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Aiwmu as a Case Study in Crosscultural-Cultural Higher Education Innovation

Scott Phillips

University of Alberta, Canada

Abstract

The Alberta Institute at Wenzhou Medical University (AIWMU), founded in 2020 through collaboration between the University of Alberta (Canada) and Wenzhou Medical University (China), represents a distinctive model of transnational higher education. Its foundation was a joint undergraduate medical program, delivered primarily in China, that combines Canadian academic medical leadership with locally relevant training to ensure graduates are prepared for the health systems in which they will ultimately practice, while offering perspectives from Western medicine. Since its inception, AIWMU has expanded into a multidisciplinary platform. Graduate-level pathways include dual-degree Master of Science programs in psychiatry and dentistry, where students are supervised by faculty both in China and in Canada. In 2026, a Master of Public Health program will launch, offering globally informed training in population health entirely within China. Across all programs, instruction occurs in English, requiring careful adaptation to meet the needs of learners for whom English is a second language while maintaining international academic standards. This case study reflects on the governance structures, curricular strategies, and cross-border collaboration that sustain program quality. It highlights the dual challenge of integrating Canadian expertise with Chinese educational contexts and of tailoring programs so graduates are equipped not only with international perspectives but also with competencies relevant to their local environment. As a Vice Dean of AIWMU, I share insights into this evolving model and the implications for higher education partnerships across diverse cultures.

Keywords: Transnationaleducation-Education; Internationalization; Partnerships; Multidisciplinary; Facultydevelopment-Development