

GLOBALIZATION AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES



At first glance, Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, may seem an unlikely place to promote internationalization. Rooted in America's heartland, Cedar Rapids is the second largest city in the state. As you drive out of the city, its buildings and buses soon give way to cornfields and tractors. But Kirkwood Community College is a champion of internationalization.

Kirkwood has approximately 400 international students representing more than 55 countries. Each year, more than 160 students participate in study abroad programs. The community college's International Programs Department, which was founded more than 40 years ago, strives to engage all faculty, staff and students in intercultural experiences.

"We have support from our president, board of trustees, administration and community," says Dawn Wood, Director of International Programs for Kirkwood Community College. "They realize that global learning is an important part of any institution of learning."

Wood admits her school is fortunate to have institutional support. Publicly-funded community colleges strive to provide affordable education to everyone in close-to-home locations. The idea of serving international students or sending local students abroad may not seem part of this vision. But in an increasingly global marketplace, it certainly should be, argues Wood and others.

TWO-YEAR SCHOOLS
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The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) values global education. In an April 2016 report entitled *The Importance of Global Education*, the AACC stated, “For community college leaders and other decision makers, the importance of global education is an urgent need that is deeply rooted in economics—student employability, our ability to live and work successfully in diverse environments, and the prosperity of local communities.”



OVERCOMING HURDLES TO INTERNATIONALIZATION



The challenges to internationalization at community colleges often stem from two main groups of stakeholders—leaders/administrators and students. “In California, our biggest challenge remains convincing administrators that it’s OK to do anything internationally,” says Rosalind Latiner Raby, Ph.D., Director of California Colleges for International Education (CCIE), a consortium of 92 community colleges that strives to increase international understanding through education.

Since CCIE’s founding in 1984, many community college leaders have argued that serving an international community is antithetical to their mission—even illegal. But that’s simply erroneous. More than 700 community colleges are federally approved to enroll international students, according to the AACC. And the benefits of educating those students at



community colleges mirror those at four-year institutions, primarily preparing all students—both domestic and international—for a prosperous future in a global economy.

Other barriers to internationalization pertain to students. The main challenge to attracting U.S. students to study abroad programs is often financial. “One of the big reasons students come to community college is because it’s more affordable,” says Wood. “They probably aren’t even considering study abroad when they come here.”

Kirkwood promotes study abroad early and often, talking about options when high school students take campus tours and during incoming student orientation. The community college also tries to keep its faculty-led programs affordable, with a target range of \$3,000 to \$4,000. In addition, it offers \$1,000 scholarships supported by The Kirkwood Foundation. These strategies are working: Kirkwood Community College ranks fourth in the total number of study abroad students among institutions granting associate’s degrees, according to the Institute of International Education’s most recent *Open Doors® Report*.

Community colleges also often struggle to attract international students. “People in the middle of China or Argentina don’t know what a community college is,” says Wood. “Effectively recruiting students requires a different model than if you are a large university in southern California or New York.” Wood and her associates spend a lot of time explaining the community college model and the benefits of a two-year degree, then talking about Iowa and Cedar Rapids.

“We have to get people to understand that they can come to the middle of the United States—there are people living here,” says Wood. “We have a wonderful product, but it can be hard to convince students and parents that it’s right for them.”



6 STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING INTERNATIONALIZATION

Despite the challenges, internationalization is growing at community colleges. According to the IIE's 2016 *Open Doors® Report*, more than 95,000 international students were enrolled in associate's degree granting colleges. That's about 9 percent of all international students. At Kirkwood Community College, the number of international students has more than doubled in the past decade.

Consider these six ideas for increasing internationalization on your community college campus:

1. Make internationalization an institutional priority. At Kirkwood, the International Programs Department is under the umbrella of Academic Affairs. "I'm at the same level as all the other academic deans, and I am very visible on campus," says Wood. She and her staff "work on everything international for the campus, so it's a very centralized model."

Raby adds that one way to prioritize internationalization is to make it part of your mission statement. "When college leadership changes—and it will—if internationalization is mentioned in your mission, then there's support for it," she says.



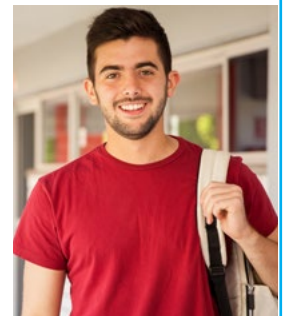
2. Create a committee to foster internationalization. "I'm a big fan of a college-wide, sanctioned international committee that draws members from the student body, administration and faculty," says Raby. The committee ensures that all stakeholders are involved and contributing to a successful globalization program. Last fall, Kirkwood created an international student leadership group to help students assimilate and get involved in campus activities.

3. Partner with universities. Most international students attend community colleges for their first two years of postsecondary education, then transfer to a four-year university to earn a bachelor's degree. Kirkwood Community College teams up with Iowa State University and the University of Iowa to visit

international high schools they believe would have good candidates for community colleges who will later transfer to universities.

4. Globalize your curriculum. "Every class from art to zoology can be internationalized," says Raby. "Encourage faculty to conceptualize how the subject they are teaching fits into the world discussion." Some community colleges, such as Lone Star College in Houston, create awards to fund travel abroad for faculty to conduct research or gather information for a class, then integrate it into their coursework or develop a study abroad program.

Kirkwood Community College created a cultural exchange program, where faculty teaching any course partner with an English as a Second Language class and lead an activity related to their course. For example, Wood teaches Global Business Skills. During the semester, her students partner with students in the ESL class to develop a business marketing plan specific to a foreign country. Not only does this globalize the curriculum, but it also fosters interaction between U.S. and international students.



5. Involve the private sector. Team up with local companies to create internships for international students or develop study abroad programs in countries where they have plants or offices. Encourage companies to share the importance of globalization to them with college leaders and administrators.

6. Let the students tell their stories. “You need to have data to back up your programming decisions, but it’s not as convincing in many cases as stories,” says Wood. “When I can get students to share stories on campus and in the community it builds relationships. It’s really important to tell the stories of what global education can do.” Kirkwood Media includes international students in its “Kirkwood Student Insights” videos on YouTube. Students share everything from what their home country is like to why they chose Kirkwood. Said one student from Sudan in a video, “Kirkwood is a great place to start and then go anywhere.”

If community colleges want to be a great jumping off point for domestic and international students, they need to embrace global programming and create more opportunities for internationalization. “We train students for jobs, and jobs are increasingly part of the global economy and demand internationalization literacy skills,” says Raby. “We also train students to be contributing members of the community, and internationalization literacy prepares for that as well.”



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