An increasing number of international students attend community colleges as a stepping-stone to prestigious 4-year colleges and universities in the United States. This section describes the top 10 benefits that U.S. community colleges offer to international students.

1. **Lower Tuition Cost**
Community college tuition and fees are approximately 50% lower than those at 4-year colleges and universities. All 50 states financially subsidize community colleges to help keep tuition fees lower and affordable to as many people as possible. If you intend to pursue a bachelor’s degree, you can lower the total cost of earning your degree by taking the first two years of a university program at a community college.

2. **Course Credits Transfer to Universities**
Most community colleges have agreements with 4-year colleges and universities to allow students to transfer their community college course credits toward a university degree. These are called articulation agreements or 2 + 2 transfer agreements. State universities usually give preference to qualified students who transfer from a community college in that state. It is also possible for students to transfer to well-known universities across the country, depending on the level of excellence demonstrated in their studies at the community college.

3. **Flexible English Proficiency Requirements**
Community colleges may accept lower scores or waive the requirements altogether for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) for admission. The TOEFL and IELTS measure the ability of nonnative speakers of English to use and understand English as it is spoken, written, and heard in college and university settings.

Community colleges provide their own English assessment tests when students arrive on campus to determine the level of their English language skills. Full-time intensive English programs (IEPs) at multiple levels are offered to address English language deficiencies and prepare international students for academic study in the United States. Tutoring, study skills centers, and self-paced computer-assisted instruction may also be provided. (For more information about English proficiency requirements, see page 37.)

4. **Focus on Teaching**
Community college faculty are primarily focused on teaching, while 4-year college and university faculty frequently focus on conducting research and publishing articles and books. More community college classes are taught by faculty rather than by teaching assistants, thus providing personal attention from professors. Additionally, because community
colleges hire many instructors who have practical work experience in the subjects they teach, students can expect to gain a real-world perspective on many subjects.

5 Small Class Sizes
Because the average community college class size is between 25 and 30 students, there is more opportunity for students to interact with their professors and each other. Small classes are highly beneficial to help international students adjust to the pace of academic life in the United States and to practice their English language skills.

6 Additional Year of Optional Practical Training (OPT)
International students are eligible for 1 year of OPT in their field of study immediately following completion of an associate degree and up to an additional 2½ years of OPT immediately following completion of a bachelor’s degree. Therefore, students who begin their higher education at a community college can be entitled to a total of 3½ years of OPT, but those who begin at a 4-year college or university can be entitled to only 2½ years of OPT. (For more information about OPT, see pages 10 and 64.)

7 Use of the Latest Technologies
Community colleges have strong ties with business and industry and are thus equipped with state-of-the-art technologies, classrooms, and facilities. Community colleges are leaders in cutting-edge fields such as biomedical engineering, biotechnology, robotics, laser optics, Internet and computer technologies, and geographic information systems.

8 Hundreds of Programs to Choose From
Community colleges offer programs in all major fields of study—ranging from art to political science to zoology. Programs currently popular among international students at community colleges include general studies, business, engineering, computer science, computer graphics, Internet technology, multimedia, hotel management, restaurant management, psychology, accounting, early childhood education, and environmental conservation.
Opportunities to Experience U.S. Culture

Community colleges are committed to serving the needs of their local communities and offer courses and activities that meet the communities’ recreational, social, and cultural needs. Although cultural and social activities may not be part of the college’s formal academic program, such activities enhance education and community life. Activities may include art exhibits, sporting events, concerts, theatrical productions, health fairs, community forums, and other events and courses that enrich the lives of students and local citizens. What this means for international students is that, in addition to a rich academic environment, community colleges offer a unique opportunity to experience the many aspects of life and culture in the United States—both on and off campus.

Excellent Student Support Services

Community colleges are committed to ensuring that all students achieve their academic goals. They offer a variety of support services and cross-cultural programs, including tutoring, advising, career planning, study skills, and counseling—many of which are designed specifically for international students. Community colleges with international students on campus often have an international office and staff specifically trained to provide helpful advice on a variety of topics that are important to international students. (For information about special services for students with disabilities, see page 27.)

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Contra Costa College & Los Medanos College

- No TOEFL Admission
- Nursing
- Bio Science/Technology
- ESL
- Business Administration
- Journalism
- Computer Science/Technology
- High Performance Computing
- Early Childhood Ed/Montessori
- Cosmetology/Culinary Arts
- Travel Marketing
- Recording Arts
- Applied and Fine Arts
- Biological Science
- Business Education
- Music and Recording Arts
- English
- Mathematics and Computer Science
- Engineering
- Graphic Communications/Desktop Publishing

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San Pablo, CA 94806
510-235-7800 ext. 4469
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www.contracosta.edu

Los Medanos College
International Students Admissions
2700 E. Leland Road
Pittsburg, California 94565
925-439-2181 ext. 7500
iso@losmedanos.edu
www.losmedanos.edu/inted
Tidewater Community College has been cited by the American Council on Education as one of eight “Promising Practices” colleges and universities in the nation for its work in international education.

AN OUTSTANDING EDUCATION

The advantages of attending Tidewater Community College include:

> Low tuition costs
> Transfer agreements with top-level universities
> Small classes and a faculty focused on teaching
> On-campus tutoring and support services
> Opportunities for student involvement in activities
> ESL instruction available to prepare students for academic coursework
> State-of-the-art teaching technology
> Located in the Mid-Atlantic Resort Area

TCC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or disability in its programs or activities.