SUMMARY REPORT
Mentoring Workshop: 28–29 April 2006, Banff

BACKGROUND:
This workshop, organized by the Task Group on Capacity Building (TG on CB), was stimulated by the realization that Canadian universities are experiencing a remarkable growth of interest among students in global health—including global health research (GHR). More specifically, the workshop was intended to address the question: "What is the strategic role of the CCGHR (‘the Coalition’) in responding to this phenomenon?”. While the Coalition’s Summer Institute program represents one Coalition response, the co-chairs of the TG on CB, Lori Hanson and Duncan Saunders, proposed that a further important contribution of the Coalition might be to work with and support GHR “champions” in Canada’s universities. And so, a select group of persons, all of whom were “GHR champions” in some way, were invited to join a preliminary dialogue on this question. [See Box 1].

OBJECTIVES:
1. To develop a “mentoring program” plan that would (among other things) provide support to the ‘graduates’ of the Coalition’s Summer Institute.
2. To share ideas and provide training about how to be an expert mentor.
3. To obtain information about the needs and challenges that ‘champions’ face, and develop a support system for these persons (for example, web-based materials, a help desk, and so on).

WHAT WE DID:
We began with a pre-workshop electronic dialogue, using these questions:
- What do you consider the key challenges?
- What instructive experiences have you had as a mentor?
- What resources (about mentoring) could you recommend?
- What are your expectations of the workshop?

Responses to these questions were summarized and made available as a handout at the workshop.
During the workshop itself (which began Friday evening April 28 and finished late afternoon on Saturday April 29), a variety of strategies were used to address the objectives. These included focused exercises (for example, stories of “outstanding mentors”), small group tasks, and periodic summaries and observations by Harvey Skinner, the invited resource person. [See Box 2].
Box 2; Harvey’s Highlights

Harvey Skinner, Chair, Department of Community Health Sciences at the University of Toronto, served as a resource person for this workshop. He drew upon his experience as a department chair (including his personal commitment to promoting global health research within the department and university), as well as his long-term participation in a partnership program that includes universities in Canada, Israel, and Jordan*. At several points during the workshop, Harvey provided summary observations, emphasizing the following concepts that GHR mentors might find useful:

- Mentors must understand that global health research involves partnerships that feature: respectful listening, mutually beneficial dialogue, and then action around shared understandings;
- At a project level (involving capacity building and specific project outcomes) key elements include knowledge exchange, relationship building and mutual development.
- Several projects can be brought together as “knowledge networks’ for broader impact. The tools and methods of “social network analysis” can be useful in understanding how knowledge networks can be effective.


MAIN THEMES:

“Minefields” for mentees:
We considered GHR “mentees” to be students at various levels (in particular graduates students) and junior faculty members, who were exploring a career in GHR, or had actually begun such a career. The mentees need:

- Basic research skills and a broad knowledge about global health and GHR;
- Information about funding opportunities, and “grant writing” skills;
- A supportive academic environment— for example, institutional review boards, ethics committees and academic promotion structures that understood the challenges and realities of global health research.
- A broader professional environment that supports GHR, such as dedicated funding sources, and facilitative publication opportunities.

Needs of mentors:
These include:

- Being part of a team (“critical mass”) of mentors or ‘champions’;
- Knowledge about funding sources
• A clearer understanding about the knowledge and skills needed for effective mentoring.

Needs of universities, along with institutional sharing opportunities:

As the dialogue progressed, it became apparent that the academic institutions represented by participants had certain needs in common. This led to suggestions about how universities might cooperate and share experience and resources. Some examples are:

• Establish awards for “excellence in GHR mentoring” (including skills in developing effective North-South health research partnerships). [It was suggested that universities could work together to develop performance indicators, and share experience about recognition strategies.]

• It was realized that some universities needed to identify the mentors (champions) that they already have. [It was suggested that a “mapping tool” could be shared, or developed, to help universities do this.]

• For some universities an awareness-creating event about GHR might be helpful. [It was suggested that universities in a particular region or province could organize a “Day in Global Health Research” traveling road show, to meet this need.]

• Some universities have established offices or centres that serve as a “one-stop shopping” resource. They may have a range of functions including: education (awareness raising), clearing-house (creating an on-line directory), facilitating project development, and so on. Most universities have international research offices—these can play a vital role as liaisons and interpreters. [Experiences about “best practices” of these centres, including lessons learned, could be shared.]

• A remarkable number of Canadian universities are currently creating graduate programs in public health; several include ‘streams’ in global health and GHR. [Ideas were put forward about possible curriculum sharing arrangements, using innovative information and communication technologies (ICTs)—see below.]
**Strategic opportunities for the Coalition:**
Several ideas emerged that represented opportunities where the Coalition might “add value”. Three of these ideas were explored in more detail through focused small group discussions:

1. **A “Core Curriculum” for global health research:**
   This group did some brain-storming about a set of ‘core competencies’ needed for global health research. Suggestions included: integrity; ethics; global health concepts; theoretical constructs of development; “grantsmanship” for GHR; project management (implementation); knowledge of personal values; awareness of Canada’s role in global health; globalization and health; “diplomatic” (cross-cultural) skills. *[Note: several of these competencies will be featured during “workshop day” on October 15th, just before the CCIH. There will also be a special workshop to further explore the “core curriculum” idea].*

2. **Inter-University Collaboration and Curriculum sharing:**
   The concept of a “Global Health Research—Collaborative University Program” (GHR-COUP) was proposed as a ‘vision’ that the Coalition might promote. *[Note: This idea was discussed further at the May 28th Simon Fraser University symposium on Global Health. Three workshop participants, Arun Chockalingham (SFU), Duncan Saunders (U of Alberta) and Harvey Skinner (U of Toronto) presented the programs of their universities at this symposium, including the idea of inter-university collaboration.]*

3. **Coordinating our discussions with CIDA about supporting GHR:**
   The group discussing this issue described several different, but unconnected current discussions with CIDA about possible increased support for GHR, for example:
   - Lorna Jean is part of a group of senior university administrators, working with the AUCC, to prepare a briefing paper to CIDA about increased engagement by universities and colleges in international development;
   - Nancy described examples of research already being done as part of CIDA-funded projects (through both ‘partnerships’ and ‘bilateral’ branches);
   - Vic provided an update about the Coalition’s consultation with CIDA’s “African Health Systems Initiative” (AHSI), promoting the idea that knowledge production and use should be included as an integral component.

It was agreed that the AHSI opportunity represents a useful “entry point” for the Coalition’s continued discussions with CIDA on this issue.

Several other ideas were put forward (for the Coalition to consider) but were not explored in further detail during the workshop. These included the following:
• Canada Research Chairs (CRCs): There are at least 6 CRC’s in global health. It may be useful to bring these persons together, as a potential ‘force’ for promoting GHR in Canada.

• A more specific mentoring program: While there certainly was interest in some kind of a program to support mentors, the Banff workshop itself did not discuss this suggestion in detail.

• “Canada-country” teams: Through the Coalition’s Task Group on Strengthening National Health Research Systems (chaired by Ken Bassett), a ‘country focus strategy’ is being explored. The key idea is to ‘integrate’ the work of several Coalition task groups by focusing on a small number of countries. [Note: this idea was developed further at the “integration workshop” that followed. “Country-Canada” teams have now been created for Bolivia, Mali, Mozambique and Zambia.]

• Teasdale-Corti teams: When the ‘finalists’ for this competition are announced, there will be an opportunity for the Coalition to provide “technical services” to these teams in areas such as capacity development (including mentoring), partnership building and nurturing, and knowledge translation.

FOLLOW-UP PLANS:
Led by the TG on CB, the Coalition is proceeding with the following plans to further explore and implement ideas and suggestions of workshop participants. These include:

1. October 15th workshops:
   Upon the invitation of the CSIH, this year the Coalition is a co-organizer of the annual Canadian Conference on International Health (CCIH). The Sunday before the conference (which for 5 years was the Coalition-organized “Day on Global Health Research”) will now be devoted to a series of workshops, jointly organized by the CCGHR and CSIH. As indicated earlier, several of the “core competencies” discussed at the workshop will be the topics of specific workshops. [See the conference website: www.csih.org for more details.]

2. Inter-University Collaborative Graduate program:
   As described above, a working group (with Duncan, Arun and Harvey) will explore further the idea of a ‘pilot’ collaborative project, perhaps using the evolving “core competencies” discussion as a framework. [A workshop on this topic will take place on the morning of October 15.]

3. Further development of a “mentoring program”:
   A small working group (Vic, Vinh-Kim and others) is conducting an October 15th workshop on “effective mentoring” where this idea will be explored further.