

By Elaina Loveland

A Renewed Commitment to International Education

M

ARTHA J. KANTER IS THE UNDER SECRETARY OF EDUCATION with the U.S. Department of Education. In this position, she reports to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and oversees policies, programs, and activities related to postsecondary education, vocational and adult education, and federal student aid. From 2003 to 2009, Kanter served as chancellor of the Foothill-De Anza Community College District, one of the largest community college districts in the nation, serving more than 45,000 students with a total budget of approximately \$400 million. She is the first community college leader to serve in the under secretary position. Earlier in her career, she was an alternative high school teacher at Lexington High School in Massachusetts, the Public Schools of the Tarrytowns (N.Y.), and later at the Searing School in New York City. She established the first program for students with learning disabilities at San Jose City College. She then served as a director, dean and subsequently as vice chancellor for policy and research for the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office in Sacramento, returning to San Jose City College as vice president of instruction and student services in 1990. In 1993, she was named president of De Anza College and served in this position until becoming chancellor. Kanter holds a doctorate in organization and leadership from the University of San Francisco. She received her master's degree in education with a concentration in clinical psychology and public practice from Harvard University, and a bachelor's degree in sociology from Brandeis University.

IE: You're recently been appointed the new Undersecretary of Education. Can you describe your new position and responsibilities?

KANTER: I oversee postsecondary education, vocational, and adult education and federal student aid and work directly with the Secretary [of Education] on a variety of priorities. I think we have a wide ranging vision, which is to align early learning zero to five with K-12 with higher education and lifelong learning, so we are looking at education as the continuum. In the global economy and with the international communities that are continuing to expand across this country and throughout the world, we have a very central role to play in international education.

IE: President Obama has been very forceful in terms of support for community colleges. Can you tell us how you see that vision being implemented? How will this impact internationalization efforts at these institutions?

KANTER: Community colleges educate nearly half of all undergraduates in the country. Our data says that we have 21 million undergraduates in the country, so nearly half of those are in the community colleges and what we haven't done enough of in higher education within community colleges and in our four-year colleges and universities is to help and support and demand that students complete college not only enter college. So we have tremendous programs that work.



Martha J. Kanter

We have a lot of best practices but they have not yet been widely shared. These programs haven't been really well understood from the research standpoint, so we are going to be shining a spotlight on what works and supporting what works in the American Graduation Initiative to get more students moving through. We're doing some things on the outreach side and improving federal student aid so with those improvements on the input side, we'll have another 3.7 million students from underserved communities coming into American higher education, many of those obviously coming into the community colleges, but the big focus is going to be on accelerating achievement in America. We want more students going through. We have, currently, two-thirds of students not fully prepared for college. We've got to do a big "wrap up" with our partners in K-12 to get more students graduating from high school with college-ready skills. We need to understand that about two-thirds of the community college students work while they're in college, so we've got to get them ready for not only college and lifelong learning, but workforce ready, so what that means is, better training, better support in articulating courses from high school to college, and then once they come to college, really supporting them.

IE: What are your top priorities to accomplish over the next few years?

KANTER: A major effort on the input side is to streamline and reform federal student aid so that we will be welcoming in 2.7 more

million students from underserved communities across America that have not had enough opportunity to attend college and they will be receiving Pell Grants. Another million will take advantage of federal loans. The second priority is to really put in the reforms and highlight the best practices to accelerate achievement in America. That is going to be the centerpiece of success in this country going forward for generations to come. We have too many students that are not workforce and higher-education ready, so we've got to better prepare them so that they'll be able to succeed and compete in both the American economy, and the global economy.

IE: International educators would like to know more about how you see the Department supporting and participating in this important area?

KANTER: I hope that everyone in the international education community has carefully read President Obama's Cairo speech. What the president said was that we will expand exchange programs and increase scholarships and at the same time encourage more Americans to study in Muslim communities, so we are planning to move ahead to significantly increase the international exchange programs not only at the K-12 level but in higher education. There's going to be an early focus on Muslim majority nations. There'll be a conference in Morocco that we'll be attending. There is another one in Brazil that's going to focus on adult literacy, so these are opportunities for America to have a strong presence internationally. We have other countries coming to us saying they want to expand exchanges and add more Fulbright scholars visiting the United States and vice versa. We also have a huge initiative in open educational resources to freely share knowledge across the world, so for example, MIT (in the late 1990s) launched the MIT open courseware project, which has since grown internationally so we have all the freely available textbooks in hundreds of disciplines in America that can be shared and vice versa. We have other countries now that are sharing information doing translations so we really see knowledge communities being internationally based to really put forth the best curriculum and the best research and the best ideas that can be actually leveraging technology through open educational resources. So, we're very excited about that and then also exchanges school-to-school. We've got classrooms across the country communicating with classrooms in other countries and there you're giving students in K-12 a first exposure to what life is like in another country. What are other students thinking about in India, in Chile, or in China, so it's very exciting there. We're also participating in the Halo Project, which is part of OECD, looking at international benchmarks for success. We're really looking at how are our students compare with students around the world. What does their curriculum look like compared to ours? I spent a little bit of time investigating Chinese high school math learning outcomes compared to our high school math learning outcomes, and there is a

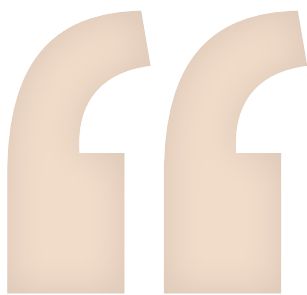
real difference. It brings out the competitive spirit in all of us. We really need to be asking 'how should we be teaching, and what more can we give our students so that they will be able to successfully compete in this twenty-first century world?'

IE: You have been a very active champion for international education during your career. Can you tell us about the development of your thinking in this area? What programs you've advanced? What emerging trends do you think are important?

KANTER: I think you know that it has been very important in my 30-year history in a community college to have an international intercultural studies division, that had a dean, that had faculty sharing knowledge, that had foreign languages, that had intercultural communications, that had ethnically based and culturally based program that were country-specific. It was very important for the faculty to be working with other faculty in the arts and sciences to say, 'This is what we're doing an international education and this is how our curriculum really dovetails with the priorities and mission of the college community,' because we were globalizing in terms of the student population while the curriculum was developing, so that was my 30-year take. Initially we had very small international exchange programs and those grew over 30 years tremendously. So, when I left the Foothill-De Anza Community College District, there were Fulbright exchanges. We had faculty going to other countries on a regular basis, our study abroad expanded tremendously to especially Pacific Rim countries, former Soviet republics and other parts of the world that previously hadn't been part of study abroad. Everything was expanding, not only the faculty, the curriculum, the exchange programs, and of course, the online learning programs as well.

IE: What have you learned from the international programs you've led?

KANTER: I'm not an expert at international programs, but what I have learned is that they are essential to the future of our higher education institutions and they are



I think it's very important that the economics, the financial side of study abroad programs be well understood, so

I think NASFA can take a leadership role in understanding that students who receive federal student aid can and do participate in study abroad. We don't want to exclude any student that could benefit. This is especially true at community colleges that serve hundreds of thousands of students who receive federal student aid. The opportunity is already there, but it is not well understood.



also essential to the future of what young people will need to know and do in a global economy in a global world.

We can have 40 languages in one classroom. You can be teaching a humanities class but you've got students from all over the world in there, from all backgrounds and cultures. The classroom has changed and we need to understand that.

IE: NAFSA is working with community college leadership to provide opportunities for more community college students to participate in study abroad. Do you have advice for us and for our readers in community colleges and in four year institutions?

KANTER: I think it's very important that the economics, the financial side of study abroad programs be well understood, so I think NASFA can take a leadership role in understanding that students who receive federal student aid can and do participate in study abroad. We don't want to exclude any student that could benefit. This is espe-

cially true at community colleges that serve hundreds of thousands of students who receive federal student aid. The opportunity is already there, but it is not well understood. Families are nervous about it. They think it's too expensive. The schools are nervous because they don't understand that it can be built into the curriculum. We've had great success in the community colleges I've been associated with in being able to cover the full cost and also expanding the number of international students coming to the community colleges. I don't think the economics of international education are well understood and it would be great if the research community could really do a series of papers on that so more colleges would participate.

IE: If a community college student transfers to a four-year institution, they might think, "I can't fit studying abroad in because I've got to finish my coursework." Are there any kind of conversations between community colleges and the four-year institutions about making sure

that a student who may want to study abroad doesn't get lost in the transition?

KANTER: Community colleges have to build in a study abroad program into their transfer agreement. So, if they finished the first full year as a freshman in a community college, and they have the second year to complete, they can build in the study abroad program with the courses that would be offered in that study abroad program. The lesson learned is planning ahead so students will know what transfer courses will be offered in the semester or the quarter that they decide to study abroad in. So, if they're a freshman by January or February if they knew what would be offered in the subsequent year as a transfer student, and they know that English composition, U.S. history, or intercultural communication or humanities is going to be offered during study abroad, they would just fit it into their program and check off that requirement for transfer needed and not delay transfer for a semester.

IE: Do you have comments about greater use of financial aid for study abroad? Many low-income students are not aware that their financial aid is applicable to transferable study abroad? How do you think we can get this message out more forcefully?

KANTER: NAFSA could play a role in providing a lot more technical assistance and spotlighting how it's done. You know, connecting directors of financial aid or federal student aid with the study abroad program directors. We have a wonderful director of international programs, George Beers, at Foothill College who has been there for 25 years. Any question on how to incorporate students who are receiving federal student aid into the international study abroad program, George can answer the technical details. But, I think that is not well understood in many places.

IE: The Simon legislation now making its way through congress would provide a great stimulus for international education—both in scholarships for students as well as drawing the nation's attention to the importance of global knowledge. How is the Department viewing the bill?

KANTER: It's very exciting that the Simon legislation is moving forward and I think you know it is in line with what President Obama has shared as his vision for how America can play a role overall in increasing international understanding, promoting world peace, and building good relationships with other countries. We think the Simon legislation and other legislation to really promote expanding international education will be very valuable to this country and to the other countries with whom we will be working.

IE: The chancellor at UC Berkeley recently suggested that the federal government should take action to support the nation's premier research universities, which now are experiencing budget shortfalls. Does that make sense from your point of view? Would this help to keep U.S. universities competitive in the international education marketplace?

KANTER: It's an important question. I think the federal government through the

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has already made significant strides in supporting the nation's research universities and all of its many of its colleges and universities. If you go to recovery.org you can see the specific investments in the research universities that were made through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. I think in the long-term if you look at newer investments in the Department of Energy, the Department of Agriculture, the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, all of those agencies are providing funding for research universities. I think what the Chancellor of UC Berkeley is thinking about is increasing the long-term federal investment in higher education specifically, and that's a national conversation at this tough economic time. It is an important one to have and I think it affects every segment of education including the research universities.

IE

ELAINA LOVELAND is managing editor of *IE*.



The
Intercultural
Communication
Institute

Programs for International Educators

Master of Arts in Intercultural Relations (MAIR)
In collaboration with the Univ. of the Pacific, Stockton, Calif.
Designed for seasoned and aspiring professionals, this limited-residency program located in Portland, Oregon allows you to earn an M.A. that addresses your career development needs for the field of international education.

Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication
July 14-30, 2010 Portland, Oregon
Designed for professionals in diverse, intercultural related fields ranging from business to study abroad, from healthcare to international student advising, the Summer Institute's stimulating and supportive environment helps you gain knowledge and skill, gather resources, and build networks.

Please contact us at:
ici@intercultural.org
503-297-4622
Or visit:
www.intercultural.org