

Why a City's Academic Excellence Should Matter to Event Planners

By

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Every conference planner will know that top speakers are a surefire way to inspire and give delegates key, relatable, and memorable messages to take away from the event. And, when it comes to heavyweight topics or themes, the academic standing of your speakers will give your event extra credibility. Once you've secured your first big-name academic speaker, who is well known and respected in their field, not only will you attract other respected academics but, in turn, your event will be one that can't be missed.

Providing access to top tier academics is one thing but where an event is held in a city known for its intellectual capital, including cutting-edge scientists, thought leadership and respected research institutions, as well as a global reputation for palpable energy and connectedness, the potential for success is magnified.

Calgary is a city boasting these very qualities with visitors repeatedly commenting on the alluring combination of a young, diverse, educated, affluent and innovative population as well as the outstanding beauty and wealth of natural resources in the locality. It's no surprise that Calgary has attracted hundreds of thousands of people from across Canada and around the world to move to the city over the past 20 years to capture and also create opportunities in this vibrant, energetic hub. Tens of thousands more visit to do business in the city for the very same reasons.

So what are the main sectors driving Calgary's intellectual capital? Well, the oil and gas industry, the engine that has propelled Canada's economy for the past decade, is the indisputable driving force with Calgary being the decision making epicentre for 4% of international oil and gas production and 15% of worldwide energy deal flow. And, it's the people that represent opportunities. Jim Gray, Chairman of Energy Group for Brookfield Asset Management in Calgary believes "People don't come here to look at an oilfield. They look for relationships. They look for people."

This of course is exactly what an event does, it provides an opportunity for relationships to be forged, innovative technologies to be shared, and business to be conducted.

Besides energy innovation, key research areas for the University of Calgary and Calgary Economic Development include technology, financial services, life sciences, agribusiness, manufacturing, engineering solutions for health, brain and mental health, and inflammation and chronic diseases.

As such, these are amongst the primary subject areas for academic excellence and can also be seen as the main sectors driving Calgary's intellectual capital into the future. "As an intellectual hub, the [University of Calgary](#) translates knowledge out to the community and commercialises inventions that are created in the labs", says Dr Elizabeth Cannon, President and Vice Chancellor at University of Calgary. When it comes to technology, for example, University of Calgary has a technology transfer arm, known as Innovate Calgary, which acts as an incubator to ensure discoveries are found and nurtured. Again, Dr Cannon brings it back to people, "having the people in our community that understand us that can leverage the energy that you feel in the city of Calgary, is absolutely fundamental to our commitment to be a global intellectual hub."

[Calgary Telus Convention Centre](#) (CTCC) works closely with [Meetings + Conventions Calgary](#), an organization whose '[Calgary Champion Program](#)' engages leaders in Calgary to provide a strategic link between international organizations and a targeted local network of potential speakers, exhibitors, sponsors and research groups thus helping to make events both viable and successful.

This year, amongst others, CTCC will welcome The [International Society of Biomechanics](#) 2019 Congress which will be held from July 31st - August 4th. Keynote speakers will include Dr. Hugh Herr, known for his revolutionary work in the emerging field of Biomechatronics. A double amputee himself, Dr. Herr is co-director of the MIT Centre for Extreme Bionics and is responsible for breakthrough advances in bionic limbs to emulate the function of natural limbs. Dr. Herr is also founder of BionX Inc., a company that commercialises the EmPower Ankle-Foot Prosthesis, first in a series of products that will emulate psychological function through electromechanical replacement. Today the EmPower Ankle-Foot Prosthesis has been clinically shown to be the first leg prosthesis in history to reach human normalisation, allowing amputees to walk with normal levels of speed and metabolism as if their legs were biological once again.

Speakers like Dr. Herr provide a strong impetus to attract other top academics and leading research scientists to the congress, all of whom will likely create opportunities for professional and commercial discussion and networking.

"We believe keynote speakers like Dr. Herr help drive Calgary's intellectual capital, and effectively reinforce Calgary's reputation as a leading light in innovation and research on a World stage." shares Adam Joyce, VP Acceleration at CTCC.

Not just Biomechatronics of course, but any event held in Calgary gives access to a rich supply of highly educated professionals including Canada's largest concentration of engineering technology talent.