

By Janet Hulstrand

Advancing Faculty-Led Programs at Community Colleges

EDUCATION ABROAD IS BECOMING MORE IMPORTANT at community colleges, and faculty-led programs are a way to both encourage students who might not otherwise go abroad to do so while also contributing to the broader internationalization of the community college campus.

“Faculty engagement in internationalization is essential,” says Geoffrey Bradshaw, director of international education at Madison Area Technical College (also known as Madison College) in Wisconsin. “And finding ways to encourage, nurture, and support the creation of faculty-led programs is one of the best ways to engage faculty in meaningful international education.”

While it seems that faculty-led programs specifically are becoming more popular, it is not exactly a new phenomenon. In fact, the three community colleges mentioned in this article have all offered faculty-led programs for at least 20 years.

Madison first began offering faculty-led study abroad opportunities in the early 1990s. Then, between 2005 and 2010, several factors led the institution to strategically focus on faculty-led programs as a central element in their inter-

nationalization strategy. “In the past there was little need for community colleges to spend significant time or energy on international issues,” Bradshaw says. “Traditionally the goal was to prepare students for employment within the local area, and when there was no need for global engagement in the local job market, international education was seen as extraneous to the core mission. This is no longer the case. Today’s employers are demanding that students are able to work effectively with diverse teams, supply chains, and customer networks that span international borders.”

Drawing on key findings from studies concerning both international and experiential education, administrators, and education abroad staff at Madison worked together to develop a model of how to create short but intensive service programs that would allow faculty and students to apply disciplinary content in hands-on applications.



Madison Area Technical College nursing students in Guatemala.



Madison College students in Costa Rica during a faculty-led “Renewable Energy for the Developing World” course that included work on rural electrification projects in Costa Rica.

The first program designed following this model was a course, “Renewable Energy for the Developing World,” which included rural electrification projects in Costa Rica; faculty-led programs in related fields followed.

In 2010 they were able to take this model to a national stage with support from a U.S. State Department Capacity Building for Study Abroad award, through which they provided training and best practices in faculty-led sustainable development service learning programs to community college faculty from across the United States. The result was the creation of the Community College Sustainable Development Network (CCSDN), comprised of 24 community colleges from Hawaii to Maine. Since 2010, CCSDN has launched 18 new programs in fields such as renewable energy, engineering, sustainable construction, nursing, and dentistry, among others.

“Community colleges have a responsibility to provide their students with the opportunity to engage in trans-

formational experiential learning programs that will help them to build global competencies and better prepare them for a global marketplace,” Bradshaw says. Today Madison and the CCSDN network continue to provide training in best practices for health, safety, and program development for faculty-led service programs (See <http://madisoncollege.edu/ccsdn>.) They have also partnered with Community Colleges for International Development (CCID) to provide greater national access to this model.

Meeting the Unique Challenges of Community Colleges

“The unique challenges of community colleges? Where do I start?” says Gregory Malveaux, professor of English, college-wide coordinator of study abroad for all four campuses of Montgomery College in Maryland, and author of *Look Before Leaping: Risks, Liabilities, and Repair of Study Abroad in Higher Education*. “First of all, we can’t wait for students

to take on study abroad in their junior year. So one challenge is that we have much less time to work with them. We have to recognize their maturity, competence, and readiness for study abroad far earlier than at a four-year institution.” He adds, “Many of our students may never go to a four-year institution, but it is just as important for them to have exposure to study abroad opportunities. By offering them this opportunity, we’re exposing a large population to an option they might never have had otherwise. The community needs this kind of international exposure, and community colleges should be able to provide it.”

Another challenge is lack of financial resources. “Community colleges are far less likely to have study abroad offerings than four-year institutions,” Malveaux says. “So we don’t typically receive endowments and outside contributions for our offices. We also have to work harder to justify and promote the positive impact of study abroad on our campuses. And we don’t tend to have as much staff as at a four-year institution. Most leaders of education abroad programs at community colleges wear multiple hats—often faculty are leading study abroad programs in exchange for teaching a reduced load. And some do it just out of sheer passion and joy, without compensation or additional time allotted.”



Emily Khan, a recent graduate of the Community College of Baltimore County, participated in a women’s studies course that, after the regular semester had ended on campus, continued in Ireland.

For this reason, partnering with other colleges is essential, according to Malveaux, who also serves as co-chair of the Maryland Community College International Education Consortium (MCCIEC). “I am a huge advocate of the state consortium model,” he says. “That way, even institutions that don’t have an official office, or a single program to offer their students, can still offer them the opportunity to study abroad, through the offerings of other institutions.” Rebekah de Wit, director of global education at the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) and the other co-chair of MCCIEC, agrees. “Collaborative efforts among colleges are a key to making study abroad work well at many schools where funding, institutional support for study abroad efforts, and/or accessibility of programs have been obstacles,” she says.

In Maryland, an MOU facilitates cross-institutional participation in study abroad programs so community colleges that can’t sustain their own programs can refer students to other programs in the state while retaining their full-time equivalents (FTEs). “We’re also focusing on cosponsoring programs, and developing an internal cache of best practices in study abroad,” de Wit says. “We’ve found that pointing to success stories, especially local community college success stories, often carries the most weight when we seek more institutional support for study abroad.” Last spring, MCCIEC organized a forum in Havana, Cuba, that was open to community college faculty and staff statewide. “We had two goals,” de Wit says. “We wanted to help participants learn about faculty-led study abroad. And, much more broadly, we wanted to bring more attention to study abroad around the state.” She adds, “It worked! We generated a lot of enthusiasm, and attracted more colleges that have become active consortium members.” The forum was so successful that they are organizing another one to take place in Iceland in the spring of 2017.

Developing, Nurturing, and Supporting Faculty-Led Programs

With so much more attention now directed toward risk management and to integrating study abroad in a systematic way into the curriculum, many community colleges are emulating the university model by centralizing and standardizing study abroad processes and practices. “Largely due to budgetary challenges and competing pressing local concerns, on the whole community colleges are behind the curve in this regard, compared to four-year institutions,” de Wit says. But, she adds, “A wave of change is taking place right now. Many community colleges are seeking to expand their study abroad efforts in a significant way.”



Students from the Community College of Baltimore County on a faculty-led abroad “Sociology in Nicaragua” program separate coffee beans in Granada to better understand realities of the coffee industry.

The office of global education at CCBC offers workshops each semester on how to propose and lead programs abroad as well as information sessions during collegewide professional development events. “We also find that it can pique interest to invite trusted providers to campus to talk about various program models and options,” de Wit says. Institutional support is also very helpful in sustaining faculty interest. “Most schools at CCBC view leading study abroad programs as a valuable form of institutional service on annual faculty evaluations and in the promotion process,” de Wit says. The office of global education has also secured a small amount of institutional funding to offer annual competitive international travel grants, which faculty members can use for program development or site visits. They also reserve a few spaces on most of their programs for faculty members to enroll in as participants. “They’re exempt from registering for the course but they pay the travel fee,” de Wit explains. “This helps to fill programs,

and gives faculty the chance to travel and to become familiar with the nature of faculty-led programs. It also allows students to interact closely with faculty role models, something students have cited as a significant benefit.”

Malveaux sends out an annual collegewide call for proposals via e-mail, and a committee helps him vet, interview, and select approved proposals. “I am one of the few, and fortunate, administrators of education abroad and global education in the Maryland community college system who can provide additional payment (1 credit worth) to compensate faculty who incorporate study abroad into their existing courses,” he says. “I also try to encourage faculty participation by pointing out benefits such as gaining professional development in the field. In addition, when a faculty member merges a short-term study abroad program into a semester course, the cost of their individual program is fully absorbed into the overall costs; otherwise, the partnering travel agency

needs to pay it.” He adds, “A fully paid program can provide additional incentive for faculty participation: a faculty leader who works extremely hard on such programs should not have to pay their own way.”

Working strategically with providers is another way to build program offerings. According to Laura Pierce Weldon, associate vice president for custom programs at International Studies Abroad, “Faculty-led programs are a particularly good fit for community colleges, as they can be shorter, and can be customized to create lower-cost programs.” She adds, “Providers can help faculty by sharing their expertise in a given program location, as well as in program development. Community colleges can also plug into existing programming. The ‘plug & play’ model allows faculty to rotate in and out, so that a sustainable program can be created, and academic integrity can be maintained. Providers can also help make collaboration between community colleges easier, because there is a central entity coordinating things, so that one college isn’t shouldering the responsibility.”

“ISA has been a wonderful partner both for CCBC and MCCIEC, finding creative



Madison College students in France.

solutions for a wide range of requests and concerns we’ve put forward,” de Wit says, and adds, “Good providers can relieve a lot of the liability concerns that community colleges have, and can simplify many of the administrative challenges too—by suggesting cost-effective program sites and itineraries, accepting payment directly from

students, facilitating payments to faculty, and helping with marketing efforts.”

Institutional and Academic Benefits of Education Abroad

According to de Wit, at CCBC, faculty-led study abroad has created new opportunities for collaboration across programs and campuses, as faculty work together to offer programs that are open to more than one discipline, increasing the likelihood that a program will run. “A common university model for academics in faculty-led programs is to offer a special course section that is open only to travelers, but this model tends to be less successful at many community colleges, where the pool of prospective participants is typically smaller.” One strategy CCBC has used is to design a short-term travel program with content that relates to at least two or three analogous courses and sometimes even different disciplines. “Then we make the travel component an option for students in those regular, open-enrollment courses. That way, we don’t need to worry about filling courses—only about filling the travel program.” At the same time, with multiple course options, they increase the pool of prospective travel participants. “Scheduling the travel to take place just after the end of a fall or spring semester, or during spring break, means that students’ in-

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

1. Publication Title: *International Educator*. 2. Publication Number: 1059-4221. 3. Filing Date: September 2016. 4. Issue Frequency: Bimonthly. 5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 6. 6. Annual Subscription Price: *International Educator* is a member benefit for NAFSA members. Nonmembers in the U.S. can subscribe for \$40 USD. 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 1307 New York Avenue, NW, Eighth Floor, Washington, DC 20005-4701; Contact Person: Marlene Johnson; Telephone: 202.495.3699. 8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: Same as above. 9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, and Editor: NAFSA: Association of International Educators, Same as above; Publisher: Marlene Johnson; Editor: Elaina Loveland. 10. Owner: NAFSA: Association of International Educators, Same as above. 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None. 12. Tax Status: has not changed during preceding 12 months. 13. Publication Title: *International Educator*. 14. Average, Preceding 12 Months: 15. Extent and Nature of Circulation: a. Total Number of Copies: 13,0334; b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 11,400 c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 11,400; d. Free Distribution by Mail: 0; e. Free Distribution Outside the Mail: 1,348; f. Total Free Distribution: 1,348; g. Copies Not Distributed: 255; h. Total: 12,748; i. Percent Paid Circulation, 89%. 16. Publication of Statement of Ownership: *International Educator* November/December 2016. 17. Signature and Title: Elaina Loveland, Editor, *International Educator*.

complete grades from the associated course can be resolved quickly, and facilitates the use of financial aid," de Wit adds.

Assessment of study abroad outcomes at CCBC has shown that participating in faculty-led study abroad has resulted in many students taking significant positive steps forward along their academic paths, de Wit says. "Solidifying their choice of a major or career, broadening their perspective on career paths and future opportunities open to them, gaining new outlooks on some of their values and beliefs, developing closer relationships with faculty and other students who have subsequently served as mentors, and much more: we see great value in these outcomes."

Emily Khan provides an example. A recent graduate of CCBC, she participated in a women's studies course that, after the regular semester had ended on campus, continued in Ireland. Like many faculty-led programs in community colleges, the program empha-

sized experiential and service learning. "A lot of our work was outside of the classroom, such as volunteering at a soup kitchen, and learning more about the immigration process at the Irish Refugee Council," Khan says. After the program ended, she flew to Turkey, where she participated in a month-long teach and travel program that included an internship with a nongovernmental organization (NGO), a job as an English teacher, and an intensive week-long Islamic studies course. She is now enrolled at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County, where she plans to graduate with a bachelor's degree in biology and go on to medical school.

Khan's ultimate goal is to work abroad with programs such as Doctors Without Borders. "I hope to find a balance between medicine and my interest in global studies," she says. She adds, "Because I come from a Pakistani-American background, I thought I knew all about handling culture shock, and

exposure to people of different backgrounds. I couldn't have been more wrong. I met so many different people, with their different accents, dialects, and life stories. It made me take a step back and humble myself. I realized how lucky I was to be able to experience a completely different part of the world alongside my classmates and professors. My first study abroad trip taught me how to appreciate and respect culture and diversity more than I already did. It is something I will carry with me in my daily life, whenever I may come across someone from a different background, country, or culture." **IE**

JANET HULSTRAND is a writer, editor, and teacher who divides her time between France and the United States. She has created and taught literature classes for the City University of New York in Paris, Florence, Honolulu, and Havana, as well as faculty development workshops for education abroad. Her most recent *IE* article was "Increasing Diversity in Education Abroad," in the May/June 2016 issue.

Wherever they go, whatever their goals, we'll be there.

We understand the unique needs of international students – we've been serving them for nearly 40 years. We also understand the challenges you face as an international educator. Whenever and wherever you need us, we'll be there.

Call us today to find out how we can be there for your international students.



**INTERNATIONAL & DOMESTIC STUDENTS • STUDY ABROAD
TRAVEL ASSISTANCE • REPATRIATION AND MEDICAL EVACUATION**



International Programs | 800.537.1777 | www.4studenthealth.com