

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Expanding “Identity Horizons” from Canada to Finland

London Ontario | January 26, 2010

Academica Group’s president, Rod Skinkle, is one of six Canadian investigators returning from Finland this week where they met with colleagues from the University of Helsinki and Tampere University to begin discussions concerning an international cross-cultural study to examine the connections between education and the process of identity development among youth. Ultimately, the project hopes to uncover insights useful to governments and educators seeking to improve education participation and youth work among at-risk demographic groups.

Dr. James Côté, a sociology professor at the University of Western Ontario and the lead investigator on the project, explains that identity formation is fundamental to an individual’s integration into community and society, and critical to socioeconomic and psychological fulfillment. Educational alienation and disengagement can lead directly to societal alienation and disengagement, reinforcing risky behaviours and antisocial attitudes throughout life. The project will explore whether formal interventions can broaden young people’s “identity horizons” and encourage them to contemplate higher levels of education and more professional career pathways.

In addition to Skinkle’s time and research expertise, Academica Group has donated a range of resources to the project, including its proprietary SMS™ Online Survey platform, student research recruitment strategies, and experience designing and developing online video interview microsites like Perspectives™ and RealityCampus™.

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Academica Group Inc. is a research-based marketing consultancy focused exclusively on the higher education sector, and a worldwide leader bringing marketing innovation to higher education. For 14 years, our continent-wide survey of college and university applicants (the *UCAS™ Applicant Study*) has set the global standard for comprehensive higher education consumer research into market perceptions and brand reputations. Academica Group has made important contributions to provincial and national higher education policy research, in areas such as postsecondary accessibility, funding, retention and student pathways studies. Back in 2007, Academica Group's social media team was among the first to experiment with a Facebook application for prospective students. Our web development group specializes in information architecture and user interface validation for institutional websites, and has pioneered the construction of institutional web presences using the Drupal open-source content management system. Academica Group also publishes Canada's leading daily news digest for higher education, *Academica's Top Ten*, which is now read by more than 7,000 subscribers at institutions and agencies across the country.

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