

# Global studies in the community college curriculum

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*The study reports on the development of global studies programs in community colleges. It offers a rationale for global studies through clarification of the widely contested phenomenon of globalization. By investigating key advances in global education over the past 15 years alongside current college initiatives, the research offers recommendations for programming in the community college context.*

## Introduction

Global studies programs in community colleges are increasingly common. Primarily they are developed in order to prepare students to be “globally competent citizens” (ACIIE 1994). In recent years, college leaders refer to globalization in association with global studies, often times even synonymously; and yet these terms, in association with college internationalization programs, can be difficult to distinguish, parse, and then align with a programming purpose. Several colleges contacted for this report indicate faculty have spent two or more years in discussions about what a global studies program might include. Defining the phenomenon of globalization and then framing it within global studies outlines effective ways to integrate global studies into college curricula. In order to do so, some elaboration of the terms is necessary to place them effectively within the lexicon of the community college learning enterprise. Four key components of model global studies programs are

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the result of reviewing literature from more than 30 community colleges. Primarily, the research focuses on Midwestern colleges to better inform the Parkland College program development in Champaign, Illinois, although websites at colleges across the country have been reviewed as well. The conclusions offer policy and practice considerations for linking global studies to other emerging learning trends in the community college.

## **Globalization and global studies**

It is not unusual to see the terms *globalization*, *globalizing*, *global studies*, and *internationalization* used interchangeably in community colleges, or even in the broader higher education context. Increasingly, community colleges are expanding international education programs by developing academic global studies programs, so there are numerous potential sources of confusion. The following are working definitions for each of the terms as well as a few additions that point toward the overall theme, how to integrate global learning opportunities for maximum student benefit within the college itself.

*Globalization* is defined as “a social process in which the constraints of geography on econom-

ic, political, social and cultural arrangements recede, in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding, and in which people act accordingly” (Waters, 2001, p. 5). Therefore, globalization is a long-term, historical process of human integration whose pace quickens and recedes based on human invention, environmental forces, and numerous social influences. Some events stand out as particular human, economic, social, and technological examples of how the process quickens and expands through great change events. For example;

1. when humans first migrated out of Africa;
2. when capitalism emerged through European extraction of colonial resources;
3. when competing political ideologies produced global alliances in the mid-twentieth century; and
4. when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, spreading waves of capital, ideas and new technologies.

While the above list could go on, it shows how, globalization is associated with rapid change events, yet continues in times of stasis and consolidation. Also evident in the above examples are Levin’s (2001) four domains of influence within globalization: economic, political, cultural, and informational. As a result, the

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term applies to long-term, historical processes which can be difficult to quantify (although economists have done so). Yet to the casual observer, the processes appear obvious in terms of language, religion, treaty and trade regulations, and emerging global communication networks. When the term *globalization* is used, one can refer not only to a world history of better connected human interaction, but also to the role of capital, technology, and information in providing advantage. Thus, *globalization* is rarely a neutral term.

*Global studies*, on the other hand, refers to a learning exercise that helps a person understand the interconnected nature of the world over time. Global studies programs use comparative studies, cases, and even literature to help students learn;

1. intercultural and language communications skills;
2. how to analyze and interpret both natural and manmade global systems;
3. how geography, history, language and culture, particularly through advanced study of one people or region, can affect their future trajectory; and,
4. interpretive skills to apply the above to the value decisions they must make in life.

Most global studies faculty would advocate that interpretive

skills are essential, that students cannot just learn facts or parts of a language to be globally competent learners. The above list varies considerably from college to college but mirrors widely accepted ideas since the Airlie House conferences of the mid-1990s. Those meetings brought national college leaders together not only to define but also to create a global education agenda, producing two widely distributed reports that remain influential among community college global educators today (ACIIE, 1994; 1996).

By its very nature, global studies is an interdisciplinary exercise, in which the social and natural sciences, as well as the humanities, arts, and other disciplines all provide learning resources. For example, a business student might complete an international business course; but a foreign language, world geography, or comparative literature course can help the student gain related knowledge that will improve his or her interpretive and analytical skills (see Table 1 for course-content examples).

In building global studies curricula, learning outcomes are designed to include specific knowledge within a student's field, be it business, a vocational area such as allied health, or a humanities focus such as literature. But the origins of interpretive skills lie at the

intersection between knowledge within the major and using that knowledge within the domains of human interaction and social settings—conflicts perhaps being the most common. For example, integrating foundational knowledge of a major, such as accounting in business, with interpretive activities that analyze cultural influences in value decisions (e.g., the role of family in relationship-building, aversion to financial risk, historical territorial animosities, gender roles, communication cues) leads to cross-cultural insight.

Global studies, when seen in the context of integrating factual knowledge with human interpretations across cultures, becomes a learning objective that transcends one department, one group of faculty, or even one office such as international education. As a result, within a community college, all academic and vocational areas can and should play a role

in teaching global concepts. The larger question becomes how to integrate the diverse learning activities. As Capra (1996) and other living systems theorists have stated, the product of individual members in a system includes the networks, relationships, and new knowledge generated from the exchanges that take place.

## Programs in practice

In reviewing multiple community college programs seven common elements emerged.

1. First, each college links the global studies program to the existing overall mission statement of the college.
2. A global studies council of faculty works to assure that each component of the curriculum integrates with the others and also meets “global” requirements, established in concert with administration for articulation purposes. The council also

**Table I. Sample global issues courses and content across disciplines**

Arts & humanities	Social sciences	Business	Engineering & computer technologies	Vocational/ technical
Cultural expression: Comparative literature, Art history, Non-western humanities	Confronting problems and change: Regional studies, world geography, anthropology, sociology, criminology	Commerce across cultures: Global marketing Accounting Negotiation International law	Human improvement by design: Manufacturing teams IT communication Global networks	Community health and development International agriculture Housing design Water systems Waste treatment

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encourages interdisciplinary and comparative approaches that support development of critical thinking skills.

3. Each college includes existing courses that have adopted a global theme within the course. Introduction to Anthropology, for example, might teach globalization concepts from multiple entry points over the semester. Some colleges include the courses as a separate area of completion from more general courses with global content. Commonly, they are within Associate of Arts programs that emphasize Global Studies.
4. The programs identify specific courses already inherently global from across the college that are to be completed as a “core requirement” of the global studies program. Courses range from Art History to International Agriculture and can be chosen based upon student interest.
5. Some integration of study abroad, experiential or service learning is either encouraged or required as a capstone or participatory experience. Commonly it was described as an application activity, although rarely is it reserved for after completion of global studies coursework, as is common in “capstone” courses.
6. Completion of a foreign language sequence, which can vary widely from one course to completion

of a four-course introductory sequence.

7. An ongoing global studies seminar for students and faculty which offers guest lectures, reading/discussion clubs, and social interaction.

There are several organizations that assist community colleges in developing or furthering a global studies agenda. Community Colleges for International Development (CCID) recently completed a friendly merger with ACIIE<sup>1</sup> and thus assumed much of ACIIE's global studies and curricular emphasis. Organizations like National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA), Community Colleges for International Studies (CCIS), The Midwest Institute (at Kalamazoo College) among others are diverse in their aims and so work toward long-term internationalization goals with global studies being one academic component of international education. However, increasingly, colleges are recognizing that it is also possible to create a global studies unit and house international education within that unit. In doing so, they prioritize academics and a student-centered approach that departs from more traditional views of international education as an endeavor gener-

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<sup>1</sup> This merger took place while this article was under preparation as well as during preparation for a national satellite broadcast on World Languages. As a result, the author was able to visit extensively on this topic with John Halder, President of CCID, and Linda Korbel, Executive Director of ACIIE.

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ating revenue for faculty and college development. The present study suggests that global studies staff are more likely to be, or report to, faculty and academic departments, while international education staff are more likely to be, or report to, administrators.

## Conclusions

The study at hand sought to add definition to emerging global studies programs in community colleges. It has reviewed existing literature on programs in place or under development at more than a dozen community colleges. From preliminary analysis in connection with existing globalization literature, the article concludes with initial policy and leadership recommendations which form an initial foundation for future debate and scholarship on the topic.

Faculty professional development programs need to include more comprehensive training on how to integrate globalization concepts into courses. The same concepts will inspire study abroad and grant opportunities to further faculty professional and content development.

Faculty and administrators need to plan learning spaces that integrate core field knowledge with globalized work environments. The planning should in-

clude seeking ways to individualize study abroad experiences around career interests.

Instructional leaders must reconsider faculty workloads and administrative roles, as curriculum teaming, experiential learning, learning communities, and internship supervision rarely are absorbed into existing duties.

Case studies that integrate field knowledge with social, cultural, geographical, and other interpretive areas, should be developed in faculty teams. Such studies become critical tools for building communication skills in students. In increasingly individualized (online) learning environments, faculty must continue to introduce problems and challenges that require students to apply team skills.

Senior leaders have a rich terrain in which to reconsider curriculum, faculty teams, and department roles for the integration of global studies into existing college curriculum. Global studies appears to be an excellent means to reduce silos, reconsider academic partnerships, and encourage new leadership among faculty.

All too often educators add a new course, update vocabulary on course curricula, or add new, even diverse faculty, thinking the curriculum has been up-

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graded. But by integrating the four learning objectives outlined above into curriculum planning and considering the seven program components, faculty have new architecture for designing rich, diverse, and extended learning experiences for students and adding to faculty professional development opportunities. With clarified definitions, an interdisciplinary framework for curriculum development, and the location of intersections for the key learning components in a global studies program, faculty save debate and planning time and discover a more integrated approach to global studies programming.

At the same time that many colleges promote service learning, short-term study abroad, and even honors and compressed course formats for adults, many students still opt for individualized, online, and other nontraditional instructional approaches. The holistic frameworks outlined above encourage faculty and administrators to think outside of traditional academic discipline models, outside of isolated course parameters, and consider ways to meet the emergent global community college mission. By integrating such learning objectives, they can design more creative, global, learning experiences for students.

## References

- ACIIE. (1994, 1996) Airlie House Reports. Accessed from <http://www.aciie.org/airlie.htm>
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- Levin, J. S. (2001). *Globalizing the community college*. New York: Palgrave.
- Waters, M. (2001). *Globalization* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Routledge.

## Related websites:

- Bellevue Community College, WA: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/globalstudies/>
- Massachusetts Bay: <http://www.massbay.edu/index.cfm/fuseaction/Page.viewPage/pageId/449>
- Minnesota State College Programs: <http://www.internationalprograms.mnscu.edu/international/index.html>
- Oakton Community College: <http://www.oakton.edu/acad/globalstudies/concentration.htm>
- Parkland College: <http://www.parkland.edu/inted/intledaca.htm>
- St. Louis Community College at Meramec: <http://www.stlcc.edu/mc/globalstudies>

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