Community college study abroad programs lag

Open access policy increases accessibility and diversity of students in programs

By Rosalind Latimer Ray
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In the almost 40 years since community colleges first offered study abroad programs, such study has become second only to international student programs in the scope and depth of participation. The Open Door program, also begun in the early 1970s, was one of the first open access policies that has increased the size of the student population at community colleges. It is precisely the community college open access policy that has increased the accessibility and diversity of participating students, and has been a critical component of the study abroad experience.

Community College Study Abroad opens new access to education. In the almost 40 years since community colleges first offered study abroad programs, such study has become second only to international student programs in the scope and depth of participation. The Open Door program, also begun in the early 1970s, was one of the first open access policies that has increased the size of the student population at community colleges. It is precisely the community college open access policy that has increased the accessibility and diversity of participating students, and has been a critical component of the study abroad experience.

Community College Study Abroad

There are multiple reasons why study abroad is such a powerful and unique educational experience for students. Whether a student is preparing for a career in the global economy, culturally immersed in another country, or simply wants to experience the world first hand, study abroad provides educational benefits that simply cannot be found in the classroom.

Data from the Open Doors Reports confirms that study abroad programs are an important component for undergraduate students. In 2002-2003, 4,085 students abroad. The low number is an important component for undergraduate students. In 2002-2003, 4,085 students abroad.

Numerous studies confirm the benefits gained from studying abroad for all students, and especially for under-represented students. Benefits include definite changes in perception and attitude toward global relationships, increased empathy towards politics and social service, significant learning curve growth in interpersonal skills, academic performance and reduction of cultural stereotypes. While short-term programs may not allow beginning language learners to gain in terms of grammar skills, they do gain in life experiences. For first generation or immigrant students, study abroad provides an opportunity to re-learn individual cultures and histories. For students who have not traveled beyond their own neighborhoods, studying abroad becomes a life-altering experience. Most importantly, what benefits four-year college students in terms of study abroad also benefits community college recipients.

Community colleges are bound by their mission of open enrollment to offer high academic quality programs at as low a cost as possible to provide opportunities for all students to participate. To achieve this, community colleges must first, reinforce awareness of the benefits study abroad programs offer. Inclusion of international education in college policy, mission, master plan, and/or annual priorities will help secure a foundation for study abroad at the college. Community colleges also must be able to offer a program that meets the needs of all students.

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ETS seeks community colleges to administer Internet-based TOEFL

Educational Testing Service (ETS) is seeking community college partners to begin administering Internet-based tests, as best test administration sites (CTAS), beginning with the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) in September.

As charter CTAS partners, ETS officials say, community colleges not only will be leading the way in Internet-based testing, they will provide a valuable service to students, attract new students to their campuses, promote international exchange and have exclusive access to other ETS products.

In order to participate, colleges need to have a language lab, computer lab or other secure room with computers and Internet access that can be reserved for ETS testing up to 30 times per year. ETS will compensate colleges to manage the testing at their sites, similar to what is done with ETS paper-based tests.

To apply, go online to http://www.ets.org/ecep. Enter Rex and AACC in the Reference ID block. Questions may be e-mailed to Rex Corlett at rcorlett@ets.org.

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