

Affiliate Forum: Globalization of College Campuses — Enriching our Lives

By Judi Marino

With this issue, the NCSSSMST Journal introduces the Affiliate Forum column. As NCSSSMST institutional and affiliate memberships grow, this new feature offers college and university affiliates to articulate and address questions and issues from a post-secondary perspective: college admissions, research opportunities, selecting a major, and so forth.

According to the Open Doors report from the Institute of International Education, more than a half million international students are currently studying in the United States.

Over half of the international students are from Asia, both the subcontinent (India is the leading sending nation of students) and the Far East (China, Korea, and Japan leading in numbers sent). Following Asia, 13% of our international students are from Europe, 12% from Latin America, 6% from Africa, 6% from the Middle East, and 1 % from Oceania.

Open Doors reports that international students contribute over \$13 billion to the U.S. economy. I believe that the contributions of these students are much more far-reaching than monetary, however. Their respectful manner, their appreciation of the opportunities presented to them, their work ethic, their intelligence, their talent! Their names! The foods they prepare and share with us, the gifts they bring (I could write a book alone on the gifts I've received!), the stories they tell.

On the campus of Florida Institute of Technology (FIT), we find many international students willing to share and contribute and become active in our academic community. They are active in clubs and organizations and begin many new campus organizations to share their culture and their heritage. They are amazing musicians with interesting instruments, delightful dancers with native dances, pure, sweet singing voices, thespians, writers, playwrights. They

are mathematicians, scientists, computer whizzes, historians, activists, humanitarians, global thinkers and doers. There are their native outfits, works of art, and other visual delights that show our differences yet make us smile.

We are blessed to have our lives enriched by other cultures and our minds broadened by insightful students. Probably all of us have stories about compelling, perspective-changing experiences by or with international students. Let me share a few of the students that enrich my life every day.

My young Malaysian student, who walked right up to my table at a college fair in Penang with her parents and informed me that her psychic told her she would attend FIT. She attended, thrived, and eventually earned her doctorate in genetic engineering, and married a student of ours from Puerto Rico.

My student assistant from Bogota, Colombia maintains a 4.0 GPA in aerospace engineering. He spent Thanksgiving with his girlfriend's family on the island of Puerto Rico. She and he fight about the fact that he speaks Spanish but no one in Puerto Rico can understand him. He loves mountain biking and comes to school in Florida! Don't you know he joined two biking clubs in the state that somehow find mountains near us to bike?

At a college fair in Barbados, there was an announcement over the public address system for

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me to come to the registration table for a phone call. It was the mother of a student who had attended and graduated from FIT, but Mom saw my photo in the Barbados newspaper and had to call to say hello and to tell me how wonderful her daughter is doing as a chemist in Connecticut.

There is a student from Trinidad who plays amazing guitar. When visiting Trinidad, his mom and dad picked me up and brought me to their home, where I learned of this boy's talent. Later, we came back to campus and I made him play for me. I would never have known this or heard the boy play had his parents not been so proud.

The Indian student who doesn't want to be an engineer, but the family insists. He started a talk show on campus, has written two plays and loves everything to do with the theatre. The student who insisted I'd like Indian food if I would just give it a chance and go to the place he likes best. It didn't work, but I'll never tell.

Has it been a pleasure to meet students from nations all over the world on our campuses? For me, absolutely! Please don't misunderstand: we deal with amazing, talented and delightful students from our own country on a daily basis. That's just another article for another day!