

regions in the United States. Over the years, my colleagues and I have detected an enduring preference for private institutions among those coming from abroad and a perception that equates private institutions with high quality.

Yet in New England and across the United States, state-funded public institutions, especially the large research universities, rank among the world's best in key fields of particular interest to international students. Community colleges—an American invention that is now spreading abroad—also are attracting growing numbers of international students to New England and the United States. In fact, though foreign enrollment in community colleges slowed somewhat after September 11, there was a 20 percent increase in foreign student enrollment in these institutions between 1999 and 2005.

The good news is that as the world becomes a flatter place, and as the nationwide enrollment of international students continues to rebound post-9/11, New England schools too continue to beckon.

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World Community

Middlesex CC Infuses Global Initiatives into Core Curriculum and Beyond

CAROLE A. COWAN

Twenty years ago, Middlesex Community College (MCC) in Massachusetts decided to add a global focus to its programs. Since then, the college has garnered worldwide recognition for the range of international initiatives it has integrated into its curriculum across academic disciplines.

Today, Middlesex offers unique opportunities for international study and professional development for its students, faculty and staff, as well as training programs for foreign businesses, intercultural training for local businesses and programs to help foreign countries modernize their education and economic infrastructures.



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With one campus situated in the traditional gateway immigrant city of Lowell, Mass., and another in suburban Bedford, Mass., Middlesex serves a diverse population that includes many Asian and Hispanic immigrants. It also hosts many international students on both campuses and supports community programs with an international focus.

International awareness

An international perspective is embedded into MCC's core curriculum, which requires students, regardless of major, to take six intensive-value courses, including one with a multicultural or global awareness focus.

The college also funds international student fellowships, in which selected students visit a foreign country and study its history and culture. Once accepted for a fellowship, students enroll in a specially designed, three-credit course featuring lectures, readings and papers focusing on the history and culture of the country they will visit. MCC faculty and staff accompany students overseas during these foreign fellowships.

Since 1992, Middlesex has offered two- and three-week fellowships to China, Russia, Costa Rica, Spain, Ireland and the Netherlands. Many participants report having had life-changing experiences through this intense exposure to another culture. To ensure access for all students, MCC fellowships cover the costs of air and ground travel as well as lodging and meals.

MCC's *Pluralism in Islam* Project will present a series of faculty seminars on the diversity within Islam. Participating professors will then infuse their knowledge into a variety of college courses.

To truly internationalize the curriculum, colleges must internationalize their faculties. Middlesex constantly promotes opportunities for faculty and staff to travel abroad to attend professional development seminars on internationalizing curriculum and to collaborate with other colleges to implement these programs. MCC faculty and staff have participated in educational institutes recently in Africa, Armenia, Cambodia, Ethiopia, South America and Ukraine.

Many Middlesex international programs promote global harmony. The college is now working with the Marishane Senior Secondary School in Limpopo Province, South Africa, to address the high level of violence against women in South Africa. The goal of this State Department project is to create a Community Support Center at the secondary school, train teachers and counselors and create age-appropriate curriculum to reduce violence against women.

Middlesex also recently received a U.S. Department of Education grant to train faculty to teach about pluralism within Islam. MCC's *Pluralism in Islam*

Project will present a series of faculty seminars on the diversity within Islam. Participating professors will then infuse their knowledge into a variety of college courses. *Beginning Arabic* language courses have also been added to the curriculum.

For 17 years, Middlesex has hosted the Wider Horizons program in Lowell, in collaboration with the Lowell Public Schools and the University of Massachusetts Lowell. This unique initiative brings together teachers in training from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, Protestant and Catholic, to work in the Lowell Public Schools Summer Program and the UMass Lowell National Youth Sports Program.

Link to development

There is no doubt that international education and economic development are firmly linked. Since organizations regularly transcend borders, community colleges are obligated to make their students globally literate and capable of competing internationally.

Middlesex recently completed a three-year State Department-funded project in collaboration with Azov Regional Management Institute in Berdyansk, Ukraine, focusing on workforce development and distance learning. MCC staff helped the institute develop, customize and market its contract-training services to stimulate economic development in the region and also taught institute staff how to create online and hybrid courses.

MCC's Law Center organized and ran a five-year conflict-resolution and mediation training project in Cambodia with the University of Phnom Penh's National Institute of Management. At the time, it was the only U.S.-funded education program in Cambodia.

Community global awareness

Recognizing the rich contributions people from other countries and cultures make to American life, Middlesex supports many local events and organizations that promote and celebrate international awareness in the community. For example, *Cambodian Expressions*, an annual, multi-week Cambodian film and arts festival, is cosponsored by MCC, in partnership with more than 15 local education, businesses and cultural institutions. Events are held throughout Lowell.

MCC's *One World Series* brings authors, educators, public officials, artists, journalists and other notables from around the world to Middlesex to address topics of interest.

By weaving together people and projects that reach beyond traditional educational boundaries and enrich all participants, Middlesex has rapidly become a learning center for the entire community—exactly what a community college should be.

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