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L'ATLANTIQUE

News Release

Universities are essential partners in Atlantic Canada's future

Halifax, Nova Scotia (Wednesday, April 26, 2006) - Universities contribute \$4.4 billion in direct and indirect benefits to Atlantic Canada's economy and are hugely significant to encourage growth over the next decade, says Dr. Axel Meisen, Chair of the Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) and President of Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Along with his 16 colleagues, Dr. Meisen today received and spent the day discussing key findings from "***Smarter Together: The economic impact of universities in the Atlantic Provinces***", prepared by Michael Gardner of Gardner Pinfold Consulting Economists Ltd., Halifax, Nova Scotia on behalf of the AAU and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. The study is available online at www.atlanticuniversities.ca.

ACOA funded the study in partnership with the AAU.

"Atlantic Canada's universities are important strategic partners for governments, economic development agencies, regional advocacy organizations and communities," says the Honourable Peter MacKay, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. "This study identified the significant economic impact of universities in our region and opens another door to building a strong Atlantic Canada."

"Atlantic Canada universities contribute to the economy through services, people, students, and community partnerships," says Dr. Meisen. "This study shows that there is a definite economic impact, but also a wider benefit to Atlantic Canada in having a strong university sector."

Key findings:

- ◆ Graduates provide our growing local national and international economies with human capital to advance, innovate, and diversify.
- ◆ Universities conduct basic and applied research, providing the foundation for innovation.
- ◆ Universities serve as a focal point for arts and culture, for debate on public issues, for athletics and recreation and other community enrichment activities.
- ◆ Atlantic universities offer a wide range of continuing education programs.
- ◆ Demand for university education is strong in the Atlantic Provinces.
- ◆ The Atlantic universities are increasingly recruiting nationally - attracting students from across the country and from over 100 countries.
- ◆ Universities are integral to their communities, defining the character of the cities and towns in which they are located.
- ◆ Universities generate substantial economic and social benefits for the region.
- ◆ Universities are a primary source for innovation and basic research.

Suite 403
5657 Spring Garden Road
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3R4
Phone: (902) 425-4230
Fax: (902) 425-4233
www.atlanticuniversities.ca

"The study obviously tells us about the impact of universities today," says Dr. Meisen, "As important as it is to know this information, the study will hopefully be a catalyst for future actions by universities and in partnership with others such as communities, business, government, and regional advocates, to build upon the strategic value of this asset."

Some themes for future exploration:

- ◆ How can universities be a catalyst to help the region and Canada grow its intellectual assets?
- ◆ What more can universities, government, business, industry, and communities do to fully leverage our assets and to grow the economy of the region and Canada?
- ◆ How can universities use their intellectual assets to grow the region's economy – for retaining and attracting new employers and immigrants, improving standards of living, increasing innovation and research?
- ◆ What is the role of universities in helping the region take its place as a have-region in Canada and internationally, as well as maximizing our economic and social potential?
- ◆ What more can be done to strengthen our university sector through strategic partnerships?

“Collectively the AAU believes that if we can create more strategic partnerships over the next decade, we will grow our economy, develop and keep our best and brightest at home, and attract more national and international students,” says Meisen. “Such a vision and direction could potentially have broad societal and economic implications.”

Based on the findings of the study, Atlantic universities are poised to contribute more to the regional and national economy by:

- Graduating more Atlantic Canadian students,
- Attracting more national and international students,
- Securing more national and international research grants,
- Upgrading our physical infrastructure,
- Commercializing more research with the private sector, and;
- Making post-secondary education accessible to more students.

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Contact:
Peter Halpin
Tel. 902.425.4238
Email: phalpin@atlanticuniversities.ca