

“Made in America” Credentials to Support the Skilled Immigrant Workforce

Part II: Steps to Success Webinar Series

Thursday, September 29th

Hosted by WES Global Talent Bridge & IMPRINT

Steps to Success: Integrating Immigrant Professionals in the U.S.



Key findings include:

- Social capital is powerful
- English really matters
- **“Made in America” Credentials Boost Employability**

“Immigrants who had invested in additional U.S. education were more likely to be employed and successful than those who had only received education from abroad.”

www.imprintproject.org/steps

IMPRINT

Immigrant Professional Integration

IMPRINT is a national coalition of nonprofits helping underemployed skilled immigrants to start their American careers.

IMPRINT:

- Creates and disseminates resources
- Advocates for policies that facilitate immigrant integration
- Broadcasts best practices

www.imprintproject.org

 WES Global Talent Bridge®

A program of World Education Services (WES) helping skilled immigrants fully utilize their talents and education in the United States

- For Immigrants and Refugees
 - Reliable guidance, resources – www.GlobalTalentBridge.org
 - *Pathways to Success* seminars
- For Service Providers, Institutions, Agencies
 - Online Resource Portal, Newsletter
 - Professional Development: Training, Webinars, Technical Assistance
 - Programmatic Partnerships: Seminars, Events, Publications, Advocacy

Bridging the Gap for Foreign-Educated Immigrants: A Guide for Community Colleges

Created in partnership with CCCIE, the guide is a repository of best practices that provide U.S. credentials to immigrants and refugees around the country



Today's Presenters:



Tere Wisell

Executive Director, CCCIE

Vice President of Workforce Development and Community Education, Westchester Community College



Jill Casner-Lotto

Director, CCCIE

Westchester Community College



Fred L. Fontaine

Director, Retraining Program for Immigrant Engineers
The Cooper Union

What is CCCIE?

- A national network of community colleges and other organizations committed to supporting immigrant education through their innovative programs and services.
- Hosted and led by Westchester Community College, Valhalla, NY.

CCCIE's Mission Statement:

- To build the capacity of community colleges to accelerate immigrant and refugee success and raise awareness of the essential role these colleges play in advancing immigrant integration in our communities.

Current Initiatives:

- **Action-based research** and exchange of promising practices (www.cccie.org)
- **Thought leadership** through conference planning and presentations
- **Technical assistance** to community colleges and other stakeholders
- **Strategic partnerships** to expand policy reach and influence the field

About Cooper Union

- Founded in 1859 by Peter Cooper, industrialist and philanthropist
- Offers bachelor and master degrees in engineering (chemical, civil, electrical and mechanical) and architecture, and a bachelor degree in art
- All programs are renowned and admission is very selective and merit based, students receive a 50% tuition academic scholarship.
- The school is small- fewer than 1000 total students—and provides small classes and close interaction between faculty and students.

About The Immigrant Re-Training Program

- The Retraining Program for Immigrant Engineers was founded in the early 1990's to help highly skilled immigrant engineers and scientists
- Original focused on immigrants from the former Soviet Union, but now has students from 100 countries all over the world
- Cooper Union partnered with CAMBA, a community-based organization, to enhance our ability to serve our target population

Community Colleges as a Resource

- Career pathways, including flexible, short-term certificates and degrees
- Workforce /economic development focus
- Experience working with immigrants
- Professional English language skills
- Access to new networks on & off campus
- Counseling & mentoring services



Academic & Career Counseling

Bridging the Credit vs. Non-Credit Divide

Understanding non-credit and credit programs and what they can offer is **critical** for:

- **Foreign-educated students**, so they can make the right academic and career choices.
- **Community college advisors**, so they can offer the best possible advice leading to a career pathway and better-paying job.
- **CBO/Adult Education advisors**, so they can make the right referrals when advising prospective students.

Portland Community College: ABS Career Pathways

Adult Basic Skills Career Pathways

- Offers stackable, short-term credentials in various fields (accounting, computer systems, customer service, retail sales)
- Allows immigrant, ESL students to take credit CTE courses while concurrently enrolled in a contextualized academic support course
- Students simultaneously master academic, language, and job skills, earning industry-recognized credentials quickly
- Between 2011-2015: 82% completed their Career Pathway credential, 88% continued their education and/or went to work



Portland Community College: ABS Career Pathways

How the model serves foreign-educated students:

- Culturally competent career coaches who understand students specific challenges & strengths
- Alignment with employer needs
- Diverse learning communities/peer mentoring foster intercultural understanding
- Partnerships with immigrant-serving organizations
- Intentional outreach in ESOL classes and in community



Bluegrass Community and Technical College: Biotechnology Career Pathway

- Part of *Building Community Partnerships to Serve Immigrant Workers*, a national initiative of National Council for Workforce Education
- Goals of BCTC & Kentucky Dream Coalition partnership:
 - Develop a bilingual biotechnical career pathway for immigrant/Latino students
 - Target marketing to the immigrant/Latino community
 - Work with administration to change “Mandatory Placement” policy to accommodate ESL students in biotechnology pathway

Bluegrass Community and Technical College: Biotechnology Career Pathway

Progress To Date:

- Adopted biotech courses developed under Accelerating Opportunity project as entry-level biotechnology certificate; using contextualized ESL biotech curriculum
- Adopted credit ESL to replace noncredit advanced ESL
- Developed bilingual outreach materials and calendar of events to promote biotechnology program to immigrant community

Bluegrass Community and Technical College

Progress to date (con't):

- Leveraging a federal TRIO grant to increase targeted outreach to immigrants
- Launched action committee to evaluate strengths and gaps in services to minority and immigrant students
- Appointed faculty member as full-time student support navigator to ease transition of Adult Ed/GED/ESL students into college

Case Study: Fidel del Gonzalez Safora

- Came to the US from from Cuba in 2013 with a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering
- Worked in meatpacking dept. of a local supermarket
- Co-enrolled in ESL, Computer-Assisted Design, and Intro to Technology courses at Westchester Community College
- Received associate's degree in civil technology
- Hired by a small construction management firm
- Continued on in master's program in engineering at CUNY



Case Study: Fidel del Gonzalez Safora

Success Factors:

- Supportive ESL and academic course instructors
- Engaging classroom discussions as an introduction to American culture
- Extra-curricular activities
- Access to services, including Welcome Center orientation sessions and career advising
- An “enterprising approach”—standing out in class, reading novels, newspapers; watching TV

Retraining Program for Immigrant Engineers (RPIE)

The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art

Partnering with CAMBA

Education Director: Fred L. Fontaine, Ph.D. (Cooper Union)
Program Supervisor: Larisa Akerman (CAMBA)



History & Structure

- The RPIE was founded in the early 1990s to help highly trained engineers and scientists from the former Soviet Union to be placed in American jobs where their skills could be utilized.
- Since then, outreach efforts have led to a truly international community being served, with students from over 100 countries participating.
- Participants are often unemployed or underemployed in “survival” jobs. They have difficulty finding positions where they can utilize their skills to lift themselves out of the “working poor” class, often because they lack American experience.

History & Structure (cont.)

- Cooper Union provides specialized training courses **free of charge** that prepare highly skilled engineers for placement in highly sought after positions. The emphasis is on American standards and practices, and matching student skills to job market trends
- CAMBA recruits applicants, matches them to our courses, and provides job placement and related services. CAMBA also tracks our students' progress after leaving the program, and measures critical metrics for continuous improvement

Value of the Program

- Serves about 220 students per year
- Job placement rate over 60%. Job retention rate over 90%
- **\$12,000**: Average annual earnings prior to entering the program.
- **\$40,000**: Average starting annual salary for those placed by the program
- Students are **already** knowledgeable in their fields. Our courses emphasize **American** codes, standards, practices, and the contextual language in professional fields. We match our courses to the needs of the job market
- Credentials from Cooper Union are a mark of excellence, a certification of the quality of the training the students receive
- Our students perform so well once placed, companies often come back to us to hire more of our graduates

Course Offerings

- Analytical Chemistry- Spectroscopy and Chromatography
- Green Building Guidelines & Environmental Safety
- HVAC and Refrigeration
- Building Operation, Maintenance & Safety Regulations
- The National Electrical Code (NEC) and Its Application
- Data Architecture Principles and SQL
- Java Programming
- C# Programming
- Linux & Unix Administration
- Android Software Development
- Software Quality Assurance- Manual Testing
- Software Quality Assurance- Automated Testing
- Introduction to AutoCAD
- Advanced AutoCAD and Revit
- AISC Structural Steel Design
- ACI Structural Concrete Design
- Construction Cost Estimating: Bridge, Highway & Railroad

The Students

- Students represent 100 countries from 6 continents.
- Have college degrees and experience in engineering or science fields.
- Have work permits, and can speak English well enough to function, but often lack contextual language skills.
- CAMBA recruits students via advertising (e.g., libraries, Craig's list) and outreach to community organizations.

The Students (cont.)

- Students who need other services (ESL, etc.) are referred to other organizations
- CAMBA matches students to our courses. Students typically take 2 or 3 courses over a 10 month period
- CAMBA uses professional job developers to place students with local companies
- Workshops to develop interview and resume writing skills are also provided

The Instructors

- Our instructors include full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, staff, alumni and friends of Cooper Union.
- They are professionals in their fields, with practical experience and connections with the industry in the New York City area.
- Their role is as much to serve as **mentors** as it is to provide instruction on technical material.

Synergy with Other Programs

- The NYS Office of New Americans has provided important support for our program including:
 - Use of classroom space at no charge.
 - Donation of Google tablets for use in some of our classes.
 - Publicity via PR announcements.
- Interaction with local community and other non-profit organizations, referring students who need services provided by these organizations.
- Examples:
 - Upwardly Global
 - Jewish Community Centers of Brooklyn
 - Chinatown Manpower Project
 - Workforce Career Centers (various)
 - Borough Community Boards

Success Story: Mr. O

- 38, male, married. Electrical engineer from Nigeria.
- Worked as engineer in oil/gas industry prior to immigrating to US.
- Worked in US as oil/gas service rep. for 3 years prior to being laid off in 2015.
- Arrived in NYC in 2015. But NYC does not have jobs in oil/gas industry.
- Worked as baggage handler at JFK, making \$10/hr.
- Enrolled in our National Electrical Code (NEC) class in Fall 2015.
- Working with job developer at CAMBA, Mr. O was matched with several employer partners and attended multiple interviews.
- May 2016 (18 months after arriving in NY) received a position as Junior Building Inspector at McCright Associates.
- His annual salary is now \$46000.
- He inspects the integrity of electrical systems in NYC NYCHA housing.

Q&A Session



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Thank You!

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