

Coast Mountain College – International Education with Integrity – September 2023 Update

Our Coast Mountain College (CMTN) core values are **Adventure, Transformation and Integrity**. These guide everything we do, including international education which is, by nature, adventurous and transformative. As one of our core values, integrity is extremely important to us, and here are some ways we approach international education with integrity. Our goal is to be the college of choice for Experiential Place-Based Learning by 2027.

Highly Trained and Experienced Staff to Support Our International Students

Three of our team members who work with international students on a regular basis are certified as Regulated International Student Immigration Advisors (RISIAs), which means they have the training and detailed knowledge to advise students on their journey through Coast Mountain College. We also have a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant (RCIC – an authorized immigration and citizenship representative) who can provide reputable advice related to immigration, refugee, and citizenship pathways for Canada. We are proud of having a very robust team for an institution of our size, with a level of knowledge that exceeds the minimum guidelines for institutions.

Our President and CEO was an international student in another country and many members of our management team have experienced living in a different culture. Our Vice-President, Academic, Students and International has personally experienced coming to Canada as an international student in Canada and understands the benefits and challenges of moving a family to a new country to pursue education. Their combined experience helps us take an empathetic and realistic approach to international education in our region. CMTN is also part of the Local Immigration Partnership with other Terrace-based non-profits such as Kermode FS and Skeena Diversity, to help welcome newcomers to Terrace.

Overall, our team understands that every student's educational journey is unique and that each person's opportunities and challenges are different. The empathetic and customized approach we take to each student's journey is one of the reasons we have such a high satisfaction rating among our graduates. In fact, many of our students have stayed on to work for the college after they graduate – in recent years, we have hired CMTN international student graduates for the Registrar's Office, Marketing, IT, Accessibility Services, Student Life, Catering and Event Services, and Student Housing.

Many of our students have successfully proceeded with the BC Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) for their permanent residency. BCPNP gives additional points to applicants applying from outside the Lower Mainland. Many of our students take advantage of this as they succeed in finding a full-time job after graduation.

A Realistic Approach

We are a small, publicly-funded, regional college and our mandate is to provide education and training to the people of Northwest BC. We are also aware that our communities are small and have limited resources so we need to maintain a realistic balance. For this reason, we aim to limit the number of international students that we accept each year to about 20% of our student registrations, meaning that 80% of our students are domestic. This 80/20 balance is sustainable for us. Another institution may do

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something else but we want to ensure that we can offer each of our students what they need to succeed, no matter where they are from, so we are careful not to over-extend.

Our Recruitment Goals

We recruit our international students from a wide cross-section of countries so that our students have a truly international and diverse experience. Our recruiters include CMTN staff, on salary. We have a limited number of agreements with agents to support our connections in a larger variety of countries. All external agents undergo rigorous training to prepare them to represent Coast Mountain College in an authentic way and to participate in meetings with our International recruitment coordinator when they require additional information and support.

In 2022 we welcomed students from the Philippines, Vietnam, Peru, Belgium, Mexico, Nigeria, South Korea, India, Jamaica, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Brazil, Ukraine, and other countries. While we aim to increase diversity within our international student numbers, we are striving to maintaining a balance of 20% international students across our institution in order to provide excellent service to all our students. In 2023, we saw an increase in the number of international students that were interested in attending Coast Mountain College. This, coupled with lower than expected domestic enrolment cause the balance to shift, although our total number of students did not increase.

Our team is working hard to attract more domestic students to study at CMTN so we can return to the balance of 20% of the total student population.

Housing and Community Support

Northern communities in British Columbia are experiencing a housing shortage, but there is still room for newcomers to Canada. The newly built student housing building, Wii Gyemsga Siwilaawksat, at our Terrace campus accommodates 108 students in a safe, comfortable setting. This accommodation houses a mix of international and domestic students and we keep the rent affordable by including all amenities in a single, fixed cost of approximately \$600 per month to help students budget and be successful in their studies. This monthly cost is much less than what other post-secondary institutions in BC charge. In the future we hope to have similar student housing in other communities.

For students who live off campus in Terrace, or attend classes at our Prince Rupert or Smithers campuses, our student housing coordinator, alumni, and current students regularly share information about available accommodations for rent on a student-created Facebook page. There are also WhatsApp groups for international students at each campus. People within the communities open their homes to rent rooms and basements to our students. Many community members have reached out to support the success of this initiative and enjoy having students as renters.

Student Support

Our student orientations have been upgraded this year to include more information on academic supports and expectations, academic honesty, cross-cultural understanding, and mental and physical health and wellness, so that all students feel supported and are informed of the many resources they can access.

Free supports that are available for all CMTN students (domestic and international) include:

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- orientation sessions
- individualized advising
- Learning Assistance Specialists
- English as an Additional Language (EAL) specialist
- 24/7 multi-language professional counselling
- workshops on writing, time management, awards and bursaries, and other topics
- WriteAway online writing support
- AskAway online library service
- health and dental benefits
- accessibility supports
- emergency bursaries
- online tutoring 24/7 (from Tutor Me)
- Inqli – online mentoring
- paid projects through Riipen Level UP
- job board
- food bank.

In addition, all CMTN staff and instructors can access the Early Alert Referral service if they see that a student is struggling to succeed in their academics or just generally not thriving. This referral service is supported by our Centre of Learning Transformation and connects the student with the supports that are right for them, free of charge.

Our college is small, with very small class sizes, which makes it easy to know students individually, by name. Student Engagement Officers organize outdoor activities for students, helping them keep fit and stay engaged, as well as connecting them to recreational and other activities in the region.

Adventure, transformation and integrity remain at the core of what we do as we move towards our goal of being the college of choice for experiential place-based learning.