Boston College Hosts OECD’s First International Conference on Innovation, Higher Education, Research and Development

Chestnut Hill, Mass. (October 2012) – In a groundbreaking partnership with the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Boston College’s Center for International Higher Education (CIHE) recently hosted a three-day international seminar as part of the OECD’s Innovation, Higher Education, Research and Development (IHERD) program. The seminar, focused on the role of research universities as drivers of the world’s knowledge networks, was opened by Joseph O’Keefe, S.J.; Philip Altbach, CIHE Director and J. Donald Monan, S.J. University Professor; and Åsa Olsson, IHERD Coordinator.

Drawing on the attendance and expertise of some 40 participants from around the world and held on the BC campus, the seminar’s work program explored the future prospects of research institutions in developing and middle-income countries. To do this, participants considered the world’s current research networking platforms; new methods of communication; and the challenges facing the creation, expansion, and improvement of knowledge networks in an ever-more complex global environment. Session leaders included academics and researchers of global standing, as well as the CEOs of learned societies and bilateral development partnerships, from Australia, Brazil, France, Hong Kong, Korea, New Zealand, Nigeria, and South Africa. The conference also featured local guests, from BC of course but also Harvard, MIT, and UMass-Boston.

Seminar participants presented, commented, and reflected on the role of research universities in advancing the global knowledge economy; the international networking of higher education institutions through consortia; the rising mobility of researchers within international knowledge networks; policy-making regarding academic knowledge and output; the development of institutional research worldwide; the potential of partnerships, whether for research capacity-building in developing countries or between universities on a North-South basis; the impact of rankings systems on up-and-coming, middle-income countries; the role of learned societies, which bridge research, policy-making and funding; and the nexus of research universities, technology transfer, and job creation.

In addition to the Center for International Higher Education’s partnership with one of the world’s leading intergovernmental organizations, and the attendance of some 40 leaders of thought from over 15 countries, a further highlight of the seminar will be the dissemination of its scholarly findings: by agreement with the UK-based Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE), seminar papers will be published in a dedicated, spring 2013 issue of *Studies in Higher Education*, a leading European higher education journal.
Prof. Altbach and Ms. Olsson share the belief that this pioneering event made, and will continue to make, a significant contribution to the future effectiveness of research universities in a period of significant change in higher education.

**Further Background**

The OECD’s four-year Innovation, Research and Higher Education for Development (IHERD) program was recently initiated with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). Its overall objective is to increase strategic and coherent investments in innovation, higher education and research, which are crucial to global development. [http://www.oecd.org/sti/innovationhighereducationandresearchfordevelopmentiherd.htm](http://www.oecd.org/sti/innovationhighereducationandresearchfordevelopmentiherd.htm)

The Center for International Higher Education (CIHE) is a specialized research center in BC’s Lynch School of Education (LSOE); led by Prof. Philip Altbach and Dr. Laura Rumbley, its mission to advance knowledge about the complex realities of higher education in the contemporary world. [http://www.bc.edu/research/cihe/](http://www.bc.edu/research/cihe/)

The Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) is a UK-based international society that aims to improve the quality of higher education, and encourage debate and publication regarding the policies, organization, and management of higher education institutions. [http://www.srhe.ac.uk](http://www.srhe.ac.uk)