Chapter 1

International Student Mobility at California Community Colleges

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ABSTRACT

The authors in this chapter use a case study of three California community college districts to explore how they are strategically developing, advancing, and assessing the continuous cycle of community college international student recruitment, retention, and student success. These districts show how specifically designed practices can link internationalization to college missions, embrace student experiences that provide cultural and academic benefits for all students, and ensure what critical mass is needed to make these benefits happen. The authors also explore how this cycle is essential in designing a community college internationalization strategy to link student mobility to student success.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1960, California community colleges have supported student mobility through designated international student programs. In the 2013-2014 academic year, roughly 26,375 international students studied at 92 of 112 California community colleges and contributed $695,325,400 to the state economy (IIE, 2014). These programs ranged in size from fewer than 10 students, to over 3,000 students. California has 15 international student community college programs recognized in the 2014 Institute for International Education Open Doors Report.

This chapter uses a case study of three California community college districts to explore how they strategically develop, advance, and assess the continuous cycle of community college international student recruitment, retention, and student success. These district programs show the importance of linking internationalization to the college mission and demonstrate the importance of using these programs to enhance cultural and academic benefits for all students. The study also reveals the importance of ap-
plying the vision of the Executive officer to identify the critical mass necessary to make these benefits happen. This chapter explores how understanding this cycle is essential in designing a comprehensive internationalization strategy to link student mobility to student success.

BACKGROUND: COMMUNITY COLLEGE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAMS

Community college international education includes programs and curricula that connect students, faculty, and local communities to people, cultures, and contexts beyond local borders. The goal of international education is to “accelerate knowledge about and encourage cross-cultural communication to enhance culture, ethnic, class and gender relationships among divergent groups” (Raby & Valeau, 2007, p. 6). These programs support a philosophical construct in which an internationally literate individual is one who can effectively navigate the complexities of the modern world. The California State Chancellor’s Office commissioned report *Looking to the Future* (Raby, 1998) defined international student programs as:

*Programs and services designed to assist students from other countries to pursue a course of study in the United States on foreign student or visitor visas (F-1, M-1, J-1). International students are germane to the community college mission, as they provide academic and cultural richness not found elsewhere by serving as human resources in both class discussions and student activities, and by helping to build friendships that filter into future socio-political and economic relationships. (p. 3)*

This definition continues to support and inform internationalization efforts at California community colleges today.

A literature review of community college publications confirms the benefits and identifies the challenges of operating international student programs. These publications span four trajectories:

1. Advocacy, in which international students are seen as important components of the college mission;
2. Development of support services as a pre-requisite for having an international student program;
3. Enhancement of marketing for recruitment to specifically bring in revenue; and
4. Integration of international students as a component to build human capital through higher education.

Advocacy

Community college publications use advocacy to encourage discussion about the internationalization process (Valeau & Raby, 2007). Policy documents advance national dialogue on the role of international students in community colleges. The American Association of Community Colleges commissioned several reports, including *Building Communities* (1998), *Educating for the global community: A framework for community colleges* (Elsner, Tsunoda, & Korbel, 1994) and *Re-Claiming Community Colleges* vision (2012), that define the importance of a globally competent citizenry in an era of global competitiveness. Community college practitioners are also advocates as they emphasize how international student programs are essential to the college mission (Brennen & Dellow, 2013; Gleazer, et al., 1978; Raby &