**Excellence in Innovation- Leadership Development**

**Jennifer Browne, Memorial University of Newfoundland**

I am pleased to be able to put forward such a worthwhile nomination for this year's Excellence Innovation Award. The late Steve Jobs once said that “innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower” and I truly believe that the evidence of innovation in this nomination not only makes Jennifer Browne a very worthy recipient of CACEE?s recognition but also distinguishes her as a leader in our field.

Over the course of her career, Jennifer Browne has led successful projects, developed numerous initiatives for staff and students, and contributed to the development of new knowledge and programs. One of the most recent initiatives that Jennifer has developed and the highlight of this nomination is the International Experiential Institute (IELI). IELI is the first of its kind in North America. Its vision was established to bring together Canadian student affairs professionals, American recreation and college activities professionals and other globally focused professionals to partake of experiential learning and leadership growth in a tightly knit setting. The foundation and founding of IELI is a formed on partnership between the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA), the National Intramural Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) and Career Development and Experiential Learning at Memorial University of Newfoundland. This premier event provides participants an opportunity to discover how to apply or enhance the application of experiential learning on higher education campuses.

It may not be evident from the brief overview why this initiative should be considered innovative on a national scale. There is something visionary about this project, visionary in that it facilitates a collaboration that circumvents geographic and thematic barriers. It has forged relationships between not only two American associations and a Canadian campus but also the many personal relationships and connections of the yearly participants. IELI has offered individuals not just a conference or a seminar but a powerful opportunity to learn and experience. The depth of the learning opportunity is apparent from the established outcomes for the Institute, which are:

* Connect with an international community of professionals engaging in experiential student learning
* Learn how student engagement can be supported thorough experiential learning
* Gain skills to develop effective experiential learning practices on individual campuses
* Engage in hands-on experiential learning activities through the culture of the host location

Innovation is not only apparent in the articulated outcomes but also the model of learning and the development of scholars in residence to this intimate setting. The inaugural scholar was Dr. George D. Kuh, a director and Chancellor's Professor of Higher Education. Among his 300-plus publications, Kuh has authored 21 books and monographs, including Student Success in College (2005), Student Learning Outside the Classroom (1994), Involving Colleges and The Invisible Tapestry: Culture in American Colleges and Universities (1988). This was followed up by Dr. Susan Komives, Professor Emerita, past president of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education and a former President of the American College Personnel Association. Dr. Komives is the author of a dozen books or monographs including Student Services, Exploring Leadership, Leadership for A Better World, and the Handbook for Student Leadership Development. She was a member of the teams that wrote Learning Reconsidered and the ensemble that developed the Social Change Model of Leadership Development.

Another aspect of innovation is risk taking. Jennifer as a leader has offered to not only assist in the development of IELI, as a new initiative, but also to host the event and in doing so assumed much of the risk of the institute's success. Taking calculated risk takes confidence but also a strong belief in the collaboration and the initiative that you are undertaking.

Jennifer Browne is a seasoned authentic leader that in this instance took the initiative to establish a dynamic, learner-centric initiative. Never operating in a vacuum this program was collaborative in partnership and inclusive in enrolment, allowing a vibrant network to be operationalized that embraced the diversity of participants and host location. For this initiative and the success of IELI as a now established event I truly feel that Jennifer Browne is deserving of the 2015 CACEE Excellence in Innovation- Leadership Development Award.

**What was the budget range of this project?**

High ($10,000+)

**What was the size of the team working on this project?**

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