start their own businesses and create new jobs across the province. At the same time, we also want to ensure

Canadian students have the intercultural skills to succeed in a global marketplace. Achieving all those goals will require a strong commitment to collaboration and global learning both within our own community and with a network of partners across the globe.

The internationalization efforts outlined in this strategy will make our campus more diverse and also more equipped for global collaboration, both of which are necessary for developing new ideas and perspectives that lead to greater innovation. They build on and complement the work already being done to make our campus more inclusive, such as our [Aboriginal Strategy](#) and the [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#).

On behalf of everybody at NAIT, we are proud to set forth a global engagement strategy that will not only grow international student enrolment at our institution but, in doing so, help build a more diverse and skilled workforce, support Alberta's economic growth and development, advance applied research and innovation, and contribute to the cultural vibrancy of our communities. As it pertains to the internationalization of our institution, it is the bridge between where we are and where we want to be.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Gunter', written in a cursive style.

Laura Jo Gunter
President and CEO

Our strategy at a glance

Pillar One - Educating global talent for local needs	
Objectives	Key Results
1.1 Modernize our international attraction and enrolment practices so that international students comprise 30% of NAIT's student population by 2027.	Prioritize recruitment activities in countries with a Student Direct Stream and leverage regional representation in key markets to render greater applicant conversions.
	Improve our admission processes to both enhance the applicant experience and yield program acceptances quickly.
	Implement a tuition pricing framework to complement the growth goals and explore issuing entrance awards to attract top international talent.
1.2 Expand capacity for increased international student growth in programs that appeal to global talent and align with Alberta's labour market needs.	Schools will increase the capacity for international student enrollment in key programs of study and align marketing and recruitment resources to programs slated for growth.
	Leverage market intelligence to launch new degree and diploma programs and offer post-graduate certificate programs and professional development certificates geared to experienced international students.
	Grow and promote NAIT's entrepreneurial programs to align with government immigration pathways.
1.3 Facilitate entry into the workforce for international students and support their ability to succeed in their chosen professions.	Advocate and collaborate with our partners in government for policy changes that benefit international students.
	Expand work-integrated learning opportunities for international students.
	Enhance international students job search skills and help them grow their professional networks.

Pillar Two - Student success in a globalized world	
Objectives	Key Results
2.1 Increase international student success and wellbeing by providing targeted wrap-around settlement, transition, and engagement supports.	Develop a retention plan and related resources to support international student persistence, including piloting emergency bursaries.
	Implement a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform to streamline access to multiple international student services thereby enhancing the overall experience.
	Establish new settlement programming that includes pertinent academic and English language supports, and improved access to quality off-campus housing.

Pillar Two • Student success in a globalized world

Objectives	Key Results
2.2 Prepare NAIT graduates for the 21st century global labour market by providing intercultural development opportunities to all learners.	Integrate global experiences into our programs of study, such as through collaborative online international learning (COIL) and faculty-led international field trips.
	Design co-curricular opportunities aimed at developing intercultural competence among all students.
	Integrate intercultural learning outcomes into our program review process.
2.3 Create inclusive learning environments for all students by equipping NAIT staff with greater intercultural competence.	Embed more intercultural resources into our teaching and learning supports for staff.
	Implement a central intercultural consultancy function to support staff and faculty incorporating intercultural learning into their classrooms.
	Create greater opportunities for staff to participate in international faculty exchanges and COIL initiatives.

Pillar Three • Partnerships for global engagement

Objectives	Key Results
3.1 Strengthen NAIT's brand and reputation worldwide as a trusted polytechnic institution.	Increase NAIT's presence at signature international events.
	Foster and leverage relations with NAIT's alumni network around the world.
	Strengthen NAIT's credibility and recognition through greater system-to-system engagement with other polytechnic institutions around the world.
3.2 Deliver in-demand technical skills around the world to advance Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).	Deliver capacity-building programs for workforce development around the world by streamlining market intelligence and decision support tools to prioritize project selection that aligns with NAIT's specializations.
	Expand our micro-credentials and corporate training offerings in countries that align with student growth.
	Provide a consultancy function in healthcare simulation to international organizations seeking to build capacity in the medical field.
3.3 Expand NAIT's partnerships with reputable institutions, organizations, and governments abroad.	Focus partnerships on like-minded institutions capable of scaling up multiple international activities, from student mobility to COIL.
	Establish a central consultancy function for partnership development at NAIT, including providing policy and process clarity and seeking funding opportunities to support participation.
	Leverage a campus-wide partnership repository for greater collaboration between departments.

Why NAIT needs a global engagement strategy

Today's workforce requires a broad mix of intercultural skills and competencies to succeed in an increasingly diverse and globalized economy. To create that workforce, both the Government of Canada and the Government of Alberta are committed to promoting the international education of Canadians abroad and to supporting international students here in Canada. As one of Canada's largest and leading polytechnic schools, NAIT is well-positioned to help the government in reaching its goals — and through this strategy, we now have a clear and unified vision to drive the expansion of our global engagement efforts.

A priority for Canada and Alberta

The Government of Canada strongly believes that international education is essential to the country's long-term competitiveness. Through its [2019–2024 International Education Strategy](#), the federal government has put in place a number of initiatives to ensure Canada remains among the world's top destinations for learning, which helps diversify the education sector, boost Canada's innovation capacity, promote global ties, and foster a vibrant Canadian economy.

One such initiative emerging from the federal strategy is the [Global Skills Opportunity program](#), which aims to increase the participation of post-secondary students in international learning opportunities both on campus and abroad, with a particular focus on Indigenous students, students with disabilities, and low-income students. By making it easier to access study and work abroad programming, this initiative is helping to build the intercultural competencies needed for the future of work.

At the provincial level, two new strategies have been developed that both aim to establish Alberta as a top

destination for international education in Canada. In its [International Education Strategy](#), the provincial government calls on all post-secondary institutions to play a key role in attracting and developing the talent and skills needed by Alberta's industry. It also commits Alberta's schools to expanding their educational exports to more partners around the world and to ensure learners are equipped with the skills and competencies they need to participate effectively in the global economy.

The [Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs Strategy](#), meanwhile, looks to transform the province's adult learning system by improving access and the student experience, developing skills, supporting innovation and commercialization, strengthening internationalization and system governance, and improving sustainability and affordability.

NAIT has developed this global engagement strategy to ensure our institution is aligned with and can support these federal and provincial strategies — and to guide our cross-departmental efforts in this area.



Canada is a top education destination

International students are drawn to Canada because of our high academic standards, safe and welcoming communities, work opportunities, and exceptional student experience. International enrollment at Canadian post-secondary institutions grew from 7.2% in 2010 to almost 20% in 2020.¹

Key trends influencing internationalization

In addition to federal and provincial directives, NAIT's global engagement strategy is also shaped by the current trends affecting internationalization efforts among all post-secondary institutions.



Emerging markets and mobility shifts

Demographic shifts in Asia and Africa are resulting in increasingly large youth populations looking for higher education opportunities. At the same time, more countries around the world are looking to bring students to their institutions, so recruitment strategies must shift to stay competitive.



Addressing disparities and inequities

Climate change, war, gender and racial injustices, and the rise of political extremism all contribute to the growing disparities affecting populations around the world. An inclusive and equitable education system that actively partners with many different countries can help promote greater access to learning opportunities for all.



Changing student needs and expectations

Today's students are looking to get greater value from their investment in international education. Providing programs and services with a focus on intercultural agility, career development and entry into the labour market, such as work-integrated learning, will be key to meeting those expectations.



New technological frontiers

Students are seeking simple, streamlined paths to achieve their academic, personal, and professional goals. Investing in technology can help convert prospects to enrolments, provide enhanced student supports, and create opportunities to connect virtually with other students around the world.

The skills to thrive in diverse communities and globalized workplaces

Intercultural competence refers to the capability to shift perspective and adapt behaviour in response to cultural differences and commonalities in values, expectations, beliefs and practices.² In effect, its goal is to ensure people behave both appropriately and effectively in various cultural contexts or with individuals who have grown up in different cultural systems.³ When supported by a critical mindset, heart-set and skillset, cross-cultural collaboration helps fuel innovation and productivity. Organizations that prioritize intercultural learning (along with equity, diversity, and inclusion) also see an increase in trust and commitment from the individuals who work and study there.

To remain relevant, post-secondary institutions like NAIT need to take a systems approach to fostering an interculturally competent organization. They need to take the time to fully understand what students need to thrive on campus and in their studies, then implement cross-functional approaches to meet those needs. That includes creating diverse, inclusive classrooms and communities on campus where everyone feels welcomed, safe, and understood. Key to that is helping faculty, staff and students prepare for collaboration on diverse teams by developing the intercultural skills they need to communicate effectively and appropriately with people who are linguistically and culturally different from themselves.

Our strategic pillars

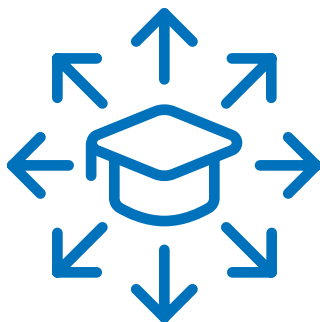
To help prioritize our international pursuits in the years to come, our global engagement strategy is built around three core pillars:



Pillar 1

Educating global talent for local needs

NAIT is a trusted destination for global talent — attracting, educating, and facilitating entry into the workforce for international students.



Pillar 2

Student success in a globalized world

NAIT ensures every student has access to inclusive supports and intercultural learning experiences that allow them to thrive in today's global economy.



Pillar 3

Partnerships for global engagement

NAIT pursues opportunities to collaborate globally to address real-world challenges, nurturing a network of partners to help advance our mutual goals.



\$823M

International education fosters economic growth

In 2016, international students spent more than \$823 million in Alberta on tuition, accommodation, and discretionary spending — supporting more than 10,000 jobs across the province.⁴



Pillar 1: Educating global talent for local needs

Amidst labour shortages across all sectors and industries, Alberta can no longer rely solely on local talent if it wants to diversify its economy and remain globally competitive. The province needs more skilled newcomers than ever before — and NAIT is well-positioned to attract diverse learners from around the world and offer them the skills and education they need to bolster Alberta’s labour force and economic prosperity.

Filling the gaps in Alberta’s workforce

NAIT is a leader in championing experiential learning and providing students with exceptional competencies and credentials. Our primary goal is to deliver career-ready learners to companies in Alberta and beyond — and it is increasingly important that these learners come from all parts of the world. Even though international student enrolment in Canada is on track to reach all-time highs, almost half of those students choose to study in Ontario. To meet the needs of Alberta’s industry, NAIT must do its part to bring in more learners to Alberta from more places around the globe.

Goals and actions

As part of NAIT’s promise to industry, Pillar 1 of our global engagement strategy focuses on the following multi-year goals:

- **Evolve NAIT’s sustainable program mix to appeal to international students.** We want to develop and offer the right mix of innovative programs and credentials that are attractive to international students and meet Alberta’s evolving labour market needs.
- **Diversify and grow our enrolment base on a global scale.** We want to expand into new markets and new sectors, becoming a magnet for diverse global talent and bringing even more international students to Alberta to support the province’s economic development.

To achieve these goals, we will work toward the following objectives and key results:



Attracting international students is an important tactic for addressing Alberta’s projected labour shortages.

1.1 Modernize our international attraction and enrolment practices so that international students comprise 30% of NAIT's student population by 2027

Recognizing that diversification is key to meeting NAIT's long-term goal of sustainable growth, we will continue to expand recruitment efforts to new markets, widening our global footprint. NAIT's in-house recruitment specialists will directly engage with prospective students through international school visits, global fairs, and other events. Initially, we will expand our network of reputable recruitment agents; however, the ultimate goal is to reduce reliance on agents and have a stronger NAIT presence in key markets. And through the ongoing expansion of regional digital marketing campaigns (e.g., online advertising; email campaigns; social media), we can ensure that the promotion of our value proposition takes on an adaptive, localized approach that will appeal to local audiences and help them see how NAIT can help fulfil their academic and professional goals.

Over the long term, some of our target countries include:

- Pacific Asia: China, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong
- South Asia: India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan
- South-East Asia: Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia
- Africa and the Middle East: Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.)
- Caribbean / Central and South America: Mexico, Jamaica, Colombia, Brazil

However, much of our immediate focus will be on recruiting students in countries participating in the federal government's Student Direct Stream program, which significantly expedites the approval of study permits for international learners. And to meet and exceed our 3-year target of 30% international students, NAIT will leverage regional representation in key markets to render greater applicant conversions.

Because international students have so many post-secondary institutions to consider, a fast, streamlined application process may be the deciding factor. At NAIT, we are committed to making improvements to our admissions process by embracing digital solutions to deliver a timely, student-friendly experience for all applicants, and by working across our programs and service areas to support customized applicant outreach for greater conversion rates.

Finally, knowing that price is an important input into international student decision making, we will develop an international tuition pricing framework that reflects NAIT's unique value proposition, factors in our competitors' tuition baselines, and is targeted to the market segment we wish to attract. This framework will balance desired enrolment volumes with program profitability, and it will ensure that price points for comparable programs support a robust alternate offer approach for students who are not accepted into their first-choice program. To supplement the tuition framework, we will explore the use of entrance awards to attract and support top international talent in attending NAIT. Partnerships with international scholarship providers (e.g., governments, foundations, private companies) may play an important part in this regard, so we are actively seeking out new networking and partnership opportunities.



33%

Immigration matters

Immigrants account for 33% of all business owners. They create important local jobs in all sectors of our economy.⁵

1.2 Expand capacity for increased international student growth in programs that appeal to global talent and align with Alberta's labour market needs

First, by incorporating international objectives into our strategic enrolment management practices and using data and market intelligence, we will continue to collaborate with NAIT's 4 schools to increase program-specific international targets to achieve the optimal number and mix of students across degrees, diplomas, and certificate programs. These targets will be complimented by a broader enrollment infrastructure (e.g., staffing; recruitment and marketing efforts; and student services) focussed on student success.

Second, it is critical that NAIT keeps a finger on the pulse of what Alberta's employers require in terms of skills and talent and delivers a diverse mix of programming that meets those requirements. That means swiftly launching new degree and diploma programs that are more appealing to global talent and aligned with Alberta's labour market needs both today and tomorrow. If we are better able to anticipate future industry demands, we can offer responsive curricula and relevant programming to educate

international students in those emerging areas. We will also offer post-graduate certificate programs and professional development certificates, which could help attract talented and experienced mid-career professionals to NAIT who are looking to refine and enhance their skills so they can be more competitive in the labour market. Because previous post-secondary credentials are prerequisites for entry into post-graduate programs, they are generally directed at providing career-specific skills and frequently incorporate work-integrated learning, making them very attractive to international students.⁶

Through the [Alberta Graduate Entrepreneur Stream](#), the Government of Alberta encourages international graduates to start or buy businesses and stay in Alberta permanently. NAIT has a vibrant on-campus community dedicated to inspiring an entrepreneurial mindset through degree programs, mentorships, guest speakers, competitors, workshops, and networks. We will continue to grow and promote business and entrepreneurial programs that allow business-savvy international students to graduate with the skills needed to start up new businesses.



1.3 Facilitate entry into the workforce for international students and support their ability to succeed in their chosen professions

If international students want to stay in Canada after graduation, they need an open work permit — but not every academic program is eligible for the federal government’s Post-Graduation Work Permit Program (PGWPP). Also, the length of a work permit is often tied directly to how long a student spends in school in Canada. That means if an international student takes a one-year program, they won’t be able to stay in Canada for very long and are therefore less likely to be hired, even if they have in-demand, highly needed skills. That is why NAIT will continue to advocate and collaborate with our partners in government for policy changes to work permit and immigration pathways so more students are eligible for the PGWPP, allowing them to gain valuable work experience that will strengthen their permanent residency application.

International students generally face greater job search challenges than domestic students, with labour market experts saying the lack of real-world work experience is a primary barrier

to international students finding a job after they graduate.⁷ We will therefore work with our partners to expand work-integrated learning opportunities for international students to give them the kind of practical, hands-on experience desired by employers — and in doing so, break down perception barriers around the capabilities of international students that may make it difficult for them to enter the workforce today.

Finally, another challenge faced by international students trying to enter Alberta’s workforce after graduation is a lack of networking and interview experience. Aligning our career support services with our institutional growth goals will be important to making NAIT more attractive to people around the world. By enhancing international students’ job-search skills and helping them grow their networks by leveraging NAIT’s alumni, we can make it easier for them to obtain employment in their field once they obtain their post-graduation work permit.



Pillar 2: Student success in a globalized world

Academic and professional growth, development, and success can happen only in an environment where students feel safe, welcome, and included. Where diversity, belonging, understanding, and mental well-being are prioritized and promoted at all levels of our institution. And where intercultural and global perspectives and opportunities permeate our teaching and learning. NAIT is therefore committed to providing the safe learning spaces and the intercultural skills that will allow all students — domestic and international — to prosper and thrive both in the classroom and after graduation.

Intercultural competence applies to all

There is so much more to student success than mastering the skills outlined in the curriculum. It is also about understanding the wider world. That can be difficult for any student, but especially for international students who must adjust to life in a new country. From language to different customs and expectations for group work or student-teacher interactions, international students need access to services and supports to help them navigate a North American polytechnic classroom. Plus, success in the classroom can be put at risk if students are preoccupied with housing, employment, study permits and other personal concerns.

To deliver the support needed by international students, we can also learn to adapt our classrooms and teaching styles to account for and respect the varying cultural norms of a more diverse student body. An important part of that is developing intercultural competencies so we can all communicate effectively and appropriately with people who are linguistically and culturally different from ourselves.

In a highly connected global economy, domestic students also need intercultural experiences and competencies to succeed in diverse, multicultural workplaces. As globally minded citizens, all NAIT students will be able to study, work and live across national and cultural boundaries. They will be open to new ideas and fully understand the value of the unique perspectives and experiences that people of different backgrounds can bring to the table.



Goals and actions

As part of NAIT's promise to learners and staff, Pillar 2 of our global engagement strategy focuses on the following multi-year goals:

- **Provide a positive and inclusive campus for our diverse and global community.** We will weave intercultural learning into programs and services to ensure everyone who studies and works at NAIT feels welcome and safe.
- **Enhance the intercultural competencies needed to succeed in a globalized world.** We want all our students to graduate as globally minded citizens, ready to tackle the challenges of the 21st century and able to succeed in diverse cultural settings — wherever their careers take them.

To achieve these goals, we will work toward the following objectives and key results:



There is so much more to student success than mastering the skills outlined in the curriculum. It's also about understanding the wider world.



2.1 Increase international student success and wellbeing by providing targeted wrap-around settlement, transition and engagement supports

We must think beyond just international student matriculation and focus on the cross-campus experiences of international students throughout their NAIT journey and into their careers. As such, developing a retention plan and related resources to support student success will be key as we continue to offer many different services to help international students adjust to life in Canadian classrooms, communities, and workplaces: academic support (e.g., academic integrity, exam preparation), career support (e.g., resumé writing, job interview preparation), mental health services, immigration advisory services and more.

However, not all students have known that these services are available to them or where to access them across our campus. To ensure more students can benefit from them, we recently centralized our international student supports in one easy-to-find location. Next, we will implement a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform to serve as a single hub for international student communication and services. And by streamlining access to multiple services and supports, we will be able to provide international students with a better overall experience and improved chances of success from the moment they arrive in Alberta to the day they graduate from NAIT.

We will also establish new settlement programming to help international students successfully adapt to their new academic and cultural environments. By reviewing specific services related to student housing, as well as academic and English language supports, we will identify gaps and implement the resources necessary to improve access to quality off-campus housing and ensure they have the supports needed to succeed in their programs of study. In addition, we will explore emergency financial assistance to support international students who experience financial difficulties due to unforeseen circumstances. This underscores our commitment to supporting student well-being as they pursue their academic goals at NAIT.

NAIT lights up the world

NAIT is a proud supporter of Light up the World (LUTW), a charity dedicated to bringing energy to communities in developing nations. In spring 2022, 10 students and two instructors from our Alternative Energy Technology program travelled to Ccollpapata, Peru, where they installed a series of sustainable solar energy modules for the town's school. Based on the success of this project, the partnership with LUTW has since been expanded into a full credit program for participating NAIT students.

"It really puts energy access and inequality issues into perspective. Witnessing firsthand the impact electricity can have in different parts of the world, that will stand out for me."

– **Jessica Morrison**,
second-year student



A global community at NAIT

The International and Intercultural Community Centre (IICC) is open to all NAIT students and staff, and provides a “home away from home” for international students. The IICC is the hub for international and intercultural community-building, capacity development, outreach, and connection, and hosts a variety of events, activities and programs throughout the academic year.

“The IICC was the place where I found belonging at NAIT. It makes me feel that halfway across the world from home, there are people who care for me. The IICC continues to help me learn and grow beyond my classrooms. I meet new people, make new friends, share stories and laugh freely. It is the place I know I will miss the most!”

~ **Bhadresh Chaudhari**,
Bachelor of Technology student

2.2 Prepare NAIT graduates for the 21st century global labour market by providing intercultural development opportunities to all learners

To help NAIT’s domestic students develop the critical intercultural competencies they’ll need to succeed in the global economy, we will integrate international experiences and intercultural learning opportunities into our programs of study. For example, by participating in faculty-led field trips to other countries or international work-integrated learning placements, students can apply their learning in diverse cultural settings and enrich their studies in ways that are just not possible in the classroom. Of course, not every student has the desire or ability to travel abroad. But thanks to technology, more students than ever can now participate in virtual international learning opportunities and engage with students all over the world. We will therefore support interested faculty to develop collaborative online international learning (COIL) opportunities.

For our students to thrive in a global workplace, they need more opportunities to develop an international mindset, internalize intercultural competencies, and meet other internationally-minded students. Co-curricular activities that take place outside the classroom — such as

volunteering in the community or participating in student societies — can provide such opportunities while also helping students learn new skills. To make the most of global learning both in and out of the classroom, we plan to design co-curricular opportunities aimed at developing intercultural competence among students.

As the spheres of business, technology, trades, and healthcare become increasingly global and intercultural in scope, it is critical that intercultural perspectives are integrated seamlessly into the practical learning outcomes of our programs. By integrating intercultural learning into our program review process, we will be better able to introduce international content and examples across our curriculum — and help our students be career-ready by being able to view issues from multiple cultural perspectives. At the school level, we will look for quick-win opportunities where we can include global perspectives in select courses/programs without having to completely redevelop them. At the program level, we will create a standard for inviting industry partners with global perspectives to participate in program advisory committees and industry focus groups that contribute to curriculum design.



2.3 Create inclusive learning environments for all students by equipping NAIT staff with greater intercultural competence

NAIT is committed to quality in teaching and learning. We support instructors and staff to excel by equipping them with best practices in creating inclusive classrooms. One of the ways we do so is through our Building Intercultural Competence (BIC) course, which currently requires participants to commit to two to three hours of learning activities over a six-week period. We want to make it easier for our staff to enroll in and complete the BIC course, which will undergo a course refresh. We also want to include more intercultural training into our teaching and learning resources, by providing more tailored guidance and tools so faculty are better equipped to lead diverse, inclusive classrooms. To give staff the opportunity to apply what they have learned, we will support a community of practice to foster ongoing intercultural learning and to share the positive impacts our internationalization efforts have had on our community. Over time, the community of practice will grow and nurture new global engagement champions across the institution.

As part of our services to staff, we will implement a central intercultural consultancy function that will, upon request, provide intercultural research and analysis. This specialist role will engage with departments and individuals to identify their intercultural goals and objectives, then provide tailored development plans to help them launch new projects or overcome challenges they have encountered.

Because international learning opportunities provide similar benefits for staff as they do for students, we will work to create greater opportunities for faculty and staff to participate in international exchanges and COIL initiatives. Exploring how peers around the world teach and practice their craft can have a significant impact on the innovation potential of post-secondary institutions like NAIT.

A badge for intercultural development

The Building Intercultural Competence course offers staff the opportunity to enhance their intercultural skills and awareness to create more inclusive classrooms. Once completed, participants receive a digital badge they can share on social media or incorporate as part of their email signature.

“Taking this course has made me a better problem solver by giving me the tools to see barriers applicants and students face from different backgrounds.”

— **Allison Poirier**,
International Admissions
Officer

Pillar 3: Partnerships for global engagement



How can post-secondary institutions offer more of the intercultural experiences required for student and faculty success? By partnering with like-minded organizations around the world. Partnerships are key to creating more opportunities for global learning and to attracting more international students.

And, if NAIT is to fully internationalize our campus, that includes building our visibility and reputation on the global stage through an expanded approach to international cooperation.

Connections to transform learners into the innovators of tomorrow

As a polytechnic institution, we need to collaborate with a range of parties that intersect the global labour force, including post-secondary institutions, governments, international financial institutions, and non-government organizations. These partnerships can take many forms: COIL programs, work-integrated learning opportunities, articulation agreements between post-secondary institutions, faculty and study exchanges, corporate training, capacity development projects, and more. Such programs and experiences matter for several important reasons.

The world is facing a series of complex issues that know no borders, ranging from global supply chain disruptions to pandemics and the impacts of climate change. International partnerships are essential to solving these issues — and to helping cities and countries meet their obligations to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

NAIT is located in Edmonton, Alberta, the first Canadian city to join UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC). By growing our international partnerships and offering more intercultural learning and knowledge exchange opportunities, NAIT can help deliver on the SDGs and contribute the GNLC's goals of providing excellence in learning for all, fostering a culture of learning, and enhancing social inclusion, economic development and cultural prosperity. More specifically, we can leverage our strength as a polytechnic education provider for in-demand fields to help address complex issues related

to energy demands, meet the growing demand for technical skills, and support the latest advancements in allied health and medical care.

For NAIT, boosting our visibility and reputation globally allows us to fulfill the promises we made to students, staff, and industry. By collaborating with more partners in more places, we can drive innovation, enhance our curriculum, and provide transformative experiences for all students and staff.





NAIT cultivates an inclusive, skilled and competitive workforce in Cuba

For more than 40 years, NAIT has delivered customized, competency-based training solutions in over 50 countries. Through the Cultivating Skills For Employment and Growth in Cuba project, for example, we strengthened the technical capacity of workers in Cuba's mining and energy sectors through a variety of industrial and training initiatives. The project helped increase the competitiveness of Cuban workers and, in turn, attracted investment and growth to the country.

Goals and actions

As part of NAIT's promise to Alberta and beyond, Pillar 3 of our global engagement strategy focuses on the following multi-year goals:

- **Build powerful relationships across industries around the world.** To offer more intercultural learning opportunities and attract more global talent, we will engage in several long-term, strategic relationships — and be highly intentional in the partners we pursue to ensure alignment with our institutional strategic plan.
- **Translate knowledge and skills to solve real-world, industry-relevant challenges on a global scale.** The challenges facing all countries are complex and transcend disciplines, sectors, and borders. We are committed to delivering the required skills and expertise wherever they are needed around the world.

To achieve these goals, we will work toward the following objectives and key results:

3.1 Strengthen NAIT's brand and reputation worldwide as a trusted polytechnic institution

To form strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations and attract the global talent needed by Alberta's industry, it is critical that we boost our visibility and reputation internationally. To do that, we will increase our presence at signature international events that bring together contacts and networks in key sectors and industries such as clean energy, digital and virtual environments, health innovations, industrial process automation, and land management and restoration. Having our leaders and researchers involved as speakers/panellists at international events will help position NAIT as an ideal partner to educate the next generation of talent, while also giving us an opportunity to highlight our expertise in the skilled trades, applied sciences and technology, health sciences, business, and applied research. Hosting key international stakeholders, such as Canada's trade commissioners and visiting delegations, at NAIT and showcasing our world-class campuses will further build our reputation as a leading polytechnic.

A targeted digital marketing strategy will help raise the profile of our institution within specific regions and sectors. As a complement to that strategy, we also plan to foster and leverage relations with our alumni network in countries where student recruitment is prioritized to promote NAIT and communicate the benefits and opportunities that come with partnering with NAIT.

Before making any decision to attend an institution, students are increasingly looking at an institution's partnerships to assess their credibility and trustworthiness. One way we can strengthen our credibility and build our reputation is through greater system-to-system engagement with other polytechnic institutions around the world, which includes improved international recognition for NAIT's degrees, diplomas, certificates and other qualifications and credentials acquired through NAIT.

3.2. Deliver in-demand technical skills around the world to advance sustainable development goals (SDGs)

One way to build our global reputation while supporting the SDGs is to deliver capacity-building programs and workforce development around the world through government- and International Financial Institutions (IFI)-funded projects. To have maximum impact, we will streamline our market intelligence and decision-support tools so we can focus on projects that are linked to our industry-leading expertise in competency-based education and curriculum design, organizational and instructional development, and infrastructure and facility design. Growing our local partnerships and on-the-ground relationships with trade commissioners and ministries of education will be key to securing preferred contracts and to better understanding regional skills needs and trends in specific industries, allowing us to be more competitive in responding to requests for proposals.

To continue to facilitate economic development around the world, we will expand our micro-credentials and corporate training offerings in countries aligned with our student growth goals, by tapping into our network of industry clients with international connections. We will also offer a fee-for-service to develop new and customized curricula for international corporate and institutional clients in our areas of specializations, including the skilled trades, information and digital technology, business and productivity, energy and environment, and sustainable development and advanced manufacturing. Increasing our number of repeat clients will also contribute to better global awareness of NAIT's expertise and position us as a destination of choice for international students.

While it isn't possible to deliver on-the-ground education in every country, thanks to remote learning, video streaming, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and other innovative technologies, more people can access our education remotely, especially in high-demand fields such as health care. Providing hands-on, immersive and interactive learning opportunities, the Centre for Advanced Simulation will position NAIT as a global leader in healthcare simulation while helping to address the talent shortages seen in this sector in Canada and around the world. We can also use our expertise to build up the capacity of other organizations in the medical field, helping them accelerate the development, launch and commercialization of new simulation solutions.

3.3. Expand NAIT's partnerships with reputable institutions, organizations, and governments abroad

Partnering with like-minded organizations is a top priority for achieving our global engagement goals, so we will strive to develop several new multi-dimensional international partnerships that fit flexibly within our polytechnic model. We will start by proactively identifying compatible higher education institutions that align with NAIT's values, programs and applied research goals. We will then sign formal agreements with those institutions that encompass multiple activities, including student and faculty exchanges, COIL programs, international work-integrated learning, and international entrepreneurial experiences for both students and faculty. We will also explore articulation agreements with post-secondary institutions and high schools in countries prioritized for international student growth that will allow students to progress from one institution to another as part of deliberate and seamless pathways.

We want the widest possible number of students and staff to take advantage of our global engagement opportunities. Key to that will be ensuring historically excluded students and communities are able to participate, including partnering with Indigenous communities and launching initiatives for Indigenous learners and students with disabilities. We also plan to tap into long-term funding sources to permit staff and student participation at low cost.

We will establish a central consultancy function for partnership development to support staff in establishing global partnerships that maximize our impact. Because successful global partnerships require continuous attention and cross-institutional care, we will carefully define roles and responsibilities for maintaining those partnerships. We will establish a policy and framework for partnership selection, to guide decisions and mitigate risk when selecting international partners. We will also develop an easily accessible repository of global partnerships to expand opportunities for collaboration between credit and non-credit international activities and build awareness of existing partnerships.

How this strategy will be implemented

A strategic document means very little unless it is acted upon and implemented. With strong governance and oversight, we can ensure this global engagement strategy is adopted in a cohesive, unified way across all of NAIT — making good on our promises to students, staff, industry, and Alberta.

To remain responsive to an evolving international education landscape, we will employ an adaptive and agile approach to the implementation of this strategy. Key to that approach is a dynamic and distributed governance model guided by a three-year resource plan.

Three-year resource plan

To achieve our goal of having international students make up 30% of NAIT's student body by 2027, we need to ensure the entire institution is prepared and equipped to maximize international success. Strategic investments will need to be made in three key areas:

- Schools — to support program and student expansion
- Student supports — to ensure international student success through targeted services
- Enrolment management — to sustain international recruitment and admissions in a timely way.

Our three-year resource plan, which is expected to be completed for the 2023-24 fiscal year, will break down what will be needed to support those strategic investments on a year-by-year basis. For each year, the plan will indicate the financial commitments and resources needed to meet the annual international student growth targets.

This will include forecasting the number, cost, and timeline for scaling up NAIT's immigration student advisors, engagement and transition coordinators, intercultural specialists, admission officers, and recruiters needed to accommodate a continuously growing international student body.

Marketing, recruitment, retention, and faculty and student support are intertwined and will need to be considered holistically to achieve annual growth targets. That's why the resource plan will also identify the actions in this global engagement strategy to be prioritized in the first three years, and the department leads responsible for their implementation.

Once the plan is released, effective and ongoing communication across the NAIT community will be key to clarifying roles and responsibilities for its implementation.



Progress monitoring and reporting

While the goals of this strategy are intended to remain steadfast for its duration, the actions are fluid and may need to shift as trends and best practices continue to evolve in the international education sector. As such, we will commit to staying current on leading practices and leveraging the institution's objectives and key results (OKRs) mechanism to report progress on an annual basis.

By continuously assessing whether our inputs and actions remain aligned to the achievement of our objectives, and by measuring the impacts this strategy is having on our institution and our stakeholders, we can ensure that we are making progress and generating meaningful change.

Conclusion

Internationalization is the comprehensive pursuit of many different activities and initiatives that will help realize NAIT's vision set out in *The NAIT Effect*.

This global engagement strategy defines three pillars around which we will focus our internationalization efforts: attracting more international students to Alberta, fostering a global mindset and intercultural competence among students and staff, and forming strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations and institutions around the world. These pillars complement NAIT's overall mission and the promises we made to learners, staff, industry partners and communities. They will help us provide a more positive and inclusive campus and online experience, deliver the exceptional talent and innovations industry needs to grow and compete, and create a place to work that fuels passion, values inclusivity, ignites creativity, develops careers, and supports well-being.

With this global engagement strategy, we demonstrate our commitment to internationalization. Above all, we aim to provide our students with an education that promotes a rich exchange of ideas, build a more diverse and skilled workforce, and contribute to a brighter future through global engagement.

Endnotes

- 1 RBC Thought Leadership, Course Correction: How International Students Can Help Solve Canada's Labour Crisis, 29 Sep. 2022.
- 2 Mitchell R. Hammer, *The Intercultural Development Inventory*, 2021.
- 3 Darla K. Deardorff, "Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization," *Journal of Studies in International Education*, Vol. 10 No. 3, Fall 2006, 241-266.
- 4 Government of Alberta, *Alberta's International Education Strategy*, 2020, p.9.
- 5 Government of Canada, *Benefits of Immigration to Canadian Sectors*.
- 6 Katherine Wall, "The rising popularity of college postgraduate credential programs in Canada," *Insights on Canadian Society*, 2022.
- 7 RBC Thought Leadership, Course Correction: How International Students Can Help Solve Canada's Labour Crisis, 29 Sep. 2022.



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