Community colleges are the largest and fastest-growing sector of U.S. higher education. For more than 100 years, U.S. community colleges have been offering affordable, convenient, and accessible higher education and vocational training to millions. With campuses located within commuting distance of more than 90% of the population in the United States, the network of nearly 1,200 community colleges in all 50 states serves more than 11 million students and the most diverse student body in U.S. higher education. Students can work toward an associate degree, certificate, or license in hundreds of fields.

International students can obtain an affordable education in a supportive and academically challenging environment at U.S. community colleges. Top-notch faculty, a high ratio of teacher–student dialogue and interaction, state-of-the-art facilities, and small class size are the hallmarks of a community college education. Because community colleges are accredited by the same regional agencies and their academic courses are as rigorous as those at universities, students with associate degrees are able to transfer their course credits to a 4-year college or university to obtain a bachelor’s degree. Alumni of U.S. community colleges include astronauts, doctors, business tycoons, artists, sports legends, and scientists who are recognized and respected around the world.

46%—almost half of all undergraduates in the United States—begin their higher education studies at community colleges, which are affordable and convenient.

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INTERNET RESOURCES

“Internet Resources for International Students,” on page 127, is a comprehensive list of Web sites and URLs you can visit to find information on all of the topics covered in this Guide. You will occasionally notice that the name of an organization is printed in blue. This means you will find a related URL in the list on page 127.

International students also benefit from the strong ties that community colleges have to their communities. Students have many opportunities to interact with local citizens. In addition, students who choose to work in the United States through an OPT program often benefit from the close relationships community colleges have with local business and industry. For example, some colleges provide facilities and support services to incubate new entrepreneurial businesses.

In 2007, more than 86,000 international students chose to begin their higher education at U.S. community colleges. The top 10 reasons are listed in the next section.

In 2007, more than 86,000 international students chose to begin their higher education at U.S. community colleges. See page 95 for a list of colleges enrolling international students.

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