

Global Talent Bridge®

Bridging the Gap for Foreign-Educated Immigrants



DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Community College
Consortium for Immigrant Education

**A GUIDE
FOR
COMMUNITY
COLLEGES**

Acknowledgements

Alexandra Lowe, a consultant for the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education (CCCIE) served as the primary writer on this project under the direction of Jill Casner-Lotto, CCCIE Director, in collaboration with WES Global Talent Bridge's team: Paul Feltman, Director; Denise Jillions, Resource Development; Katherine Gebremedhin, Outreach and Training.

In addition, Teresita Wisell, Westchester Community College's Vice President and Dean for Continuing Education and Workforce Development and CCCIE Executive Director, provided overall guidance, feedback, and support.

We would like to express our gratitude to our colleagues at the following educational institutions and community-based organizations:

Alamo Colleges

Carmen De Luna Jones, Melissa Sadler-Nitu

Bluegrass Community & Technical College

James Fenton

B'Nai Zion Retraining Program for Immigrants

Larissa Akerman

California Career Cafe, California Community Colleges

Susan Coleman

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office

Van Ton-Quinlivan

Central Piedmont Community College

Gilda Rubio-Festa

Grossmont College

Ann Durham

Highline Community College

Linda Faaren, Jeffrey Wagnitz, Stephen Washburn

Instituto del Progreso Latino

Ricardo A. Estrada, Guadalupe Martinez

LaGuardia Community College

Hillary Gardner, John Hunt, Tania Ramirez

Manos de Cristo

Karen Green

Montgomery College

Donna Kinerney

Miami Dade College

Tere Collada, Zoraya Cuesta, Malou Harrison, Marina Hernandez, Michelle Thomas

Northern Virginia Community College

Elizabeth Harper, William Kosanovich

Oregon Career Pathways Initiative

Mimi Maduro

Passaic County Community College

Kathleen Kelly, Candida Rodriguez, Robert Salvato, Nancy Silvestro

Portland Community College

Laura Horani

South Texas College

Juan Carlos Aguirre

Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges

Kathy Cooper, Jon Kerr

Westchester Community College

Ruben Barato, Joaquim Mendes, Jeanne Maloney, Eileen McKee, Robert Nechols, Sabrina Payne, Agnes Sinko, Anne Marie Verini

In addition we would like to offer a special thanks to Tere Collada, John Hunt, and Anne Marie Verini who served as reviewers for the entire guide and whose helpful comments and suggestions have greatly enhanced its usefulness.

Table of Contents

The Challenge

page 2

CHAPTER 1

Outreach & Admissions

How Wide Open Is Your College's Front Door?

page 4

CHAPTER 2

Giving Credit Where Credit is Due

Does Your College Value Foreign Education?

page 10

CHAPTER 3

Academic & Career Counseling

Are All the Right Options on the Table?

page 14

CHAPTER 4

English as a Second Language Classes

A Bridge to College and Careers?

page 24

CHAPTER 5

Financial Assistance

page 28

CHAPTER 6

A Clear Roadmap

page 32

The Challenge

You have seen their faces. You've heard their stories. The nurse from Peru who's working as a cashier. The airport manager from Ghana who's busing tables. The mechanical engineer from Pakistan who's driving a taxi. The seminarian from Poland who's re-stocking supermarket shelves.

This “brain waste” isn't just a problem for these college-educated immigrants and the 1.6 million others just like them who are either unemployed or working in low-wage, low-skill jobs. It's bad for our country. When skilled, internationally-educated immigrants end up working in low-paid survival jobs, we all lose — in terms of lost economic growth and productivity, squandered skill sets, foregone tax revenue and more.

America's community colleges are ideally positioned to play a major role in integrating these foreign-educated immigrants into the American economic mainstream. Community colleges offer a vast array of credit and non-credit courses and short-term vocational certificates that would allow these immigrants to boost their English language proficiency and prepare for a better job, for graduate school, or for professional licensure in the U.S.

Yet, for many foreign-educated immigrants, community colleges remain a perplexing mystery. Community colleges are a uniquely American phenomenon. Many foreign-educated immigrants don't even know they exist. If they already have a four-year college degree, what could a two-year college possibly have to offer them?

Few foreign-educated immigrants understand how the array of flexible, short-term programs that community colleges offer could help them translate their foreign college education into a viable educational and career path in the U.S. Few realize how a handful of community college courses taken on a part-time basis might be all they

need to complete the undergraduate education they first embarked on in their home countries or to prepare for graduate school in the U.S. Few know about the availability of intensive, contextualized ESL courses like “Accounting for English Learners” or “ESL for Health Care” that would give them the English language skills they need to find work in their field. And few are aware of how the connections that can be forged through a community college's faculty, career center and pre-professional student clubs could help them build the network of contacts they need to land well-paid jobs in the U.S.

By the same token, community colleges are often not as well-positioned as they could be to serve this student population. Although foreign-educated immigrants are typically highly motivated to succeed in an academic setting, many community colleges have yet to systematically reach out to them to showcase their academic offerings, their continuing education and workforce development programs, or their counselling and mentoring resources.

Far too often, these students begin and end their community college experience in English as a Second Language programs, disconnected from credit and non-credit programs that would prepare them for careers in the U.S. and unaware of college-based mentoring and networking opportunities that could help jump-start their professional lives. And even when they connect with the relevant community college programs, they do not always get the crucial message that their foreign education and work experience have value, and that they don't need to start all over again from scratch.

Who Are These Students?

Your foreign-educated immigrant students may be highly literate in their own language, but beginners in English.

Or they may be immigrants from English-speaking countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Southeast Asia who are completely proficient in English. They may only have completed high school or a few semesters of college, or have one or more degrees from a university in their home country, coupled with years of work experience. They may be refugees or asylees who have just arrived in the U.S. Or they may be immigrants who have worked for years in low-paying survival jobs to support themselves and their families but now want to resume their careers or train for a new one.

The one thing foreign-educated immigrants typically have in common is their lack of awareness about what programs community colleges have to offer that could serve as stepping stones to well-paying jobs and a better life in the U.S. For example, the distinction between credit and non-credit courses, the concept of “continuing education,” and the opportunity to obtain post-graduate certifications through short-term courses are not typical of most international education systems.

The tremendous opportunities that exist in community colleges match the diverse needs and flexible pathways these students need. No one program or pathway will be suitable for all. This is why community colleges have such a vital role to play in helping immigrants transition into professional careers.

How This Guide Can Help

As this Guide is designed to show, serving this population of students doesn't require a host of new and expensive programs. Rather, it calls on your community college to take a fresh look at how you reach out to foreign-educated immigrants and how you integrate these prospective students into the array of existing programs and resources that are offered on your campus to help all of your students succeed. It encourages your community college to think of foreign-educated immigrants as valued assets to your community, capable – with your guidance and assistance – of filling local skill shortages in key sectors like health care, engineering and technology.

This Guide is intended for front-line community college staff like you: admissions officers, academic advisors, career counselors, ESL and other faculty members, college librarians, financial aid advisors, and workforce development staff. Regardless of what role you play, we invite you to familiarize yourself with the entire Guide and to take advantage of all the resources it offers. Understanding issues that relate to other departments and thinking about ways to collaborate with colleagues across divisions and in your community can make all the difference for foreign-educated students. We hope this Guide encourages you to begin to think about the community college experience from their perspective.

This Guide is organized as a series of questions for you to reflect on and to discuss with your colleagues. These questions are coupled with practical ideas, case studies, suggestions and resources you can use on a daily basis as you interact with foreign-educated immigrants looking to re-build a professional life in the U.S. Chapter 1 focuses on the community college outreach and admissions process. It poses a series of questions designed to help you assess how wide open your college's front door really is, and showcases what other community colleges are doing to reach out to foreign-educated immigrants. Chapter 2 explores strategies aimed at ensuring that foreign-educated students move forward, not backward in their education and get the credit they deserve for their prior academic achievement. Chapters 3 through 5 include suggestions and resources related to academic and career advising, ESL instruction, and financial aid opportunities, respectively. Finally, Chapter 6 contains a “call to action” for everyone who works at a community college and who is interested in better serving foreign-educated immigrants. In the end, it will take the concerted efforts of administrators and front-line staff alike to make a difference for this student population.

On behalf of the foreign-educated immigrants our organizations serve, we thank you in advance for taking the time to ponder the issues this Guide raises, and for incorporating into your own work with immigrants some of the resources this Guide includes. Together, we can help these students realize their American dream. ✨

• CHAPTER 1 •

Outreach & Admissions:

How Wide Open Is Your College's Front Door?

Many foreign-educated immigrants learn about their local community college purely by chance. A friend or relative from their country mentions that they once took a class there. A boss suggests that they look into improving their English if they want a better-paying job. Or a Google search leads them to a link to your Admissions Office or to your international student advisor.

Is this really the most effective way to connect with foreign-educated immigrants? Here are some questions to think about in terms of reaching out to this population of prospective students:

- ➔ Does your Admissions Office partner with immigrant-serving community-based organizations (CBOs) in your area (e.g., refugee resettlement agencies, immigrant advocacy organizations, adult literacy programs, local libraries, and religious organizations)? Do you send email alerts about new programs and upcoming college campus tours to these CBOs? Do you encourage these CBOs to link to your college's website? Do you let CBOs know which office or staff persons at your college to contact when they make inquiries or referrals concerning foreign-educated students?
- ➔ How do you market your college to the immigrant community? Do you partner with foreign language media outlets (newspapers, radio, TV and online) to share the success stories of your internationally-educated immigrant students? Do you make use of multi-cultural social media sites to market your credit, non-credit, and workforce development programs to non-native speakers of English?
- ➔ Does your Alumni Office enlist the help of your college's foreign-educated graduates to tell their compatri-

ots about your community college and what it has to offer? Do you have a Speakers Bureau of your international alumni who are willing to speak about your college to immigrant-serving CBOs?

- ➔ Are international members of your faculty involved in spreading the word about your college within their communities?
- ➔ What is the scope of your college's "international student office"? Does that office serve only students on international student visas? Or are they also equipped to advise immigrant students and to address their concerns?
- ➔ And finally, how clearly does your college publicly describe what it has to offer these students?

Here are some simple questions you can use to assess whether your college is as accessible and welcoming as possible to foreign-educated immigrants.

Is Your Website A Maze or Is It Amazing?

If your college is like many community colleges, your website probably includes a section aimed at "International Students." But foreign-educated immigrants aren't the same as "International Students." They aren't concerned with the fine points of obtaining an F-1 visa. They are living in the U.S. for the long haul. Many are working and trying to support a family here. Getting an advanced degree at an American university or a better-paying job is an urgent priority for them.

So take another look at your website. Consider these questions and examples from other community colleges:

➔ Is information you give to your international students relevant to your immigrant students? Instead of a link just for “International Students,” **Highline Community College** in Washington State reaches out to all of its prospective foreign students with a link entitled “[Is English Your Second Language? Resources for Immigrant, Refugee and International Students](#),” which highlights the different programs and supportive resources designed to help non-native English speakers succeed.

➔ Does your website offer clear information about the career pathways that are available to students at your college? If it doesn’t, check out how **Austin Community College** in Texas showcases prospective careers, explaining how much it will cost a student to pursue a given program, how much they can expect to be paid when they have completed it, and what the growth prospects are in a given field.

➔ Is information on your website available only in English? If you are looking to attract and serve a large immigrant student population, using Google Translate to make the information on your website available in several languages will help expand your outreach. Other colleges are doing this already, with text and/or videos available in a multiplicity of languages that match those of their principal student populations. The website for **City College of San Francisco** is available in over 80 languages,

ranging from Arabic and Bengali to Spanish, Swahili and Zulu.

➔ What does the ESL section of your website say about your college? Is it an on-ramp for your college or is it a cul-de-sac? For many foreign-educated students, the link on your college’s website to the ESL home page may be as far as they ever get in exploring your college. Does it simply list the ESL courses that are available that semester? Or does it offer a wider introduction to your campus, with links to the Admissions Office, academic and career advisors, student clubs and key national immigrant-serving organizations like the Welcome Back Initiative, Global Talent Bridge, and Upwardly Global, whose own websites offer valuable support to foreign-educated professionals? At **Northern Virginia Community College**, the ESL landing page nestles alongside a menu of links for “Future Students” with sub-headings that include “Admissions,” “Advising” and “Paying for College.”

➔ Does the Financial Aid section of your website clearly explain the circumstances under which a prospective student who is not a U.S. citizen may be eligible for federal financial aid? Does it include links that would be helpful to non-citizens to determine their eligibility? Does your Financial Aid page link to scholarship resources for which undocumented students may be eligible? Do you highlight the availability of tuition assistance vouchers for workforce de-



It is essential that your college help foreign-educated students build on the base of previous education and experience, rather than start all over again.

velopment programs at your college that might be an option for students otherwise ineligible for financial assistance? If not, check out Chapter 5 of this Guide for some useful links you might want to add to your website.

Finally, you may want to take a look at what some Canadian colleges are doing. Immigrants hoping to study at George Brown College in Toronto or any of a number of other colleges in Ontario, Canada, have a new online tool, "[Applying to College as an Immigrant Student](#)," to help them navigate through the college application process, with all of the vital information they need now located in one place.

Are Your College Tours a Mystery or a Revelation?

College tours are an excellent way to reach out to foreign-educated students. Who takes your college tours? High school students and their anxious parents? Fluent English speakers?

Recognizing the value of attracting foreign-educated immigrants to their campus, some community colleges have begun to partner with their ESL departments to offer specialized tours and workshops for non-native English speakers.

For students who are studying ESL at its extension sites, **Bluegrass Community & Technical College** in Kentucky holds an annual open house that introduces them to the main campus and showcases the college's degree and certificate programs. Bluegrass partners with its

ESL instructors and community-based organizations like Kentucky Refugees Ministries and the Migrant Network Coalition to spread the word about the event. The open house, held in the evening to accommodate working students, includes an introduction and welcome by college staff. Tours of the college are led by current community college students who speak the principal native languages of the ESL students, including French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Nepali and Swahili. Bluegrass has found that these tours are most successful when ESL instructors accompany their students, offering a supportive, familiar presence.

Westchester Community College in New York has a Welcome Center which offers information sessions for ESL students that provide an overview of the U.S. higher education system and the college's own resources, including career services, financial aid and scholarships. Students who have higher education credentials from

their home countries gain information on getting their foreign credits evaluated and recognized. Run by a former ESL instructor, these workshops give ESL students a chance to ask the kinds of questions that aren't necessarily on the minds of American high school students applying to college, and to do so

in an environment where they don't need to be embarrassed about making mistakes when they speak English.

Given the dynamic nature of economic and workforce change, talent has never been more essential. If our nation and our communities are to thrive in the new global knowledge economy, providing skilled and foreign-credentialed immigrants access to educational resources is a vital imperative.

—Eduardo Padròn, President of Miami Dade College

Data Diving: What Do You Know About Your Students?

It's hard to reach out to your foreign-educated immigrant

students if you aren't able to identify them or track their progress at your college. While community colleges have traditionally gathered very little data on the background of their immigrant students or on the outcomes they have achieved, some are now collecting data on these students' educational background, retention rates, and career success. They are using that data to improve and expand immigrant education programs and community outreach services. And these efforts are paying off as these colleges are able to show quantitative improvements in enrollment, class performance, and certificate and/or degree completion.

A key partner in these data-gathering and analytic efforts is your college's Institutional Research (IR) department. Here are some questions for you and your IR colleagues to jointly consider:

- ➔ Does your college have any idea how many of its immigrant students have a college background from their home countries?
- ➔ Does your college collect any data on the educational background or professional experience of the students enrolled in your ESL programs? Is that data accessible to your Admissions Office? If so, one great way to recruit foreign-educated students for your college's academic programs is to reach out directly to them in their ESL classes.

That's what **Miami Dade College** (MDC) does to attract foreign-educated students to its [Project A.C.E. \(Accelerated Content-Based English\)](#) program, a fast-track "bridge to college" program. MDC sends congratulatory emails to its high-achieving foreign-educated ESL students, inviting them to apply to join their accelerated college-bridge program. The emails describe the college courses they are eligible to take alongside their ESL classes,

and explain how Project A.C.E. will save them time. Videos on the Project A.C.E. website in English, Spanish and French are specifically aimed at attracting foreign-educated students looking to prepare for a second B.A., a master's degree, or professional licensure in the U.S.

In a parallel effort, MDC's Institutional Research department tracks the college's English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program, monitoring key performance indicators, such as retention rates for students at each curriculum level, placement results after completion of the EAP program, and success in subsequent courses.

Even without detailed data on the educational background of its immigrant students, your community college can give foreign-educated immigrants a leg up by recruiting from your own ESL programs into your college's academic and career pathways programs. See Chapter 4 for details. ✨

Chapter Links

"Is English Your Second Language? Resources for Immigrant, Refugee and International Students"
<http://precollege.highline.edu/ell-resources/>

Austin Community College
<http://continue.austincc.edu/workforce/>

City College of San Francisco
<http://www.ccsf.edu/>

Northern Virginia Community College
<http://www.nvcc.edu/future-students/esl/index.html>

"Applying to College as an Immigrant Student"
<http://www.ontariocolleges.ca/apply/immigrant-applicants>

Project A.C.E. program
<http://www.mdc.edu/iac/esl/ace/>

Tsering

Tsering, an ethnic Tibetan who came to the U.S. from India, was a nurse in her native country. She arrived in New York in 2009 and began working part-time as a home health aide.

Like so many immigrant professionals who try to renew their careers in this country, Tsering ran into several roadblocks, including not knowing how to get recertified and how to prepare for the national nursing exam—the National Council Licensure Examination, known as NCLEX.

Eager to use her professional training, she enrolled in the NCLEX-Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) preparation course for English Language Learners through the NYC Welcome Back Center at **LaGuardia Community College**.

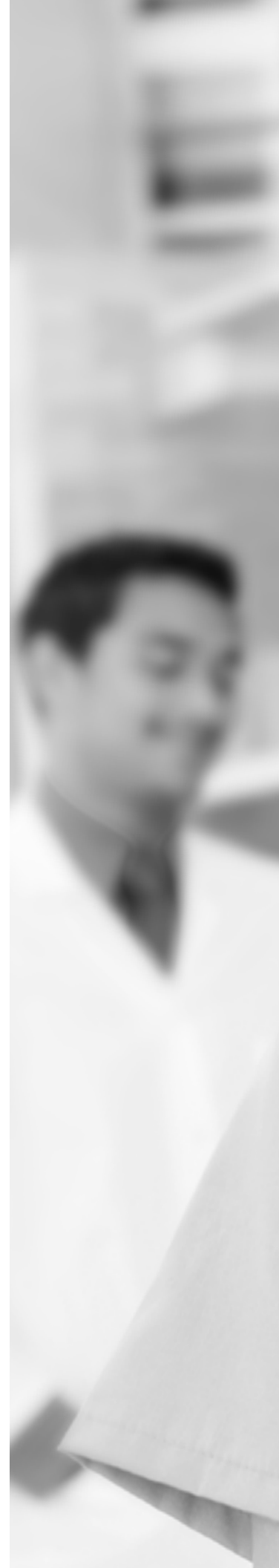
The [NYC Welcome Back Center \(WBC\)](#), located within the [Center for Immigrant Education and Training at LaGuardia](#), guides internationally-trained healthcare professionals through the state’s labyrinthine licensing process and provides career counseling and referrals to support services, such as ESL classes and training programs.

The foreign-educated nurses who come to the WBC participate in an intensive eight-month training course, adapted from the Washington State [I-BEST model](#), which pairs English language skills development with technical instruction in integrated classes. In this team-teaching environment, nursing faculty cover the healthcare curriculum— anatomy, physiology, pharmacology as well as rules and regulations, and legal aspects— while an ESL instructor, who is also present in the classroom, works with the students on their language and study skills, vocabulary and content-related material.

While the students are going through the training program, an educational case manager ensures that credential verification applications are filled out properly by students, that documents coming from the students’ countries are in order and sent to New York State authorities for validation. It’s a complicated process and can take a minimum of six months to complete, according to Tania Ramirez, the center’s educational case manager. “If there are errors on the part of the student or their nursing school/ licensing authority, it can take up to a year or longer,” she added.

“During the course the Welcome Back Center taught us not just theory or nursing, but showed us confidence, guided us with a positive attitude, and showed us a whole new world which I always dreamed for,” says Tsering. “It’s my promise that one day, I will be a better nurse, better human being, who can help [with] any health needs regardless of age, race, or gender.”

Tsering’s dream has come true. She passed the NCLEX-PN exam, obtained her NY State nursing license and then subsequently also passed the NCLEX-RN exam. She is now working as a full-time Registered Nurse at a nursing home in Coney Island, Brooklyn.





• CHAPTER 2 •

Giving Credit Where Credit is Due

Does Your College Value Foreign Education?

Few foreign-educated students have the luxury of embarking on a course of study that doesn't quickly lead to a marketable credential. Time is money for these students, who are often struggling to support a family in a low-wage, survival job.

The same is, of course, true for many American-born community college students. But one important factor sets many foreign-educated students apart from other community college students: they have either already earned a college degree in their country of origin or have accumulated college credits at a foreign university toward a college degree, and many have established careers in their home country. It is essential that your college help students build on that base rather than start all over again from scratch.

Moving Forward, Not Backward: Foreign Credential Evaluation

The single most important message that foreign-educated students need to hear from front-line community college staff is that *they don't need to start all over again*. Their foreign education has value and can be used in the U.S. for both academic and professional purposes.

If immigrant students have a high school diploma, some college or a university degree from their home country, they may need your help to get their foreign education evaluated in the U.S. A "credential evaluation" is a rigorous, third-party review of an individual's non-U.S. education. Credential evaluations can also help professional licensing boards and employers understand qualifications earned outside the U.S. so it is important to know what students' goals are before advising them how to proceed. For a complete explanation of foreign credential evaluation, consult the [WES Global Talent Bridge website](#).

In the context of a community college, a credential evaluation is a tool to help students gain recognition and credit for previous education to support the admissions or credit transfer process. Here are some ways you can advise students to use it to move forward in higher education:

- ◆ Students who have completed high school in their home country are eligible for college admission in the U.S. and should not be guided into high school equivalency (HSE) or GED programs.

- ◆ Students who have some foreign university or college education have the opportunity to receive transfer credit or gain advanced standing at an American college, getting on track to complete an associate's or bachelor's degree.



◆ Students who have earned a bachelor’s degree abroad may be eligible for graduate study in the U.S.

As an advisor, help your foreign-educated immigrants arrange to have their foreign college transcript evaluated by your college or a reputable credential evaluation organization before they register for any college courses. That way, you and your student will know what they have to build on, i.e., how many of their foreign credits are eligible for transfer to an American college or university. The more credits a foreign-educated student can transfer, the more quickly they can reach their educational goals.

For a free “sneak peek” at what the U.S. equivalent of a foreign university degree might be, World Education Services has created an online [degree equivalency tool](#) that can be used by students and advisors alike. This tool can serve as a jumping off point for career planning discussions with foreign-educated immigrants while they wait for the formal credential evaluation to be completed.

Ultimately, it is up to each college to decide how it intends to recognize the previous academic achievement of its immigrant students. Make sure your college provides clear answers to students on these questions:

- ➔ Does your website include a link that explains how foreign-educated students can go about getting their foreign high school diploma or college education formally evaluated?
- ➔ Is the evaluation of foreign transcripts and award of transfer credits done by the college admissions office as

part of the admissions process?

- ➔ If not, does your college recommend a particular credential evaluation service? If this is the case, it's important to list the names and contact information of these credential evaluation services in the general college website, not only in the section written for international students.

Credential Evaluation enables the internationally-educated to move forward with their education in the United States.

At **Westchester Community College** (WCC), for instance, a website tab under “Admissions” leads international and immigrant students to a list of six professional organizations whose evaluation services WCC accepts.

If no guidance is provided by the college, review the advice on credential evaluation at the [Global Talent Bridge](#) website or visit the [NACES](#) website.

Assessment & Placement: Minefield Or Mirror of Students' True Abilities?

At many community colleges, the initial assessment process often relies heavily on standardized tests like the Accuplacer test for class placement. These tests are rarely the best way to gauge the readiness of foreign-educated immigrants for college in the U.S. Many of these students have been out of school for a while, may not be used to taking standardized, multiple-choice tests, and are unfamiliar with the U.S. college admissions and placement process.

World Education Services has created an online degree equivalency tool that can be used by students and advisors alike. This tool can serve as a jumping off point for career planning discussions with foreign-educated immigrants while they wait for the formal credential evaluation to be completed.

What's the alternative? Mindful of how unreliable standardized test scores can be for immigrants who have never taken one, some colleges have begun to implement more "holistic" assessment tools, using structured, personal interviews to delve into the student's prior education and professional experience and to assemble a more complete picture of the students' needs and strengths.

At **Alamo Colleges** in Texas, the Workbased English Solutions program welcomes immigrants living in the San Antonio area into training programs that provide access to high-demand, career-building jobs. Alamo uses bilingual personal interviews to discuss the students' educational and career aspirations and to gauge the students' work-related skills. After the personal interview, students choose a desired course of study and take an in-depth assessment in English of their writing, listening, reading and mathematics skills. Spanish language tests are administered to Spanish-speaking students to better understand students' level of educational preparation. A four-person committee reviews the interviews and test results, makes placement decisions and provides direction to an educational case manager who meets with students to discuss next steps. For details, see "[Increasing Opportunities for Immigrant Students: Community](#)

[College Strategies for Success](#)," pp. 25 & 35.

Increasingly, colleges are recognizing that knowledge gained outside of the classroom is valuable and deserves college credit. In a section of their website entitled "Applying to College As An Immigrant Student," colleges in Ontario, Canada provide links for a "[Prior Learning and Assessment Recognition Process](#)." This process allows students to get academic credit for skills and knowledge they have acquired through work, training, independent study, volunteering, travel, hobbies or family experiences.

These kinds of "Prior Learning Assessments" are becoming more and more common at community colleges in the U.S.

At **Montgomery County Community College** (MCCC) in Pennsylvania, individual prior learning assessments are an option for all students. Faculty members knowledgeable in specific subject areas evaluate non-traditional learning experiences to see how they compare to the objectives of existing academic credit courses and help decide whether they can be considered for college credit. As the college's website explains, if a student has experi-

Free Degree Equivalency

See what your degree is worth in the U.S.

Go →

Use the [World Education Services online degree equivalency tool](#) for an instant preview of the U.S. equivalency of foreign university degrees.

www.globaltalentbridge.org/degreetool

ence as a supervisor in an industrial manufacturing firm, they will be asked to demonstrate what they have learned about production problem-solving, cost-effectiveness, supervision and labor problems, and how that learning can be related to the objectives of a course at MCCC.

Similarly, at **Alamo Colleges**, students can earn academic credit for knowledge and skills gained in job training, corporate training, military service, independent study and volunteer services. Alamo helps students create an electronic portfolio to showcase their knowledge and prior learning experience. Alamo faculty assess the portfolio and recommend the college credit to be awarded – up to 6 credit hours toward certain certificate programs and 12 credit hours toward certain A.A.S degrees.

➔ If your college has a prior learning assessment system, do you extend it to your foreign-educated students? If so, how do you publicize your prior learning assessment option? If your college lacks the resources to conduct in-person interviews and hasn't yet adopted a system of prior learning assessment, there's still an important, concrete step you can take to improve the reliability of your existing placement process.

➔ Does your community college send students directly from the Admissions Office to the college's testing office to take a placement test that will determine whether or not they are eligible to begin taking college-level courses or whether they will need to take developmental or remedial courses which cost money but aren't credit-bearing? ***This practice is definitely not ideal for foreign-educated students unfamiliar with U.S. testing systems or multiple-choice questions.*** Here's one college's solution:

At **Westchester Community College**, the international and immigrant student advisor partners with the college's

Academic Support Center to help ensure that immigrant students don't rush into taking the college's Accuplacer test. She refers prospective students to the Academic Support Center to make sure that they get plenty of practice and time to prepare before they take the test. ✨

Chapter Links

WES Degree Equivalency Tool

<http://www.globaltalentbridge.org/degreetool/>

WES Global Talent Bridge website

<http://www.globaltalentbridge.org/evaluation/>

Westchester Community College

<http://www.sunywc.edu/admissions/international-transfers/foreign-credit-evaluation>

"Increasing Opportunities for Immigrant Students: Community College Strategies for Success"

http://www.cccie.org/images/stories/Increasing_Opportunities_for_Immigrant_Students_2011.pdf

"Prior Learning and Assessment Recognition Process"

<http://www.ontariocolleges.ca/apply/immigrant-applicants#prior-learning>

Montgomery County Community College

<http://www.mc3.edu/adm-fin-aid/prior-learning-assessment>

Alamo Colleges

<http://www.alamo.edu/main.aspx?id=29384>

• CHAPTER 3 •

Academic & Career Counseling

Are All the Right Options on the Table?

Many community colleges are really two colleges in one, with a credit side of the house and a non-credit side. Few foreign-educated students are aware of or understand the difference. Yet both sides offer options that may be attractive to this student population.

Bridging The Credit vs. Non-Credit Divide

In order to make an informed choice about a flexible career pathway that is right for them, it is essential that foreign-educated immigrants receive advice that spans both credit and non-credit programs. The non-credit options and the living wage jobs for which they prepare students can serve as stepping stones to higher-skill positions for foreign-educated students who may not be able to afford, in the short-term, to enroll in a credit-based degree program or to embark on the arduous process of obtaining professional licensure in their field in the U.S. For students interested in vocational programs, it is also crucial that you help them identify credentials that are recognized and accepted by the industry in which they plan to work.

➔ If you are an academic advisor, do you know what's offered by your college's division of continuing education and your college's workforce development programs? Are you able to provide advice that spans the credit vs. non-credit divide?

If you don't, you may be short-changing your foreign-educated students, especially those who need to quickly earn an industry-recognized "stackable credential" leading to a better-paying job and to a career ladder.

At **Miami Dade College's** New Student Center, prospec-

tive students meet in-person with a pre-college advisor who is trained to be able to advise students on the full range of credit and non-credit options available at the college, as well as the pros and cons of choosing a particular credit or non-credit pathway. In fact, MDC has gone the distance and merged the role of academic and career advisor. These "Academic and Career Advisors" receive extensive training on both academic and career development pathways in recognition of the fact that an academic path needs to lead to a career. And, in an effort to make sure that working students are able to take advantage of these enhanced advising services, these advisors are available until 7 p.m. and some weekends.

At **Westchester Community College**, a health care career advisor has at her fingertips information about the full array of credit and non-credit offerings in the health care field. Many of these short-term, non-credit health care options at WCC – Certified Nurse Assistant(CNA), Patient Care Technician(PCT), Phlebotomy – can lead to jobs where students can make connections that will be useful to them later on. The fact that foreign-educated students are bilingual is often a real plus and can help them eventually get better jobs, since bilingual candidates are in demand in many health care settings.

Front-Loading Career Advice

More and more, community colleges are recognizing that very few of their students can afford the luxury of registering for courses in a vacuum. Knowing what career direction they are headed in, what jobs may be available in their chosen field, and how they can continue to build on their community college education to earn further credentials or degrees is a priority for many students at community colleges.

For this reason, a number of community colleges are choosing to front-load career advice for all their students, including their foreign-educated ones.

The [California Career Café](#) of **California Community Colleges** provides an attractive, easy-to-use virtual career center for community college students – and you don't need to live in California to use it! The website offers links to information on 15 different career pathways. For each career pathway, the website provides online tools that allow students to understand what career opportunities are available along that pathway, what educational degrees or certificates are needed for those opportunities, what the job outlook is for any particular job along that pathway, and how to find scholarships, internships and mentors in that field.

The Oregon Career Pathways Initiative began with 5 colleges and now includes all 17 community colleges in Oregon. Each has developed [Career Pathways roadmaps](#) that are visual tools to help students and community college advisors and counselors understand and navigate various education and career options. The roadmaps visualize career pathways from entry level credentials to A.S. and B.S. degrees and include various “entry” and “exit” points that note job opportunities, anticipated wages and other labor market information, as well as career and academic advising services and financial aid options. For instance, **Mt. Hood Community College** has designed Career Pathway roadmaps in a variety of occupations and fields, including medical customer service, accounting, child care center teacher, and behavioral healthcare specialist. A specially designed [Vocational ESL program](#) for non-native English speakers, immigrants, and refugees charts a path from [Certified Nursing Assistant to Registered Nurse positions](#).

For example, local hospitals, schools, and businesses may

view immigrant professionals' bilingual skills and foreign experience as definite assets in communities serving increasingly diverse populations. Partnerships between colleges and employers can lead to recruiting through the campus for apprenticeships and internships where foreign experience and foreign languages can be surprisingly valuable.

At **Central Piedmont Community College**, for example, one career pathway, Early Childhood Education, consists of large numbers of ESL students because bilingual child care workers and teachers are in high demand.

Help Is On The Way: You Don't Have To Do It Alone

If the idea of providing advice that bridges the divide between credit and non-credit programs, while also keeping abreast of dozens of constantly evolving 21st century career pathways and job opportunities sounds daunting to you, don't worry! There's lots of help available online and in person for you and for your students, if you know where to find it.

There are some organizations with national reach especially devoted to addressing the challenges faced by foreign-educated immigrants. Their resources and websites should be at your fingertips – and included as links on your college's website.

Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education

The [Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education \(CCCIE\)](#) brings together colleges around the country that are supporting skilled immigrants in innovative ways. CCCIE sponsors education and training workshops

The community college, as the local academic institution, can play a leadership role in addressing the problem of brain waste in the local community by developing educational opportunities to create pathways to success.

on community college campuses and at national conferences, disseminates research and resources through its website, and advocates for policies that support immigrant students.

◆ It maintains an invaluable repository of promising practices in immigrant education in community colleges across the country, organized according to five major types of programs or initiatives. It also invites colleges to submit innovative programs to the CCCIE database so colleges can learn from one another and share new ideas.

WES Global Talent Bridge

WES Global Talent Bridge is an initiative of World Education Services (WES) that helps skilled immigrants leverage their training, achieve their professional goals and contribute their talent to their full potential.

◆ If you're puzzled about how credential evaluations work or want to provide better job-hunting advice to your foreign-educated students, you'll find a wide array of easy-to-use resources here, including webinars and

Setting Up Shop: Entrepreneurship As A Career Option For Skilled Immigrants

Immigrants start businesses at nearly twice the rate of native-born Americans.¹ For some foreign-educated immigrants, launching their own business is at the heart of their American Dream. Entrepreneurship can be a great way to leverage their educational resources and prior job experience.

◆ At **LaGuardia Community College** in New York, for instance, the Small Business Development Center (in the Division of Adult & Continuing Education), provides entrepreneurs with free, one-on-one professional counseling for existing and start-up businesses in English, Spanish, Korean and three dialects of Chinese. Areas of advising include how to start a business; legal requirements; business and financial planning; marketing; business expansion; assistance with franchises; international trade and more.

◆ **Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA)** offers a certificate in Entrepreneurship Career Studies. NOVA also provides entrepreneurship training, mentoring, counseling and networking opportunities to eligible adults and dislocated workers through its ENOVATE initiative.

Does your college offer courses in entrepreneurship? Does your Adult & Continuing Education Division provide workshops and training for small businesses? Does your college partner with local businesses to provide coaching to aspiring entrepreneurs? If the answer is “yes” to any of these questions, then it’s a good idea to keep these options on the table as you advise foreign-educated immigrants.

1. <http://www.kaufman.org/what-we-do/resources/entrepreneurship-policy-digest/the-economic-case-for-welcoming-immigrant-entrepreneurs>

professional development opportunities.

- ◆ The [Immigrant Resources](#) section of the WES Global Talent Bridge website provides information for immigrants and links to an extensive array of programs and resources.
- ◆ Of special interest to both advisors and students are WES Global Talent Bridge’s free “[Pathways to Success](#)”[®] seminars, designed to help immigrants use their academic credentials and connect with community organizations, academic programs and training opportunities. [WES Global Talent Bridge has partnered with CCCIE](#) to bring this seminar to immigrant students at a number of community college campuses across the country.

Upwardly Global

[Upwardly Global](#) provides skilled immigrants with professional job search training, networking opportunities and placement services. If the foreign-educated immigrant in your office or classroom has completed a foreign college degree, is proficient in English, and meets certain other criteria, then you can make a referral to Upwardly Global.

- ◆ Upwardly Global has offices in Chicago, Detroit, New York and the San Francisco Bay area that include placement services, but also offers its [online career coaching and networking services](#) to foreign-educated professionals anywhere in the U.S.
- ◆ In addition, [licensing information](#) to help skilled immigrants understand all the steps required to earn a state professional license or credential is now available for 10 popular careers in California, Illinois, Michigan, and New York, and for health careers in New Hampshire.

The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians

[The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians](#) is a model organization for how to advocate for skilled immigrants in your community. In addition to serving immigrants in Philadelphia, it publishes [resources](#) that can be accessed online. For instance:

- ◆ “[How to Succeed in the Workplace](#)” is a general career guide for immigrant professionals.
- ◆ You will also find specific guides on [Accountants/Auditors](#), [Mechanical Engineers](#), [Teachers](#) and [Systems Analysts](#). Although these guides include some Pennsylvania-specific links, they will guide a foreign-educated immigrant through a professional job search anywhere in the United States.

IMPRINT

[IMPRINT](#) is the growing national coalition of nonprofits helping underemployed skilled immigrant professionals to start their American careers. It advocates for policies that facilitate immigrant integration and broadcasts best practices. On its website you will find [issue briefs](#) to help you develop and strengthen programs for skilled immigrants, including strategies for securing funding, building employer partnerships, gathering data on skilled immigrants, and becoming an effective advocate in your community.

Linking Up With Local Resources

In addition to these national resources, there are a number of local and regional programs designed specifically to serve immigrant professionals.

➔ Does the foreign-educated immigrant student sitting in your office have a professional background in the health care field, broadly defined to include not only nurses, pharmacists, doctors and dentists, but also lab technicians and physical therapists? If so, one of the first things you want to tell them about is the Welcome Back Initiative and its constituent Welcome Back Centers.

Welcome Back Initiative

The [Welcome Back Initiative](#) website is a useful source of online resources for international health care professionals, with advice on how to create a flexible career pathway that builds on the spectrum of educational and career opportunities available to them in the U.S.

◆ The ten Welcome Back Centers – many of which are based at community colleges – offer free orientation, counseling, and support to foreign-trained health workers. They help develop a career pathway plan that builds on their education, experience, and skills and can support them in obtaining appropriate professional credentials and licenses for their profession. Welcome Back Centers also help connect foreign-educated health professionals to contextualized ESL for Health Care classes based on the English Health Train curriculum, and other educational programs, jobs, volunteer opportunities that might yield helpful career contacts, and alternative career options.

◆ Welcome Back Centers are located in [Boston](#), [Denver](#), [suburban Maryland](#), [New York City](#), [Providence](#), [San Diego](#), [San Antonio](#), [Philadelphia](#), and both [Puget Sound](#) and [Northwest Washington State](#).

➔ What if the foreign-educated student sitting in your office has an educational and professional background in one of the STEM fields – science, technology, engineer-

ing or mathematics? In that case, you may have several options.

There may be programs on your campus ideally suited for these students. For instance, [Bluegrass Community & Technical College](#) has found that its biotechnology degree programs and certificates, are especially attractive to foreign-educated students with backgrounds in nursing, science and medicine because they lead to well-paying careers in a wide range of industry settings.

For a foreign-educated student with a background in computer science, the range of relevant offerings and career choices at a typical community college is, if anything, even wider. There are two-year, credit-based A.S degrees in Computer Science and A.A.S. degrees in Computer Information Systems. There are short-term, credit-based certificates in computer programming, computer-aided design, web development, and cyber-security. There are non-credit certificates for computer-service technicians, Cisco certification, Android & iPhone application developers, and health care Information Technology (IT) technicians. The possibilities are nearly endless. See, for example, the list of more than fifty IT offerings at [South Texas College's School of Continuing, Professional and Workforce Education](#).

Think Globally, Act Locally

Cities and regions need skilled workers, especially in healthcare professions and STEM careers, to drive economic growth. It is not difficult to imagine how experienced, foreign-educated professionals could potentially meet the needs of local employers if they had the right educational opportunities and support. The community college, as the local academic institution, can play a leadership role in addressing the problem of "brain waste" in

the local community by developing educational opportunities to create pathways to success.

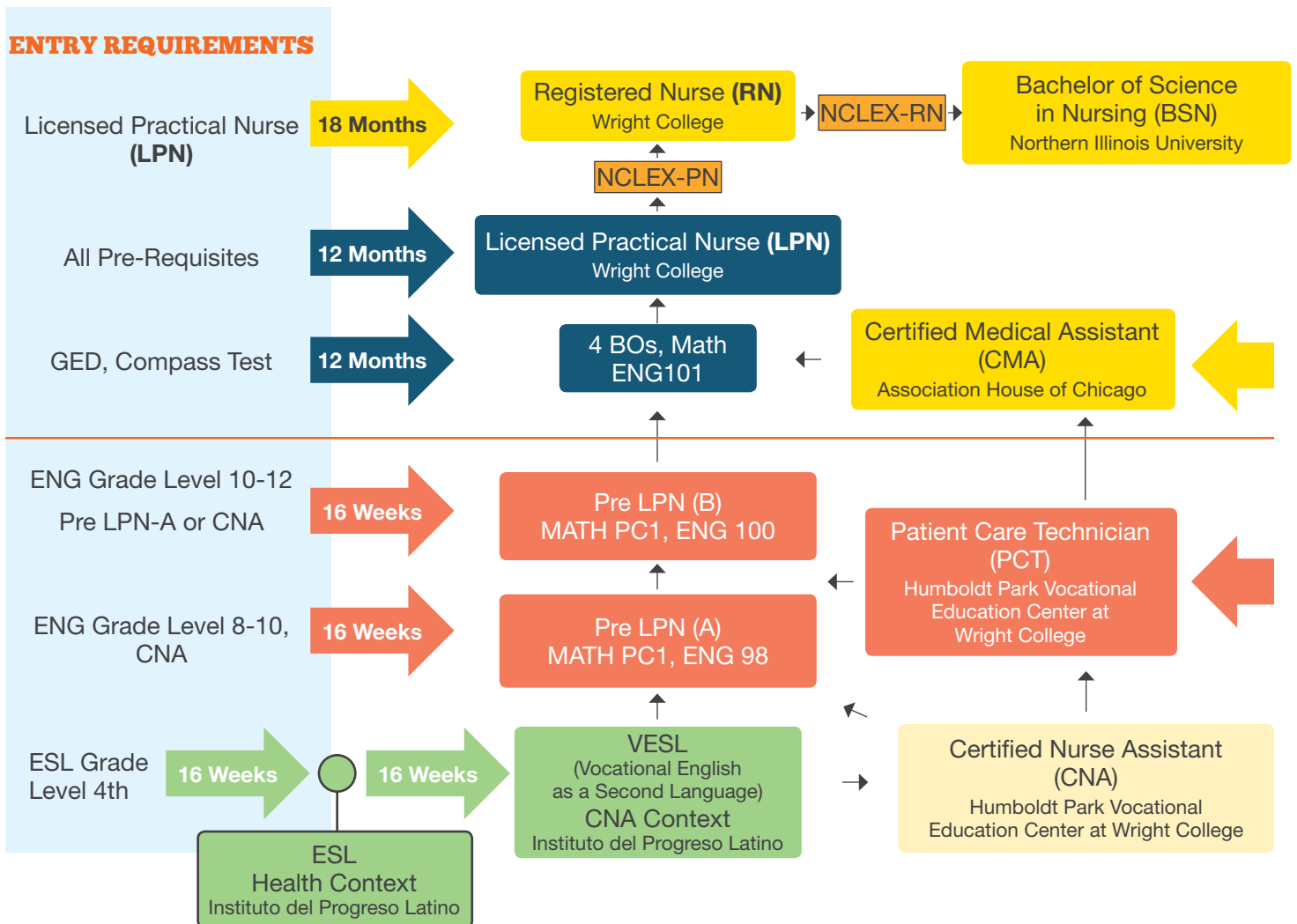
◆ **Wilbur Wright College** in Chicago has collaborated with Instituto del Progreso Latino and other community partners to develop the award-winning **Carreras en Salud** (Careers in Health) career pathway where individuals can access the pathway at various entry points depending on their English language proficiency and prerequisites

that they fulfill along the way. The Carreras en Salud model is successfully addressing the region’s need for more bilingual healthcare professionals.

► Are there ways you as an advisor, linking up with other departments, might become an advocate within your college for foreign-trained students?

► Could you have a role in recommending or developing

The Carreras en Salud Pathway Model



new programs that meet the needs of foreign-educated immigrants, such as some of the programs featured in this guide?

Consider partnering with local community-based organizations (CBOs) that serve immigrant and refugee populations to learn the profile of their clients and together design solutions that bring them to your campus. Such agencies can be champions of — and a source of referral to — community college programs that facilitate accelerated career pathways, short-term and stackable credentials and vocational certifications that build on previous education and professional experience. CBOs can also be effective partners in placing immigrants in jobs that match their skills and experience.

Building Bridges on Campus: Who Are Your Natural Allies?

In many cases, you may not need to look any further than your own campus to locate resources that may be especially helpful to foreign-educated immigrants.

➤ Has anyone at your college ever surveyed your faculty to find out which countries are represented among your full-time faculty and adjunct instructors? These international faculty members have a vital role to play in advising and informally mentoring immigrant students. **Bluegrass Community and Technical College's** Dr. Jim Fenton, Associate Professor, ESL/Humanities, makes a point of knowing which of his colleagues are immigrants or fluent speakers of other languages. “That way,” he says, “If I have a Farsi-speaking student who wants to go into accounting and I know I have a Farsi native speaker teaching in the Business area, I can put them in touch with each other. I keep it informal. I’m not asking for a formal mentoring relationship. I just create the relationship between the faculty and the student as an opportunity.”

➤ Does your college have a formal workplace culture coaching program for students? At some community colleges, these type of programs offer business students the opportunity to work one-on-one with a corporate mentor. Students visit their volunteer corporate mentors at work and get help from their mentors to explore career options

Alternatives to Licensing

It can take a long time and be very expensive for internationally educated professionals to become re-licensed in their profession in the U.S. It is important to "count the cost" and consider alternatives.

- ◆ Completing a certificate program in a community college can qualify a student for a “gateway” job — an entry-level position to gain U.S. experience while they prepare for licensing. For example, foreign-educated accountants can work as bookkeepers, accounting clerks, loan officers and budget analysts.
- ◆ Foreign-educated students often don’t realize that only a relatively small percentage of jobs in the U.S. require a license. Community colleges offer the opportunity to pursue credentials related to alternative career pathways that they may never have imagined.

and the professional working world. These kinds of mentoring programs, intended for *all* students, can be especially valuable for internationally-educated students who may have no idea how to network professionally in the U.S. These mentoring relationships can be vital in helping them gain a professional foothold in the community.

➔ What about student clubs on your campus? Do you have a Nursing Students' Association? A Chemistry Club? A National Science Teachers Association? The faculty who advise these and other clubs, and the students who participate in them, are a rich source of connections and informal advising for foreign-educated immigrants.

Montgomery College in Maryland surveyed students in its non-credit ESL programs to find out more about their prior employment, educational experience, and career goals. Based on that survey, Montgomery College recruited community volunteers to run Career Clubs for its ESL students. The three Career Clubs – in health care, business, and education – provide an opportunity for ESL students at any level of proficiency to talk with professionals working in the field, network, and practice their English. With the help of the professional volunteers, Montgomery College's participating ESL students can polish their resumes and research prospective jobs. ✨

Chapter Links

Miami Dade College

<http://www.mdc.edu/north/newstudentcenter/>

California Career Café

<http://www.cacareercafe.com>

Career Pathways roadmaps

<http://www.MyPathCareers.org/cp>

Tillamook Bay Community College

<http://www.tbcc.cc.or.us/index.php/academics/career-pathways>

The Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education

<http://www.cccie.org/>

<http://www.cccie.org/community-college-immigration-promising-practices>

Global Talent Bridge

<http://www.globaltalentbridge.org/>

<http://www.globaltalentbridge.org/webinars>

<http://www.globaltalentbridge.org/info>

<http://www.globaltalentbridge.org/info/seminars.asp>

<http://www.bhcc.mass.edu/news/2012/june/bunker-hill-community-college-hosts-pathways-to-success-seminar-.html>

Upwardly Global

<http://www.upwardlyglobal.org/job-seekers/healthcare-trainings>

<http://www.welcomingcenter.org/publications/publication-downloads>

<http://www.upwardlyglobal.org/job-seekers/online-training-programs>

<https://www.upwardlyglobal.org/skilled-immigrant-job-seekers/american-licensed-professions/>

The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians

<http://www.welcomingcenter.org/>

<http://www.welcomingcenter.org/publications/publication-downloads>

http://www.welcomingcenter.org/sites/default/files/imagefield_thumbs/howtosucceed.pdf

http://www.welcomingcenter.org/sites/default/files/imagefield_thumbs/accountantguide.pdf

http://www.welcomingcenter.org/sites/default/files/imagefield_thumbs/engineerguide.pdf

http://www.welcomingcenter.org/sites/default/files/imagefield_thumbs/teacherguide.pdf

http://www.welcomingcenter.org/sites/default/files/imagefield_thumbs/systemsanalystguide.pdf

IMPRINT

<http://www.imprintproject.org>

Welcome Back Initiative

<http://www.welcomebackinitiative.org/>

Boston: <http://www.bhcc.mass.edu/welcomeback/>

Denver: <http://www.coloradowelcomeback.org/homepage.html>

Suburban Maryland: <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Program.aspx?id=OCA/OCAWelcomeB-p482.html>

New York City: <http://www.laguardia.edu/nycwbc/>

Providence: <http://riwelcomebackcenter.org/>

San Diego: <http://www.welcomebackcenter.org/>

San Antonio: <http://www.alamo.edu/welcomeback/>

San Francisco: <http://welcomebackinitiative.org/sf/>

Pugent Sound: <https://welcomeback.highline.edu/>

Northwest Washington State: <http://www.edcc.edu/welcomeback/>

Bluegrass Community & Technical College

http://bluegrass.kctcs.edu/en/Academics/Programs_of_Study/Biotechnology.aspx

South Texas College's School of Continuing, Professional and Workforce Education

<http://careertraining.ed2go.com/southtexas/information-technology-software-development-programs>





Fidel

“I’m very grateful for the ESL program at Westchester Community College,” says Fidel Gonzalez Safora, who came to the United States from Cuba in the spring of 2013. Despite having recently earned a bachelor’s degree in industrial engineering from his home country, the only job Fidel could find here was in the meatpacking department of a local supermarket. His lack of English language skills and lack of U.S. job experience were significant barriers holding him back.

Fidel’s wife, a U.S.-born Cuban American who is a dance instructor at WCC, told him about the college’s English Language Institute. He enrolled in two ESL courses that covered speaking, listening, and writing skills and became immersed in the English language. “I was speaking English every day, every morning and interacting with students from all over the world—China, Slovakia—it was really amazing.” At the same time, his ESL instructors and classes were instrumental in helping him adjust to American society. Classroom discussions ranged from preparing for winter and understanding American holidays to politics and American attitudes toward immigrants. Fidel was able to perfect his writing skills and contributed an essay to *International Voices*, an award winning annual publication of Westchester Community College that captures the diverse experiences and perspectives of students.

But ESL was only the beginning. Thanks to the sharp eyes of a counselor in WCC’s Career Center who saw he might qualify for the college’s computer program, Fidel enrolled in WCC’s Computer-Assisted Design (CAD) certificate program, taking both CAD and Introduction to Technology courses while also enrolled in the ESL courses. “I was taking a total of five courses and working 28 to 30 hours a week in the supermarket—I never saw my wife!” he remarked. Nonetheless, his hard work and perseverance have paid off. He earned his CAD certificate last year, and has landed a job in a small construction management firm, where he is able to use his CAD skills.

“My advisor asked me questions about my interests, kept me posted on job and internship opportunities, and made sure I was following up on the possible opportunities,” he said. His advice to immigrant students: “Try to stand out in your classes—I got my job because I was recommended by one of my CAD professors—and try to learn American culture by reading novels, newspapers, watching TV, and understanding the pop culture. My wife and I watch Jeopardy.”

He is now studying for an associate’s degree at WCC in civil technology and plans to transfer to a four-year college to get a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering, get licensed, and continue on for a master’s in civil engineering. Fidel explains why he wants a second bachelor’s degree: “I’m changing my professional path. In Cuba, my preparation for the bachelor’s was in the business aspects of engineering; now, I’m interested in learning the more technical aspects of engineering, such as CAD skills, and I need this preparation for a master’s program.”

• CHAPTER 4 •

English as a Second Language Class

A Bridge to College and Careers?

Perhaps no one on campus knows the population of internationally-educated students better than the ESL instructors who work with them day-in and day-out, learning first-hand through classroom discussions and writing assignments about their students' aspirations, fears, and goals.

As a result, ESL students often look to their ESL instructors for advice and guidance on navigating the United States' educational and workplace systems. Here are some ways an ESL instructor, or an ESL department as a whole, can build on that base of mutual respect and trust to help accelerate students' passage into the professional work world.

Is Your Classroom a Gateway to Your Campus?

Many ESL students know very little about the larger community college campus where they are taking English classes, and have almost no awareness of the vast range of degree programs, certificates, and workforce development programs that might lead them to a viable career path.

Here are some simple steps you can take to help familiarize your students with the wealth of opportunities waiting for them outside their ESL classroom:

➤ Do you invite guest speakers from your school's admissions office or student clubs into your ESL classroom? These kinds of guest speakers are a great way to introduce ESL students to the wider college campus.

At **Westchester Community College**, members of the student honor society have made guest appearances in individual upper-level ESL classrooms to offer their services as peer mentors to ESL students interested in applying to college in the U.S.

➤ What sort of partnership do you have with your school's academic and career counseling staff? Lack of familiarity with the availability of counseling options on your campus, along with cultural differences, may inhibit many foreign-educated students from actively seeking out the counseling they need to chart a viable academic and career pathway for themselves.

At **Miami Dade College**, Student Services staff visit the college's non-credit ESL classrooms at the beginning of the semester and talk about the opportunities that are available at the college level. Says Malou Harrison,

President of MDC-North Campus, "We advise students about short-term programs. And we talk about certificate programs that bridge into an associate degree and subsequently a baccalaureate degree, so students understand how they can earn incremental credentials."



At **Montgomery College** in Maryland, college and career coaches go to the college’s extension sites and make presentations to ESL students about next steps. These coaches provide advice to ESL students about the difference between credit and non-credit programs, and can lead classroom activities aimed at helping ESL students transition into college and careers.

➔ Do you encourage your ESL students to sign up for the Admission Office’s campus tours? Do you lead your own campus tours to familiarize them with the on-campus resources that could help them succeed? See Chapter 1 of this Guide to learn more about how Bluegrass Community and Technical College’s Admissions Office partners with its ESL instructors to tailor its college tours to its ESL students.

➔ Do you teach your students how to access your college’s online or print course catalog?

At **LaGuardia Community College**, ESL instructors bring hard copies of the college’s Adult & Continuing Education catalog into class and use it as a basis for a scavenger hunt to help their students understand the vast array of programs they could access to forge a career pathway for themselves. Students can use the catalog to find answers to questions like, “I want to become a nurse. What courses can I take to help me reach my goal?” Or “I want to start my own business. How much does it cost to take the ‘Start Your Own Business’ course?”

For more ideas on how you can encourage your ESL students to take greater advantage of the resources available

to them on your college campus, check out CCCIE’s Issue Brief, [“Connecting English Language Learners to Supportive Community College Resources.”](#)

ESL Classes: Limbo or Launchpad Into Academic or Career Pathways?

For many ESL students, spending time and money semester after semester in non-credit-bearing ESL classes which do not rapidly equip them to advance into credit-bearing courses or into better-paying jobs is powerfully demotivating. This can be especially frustrating for

foreign-educated professionals, who have already picked up many of the metacognitive skills and experience needed to thrive in an academic environment with their American peers or in a professional workplace.

Increasingly, the focus in community colleges around the country is on how quickly and effectively their ESL pro-

grams are able to launch their students into credit-bearing academic programs or into workforce development programs that lead to viable careers. Here are three strategies that community colleges are using to accomplish this goal:

First, a number of community colleges have created contextualized ESL programs in which ESL students are introduced to specific academic and career vocabulary, and are supported along a structured path so that they can succeed in academic programs or vocational training

A new career pathway, Information Technology, has been added along with a Bridge to Information Technology. This program has been of particular interest to ESL due to high demand job opportunities and its potential to earn high salaries as you move up the career ladder.

—Gilda Rubio-Festa, Associate Dean of College & Career Readiness/International Community Outreach at Central Piedmont Community College

For many ESL students, spending time and money semester after semester in non-credit-bearing ESL classes which do not rapidly equip them to advance into credit-bearing courses or into better-paying jobs is powerfully de-motivating.

that prepares them for family-sustaining jobs.

Perhaps the best known of the contextualized ESL models is the [Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training \(I-BEST\)](#), pioneered by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. Designed for intermediate-level English language learners, I-BEST pairs ESL instructors with content area instructors in the same classroom to co-teach college-level vocational courses and workforce training. I-BEST students start earning college credits immediately.

A second strategy is for community colleges to create workforce development programs in which their ESL students can earn a series of “stackable credentials” that can be applied later to a college degree or a career.

Portland Community College

in Oregon has created short, 2 to 3-term credit career pathways in accounting, computer application systems, retail sales, customer service, and other fields, which

ESL students can access without having to meet the college’s reading and writing prerequisites because they take a contextualized academic skill building and support course concurrently.

Central Piedmont Community College in North Carolina actively recruits from its ESL classes into its [Pathways to Careers](#) program that offers credit-bearing stackable credentials. Students are co-enrolled in credit-bearing courses and in linked, contextualized adult literacy classes. An optional communication course is offered

for all ESL students in this program.

A third strategy is for colleges to actively encourage their ESL students to co-enroll in academic, credit-bearing courses.

The [Project A.C.E. \(Accelerated Content-based English\)](#) program at **Miami Dade College**, offers a fast-track ESL curriculum to students with strong academic backgrounds, including those with degrees from other countries. Students take content-based ESL courses in which they learn English at the same time that they co-enroll in academic courses in psychology, microcomputers or Internet research.

At **Passaic County Community College**

in New Jersey, students in credit-bearing ESL classes can co-enroll in paired sociology, psychology, computer information systems and early childhood education courses.

➔ What is your school’s policy on co-enrollment of intermediate and high-level ESL

students in credit-bearing academic courses or workforce development programs?

Preparing Foreign-Educated ESL Students For The Workplace: Ready-Made ESL Curriculum

Even if your own college hasn’t yet created the kinds of contextualized ESL courses or career pathways for foreign-educated ESL students that other community

The one career pathway where we have typically targeted to professional students is Entry-Level Accounting Clerk because we have found that our ESOL students who were previously accountants or who majored in accounting in their countries tended to thrive in this career pathway and could often be successfully placed into jobs after completing a certificate.

—Laura Horani, ESOL Chair at the SE Campus and Extended Learning Campus, Portland Community College

colleges have, there's a lot you can include in your own lesson plans to help your students prepare for better jobs.

A useful resource for ESL instructors who are teaching foreign-educated immigrants is WES Global Talent Bridge's "[Supporting Skilled Immigrants: A Toolkit for ESL Practitioners](#)." You will find plenty of ideas for lesson plans as well as links to entire curricula that can help you prepare skilled immigrants for the workplace.

➔ Are you teaching foreign health care professionals in your ESL classes? Then the Toolkit will point you toward the [English Health Train](#), a ready-made curriculum developed as part of the Welcome Back Initiative (see Chapter 3 above) for international health care professionals. It consists of 320 hours of contextualized, communicative activities in five major modules and 40 hours of web-based listening exercises. The modular design of the curriculum allows you to pick and choose whichever parts you think would be most relevant to your students.

➔ Do you have a mixed group of students with a variety of professional backgrounds in your ESL classes? Then the Toolkit's link to the National College Transition Network's curriculum, "[Integrating Career Awareness into the ABE and ESOL Classroom](#)" is a great resource. This publication includes a 210-page curriculum, complete with downloadable handouts, and provides support to ESL instructors who want to help their students set personal and career goals, inventory their skills, understand how to apply to college, and learn how to use the Internet to explore career options.

➔ Finally, when your foreign-educated ESL students turn to you for advice about education and careers in the U.S., how do you advise them? Although your college or

department may already have procedures in place on how and when to refer your ESL students to an academic or career advisor, it's still worth being aware of and keeping in mind the resources described in Chapter 3 on academic and career advising. The webinars and other links included in that chapter can readily be turned into speaking and listening activities for your in-

termediate and advanced ESL classes. ✨

Chapter Links

Connecting English Language Learners to Supportive Community College Resources"

http://www.cccie.org/images/stories/pdf/connecting%20esl%20students%20to%20supportive%20campus%20resources_cccie.pdf

Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)

http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/e_integratedbasiceducationandskillstraining.aspx

Pathways to Careers program

<http://www.cpcc.edu/ccr/pathways>

Project A.C.E. (Accelerated Content-based English)

<http://www.mdc.edu/iac/esl/ace>

Miami Dade College

http://www.mdc.edu/iac/esl/ace/_src/pdf/Title_V_Project_ACE.pdf

Passaic County Community College

http://www.cccie.org/images/stories/promising_practices/passaic%20octy%20community%20college_els%20program%20redesign_cccie.pdf

Supporting Skilled Immigrants: A Toolkit for ESL Practitioners

<http://www.globaltalentbridge.org/toolkit/pdf/SupportingSkilledImmigrantsToolkit.pdf>

English Health Train

<http://www.englishhealthtrain.org>

National College Transition Network's curriculum on integrating college and career awareness into the ESL classroom

<http://www.collegetransition.org/publications.icacurriculum.html>

Stackable credentials are a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time to enable individuals move along an educational pathway or up a career ladder.

• CHAPTER 5 •

Financial Assistance

Figuring out how to pay for college is a daunting challenge for virtually every community college student. And it is doubly challenging for foreign-educated immigrants, who often have no clue about the kinds of financial assistance that may be available to help them pursue their education in the United States.

Far too many immigrant students underutilize financial aid, often due to misconceptions about their ineligibility. It is therefore essential that community college advisors and instructors have at least some awareness of where to direct students for advice on financial aid issues.

Pop Quiz: Are Immigrants Eligible For Student Aid?

Many foreign-educated immigrants labor under the misconception that they are ineligible for financial aid, particularly federal student aid, on the grounds that they aren't U.S. citizens. In fact, that's not true: permanent residents ("green-card" holders) and several other categories of non-citizens (e.g., legal refugees, asylees, parolees, and victims of human trafficking) are eligible for federal student aid, including grants, loans, and work-study programs.

One helpful source of information is the [Federal Student Aid Toolkit](#) maintained by the U.S. Department of Education:

- ◆ A section on [eligibility](#) offers clear guidelines on the circumstances under which non-U.S. citizens may be eligible for federal financial aid.
- ◆ A section that offers clear advice that is tailored to non-citizens on filling out the [Free Application for Fed-](#)

[eral Student Aid \("FAFSA"\)](#).

- ◆ An on-line tutorial, "[7 Easy Steps to the FAFSA](#)," walks students through the FAFSA process and can be very helpful for perplexed but eligible immigrants.

Permanent residents are also eligible for in-state tuition in the state where they live. They may also apply for state financial aid. The Federal Student Aid website includes a link to [state grant agencies](#) for further information on financial aid available in each state.

Undocumented Students & Others Ineligible For Federal Aid

The Federal Student Aid website also gives advice to [undocumented students](#) and others ineligible for federal aid. Even if a foreign-educated student is ineligible for federal financial aid at a community college because he or she is undocumented or has already obtained the international equivalent of a bachelor's degree, or because the non-credit courses in which they need to enroll are ineligible for Pell grants, there are scholarship resources they may still be able to apply for.

- ◆ The website created by [Educators for Fair Consideration \(E4FC\)](#) with undocumented students in mind maintains a list of scholarships that don't require U.S. citizenship or proof of legal residency.
- ◆ Many community colleges raise funds from private donors and alumni for their college foundation, which in turn may be made available to students regardless of immigration status.
- Does your Financial Aid website link to your college's in-house scholarship resources? The website of [Highline](#)

Community College, for instance, prominently displays a link to its Jumpstart Scholarship Program, designed to help academically motivated immigrants, refugees and other non-native English speakers successfully transition into college. In addition, Highline offers a scholarship funded by Alaska Airlines to support ABE/ESL students' transition to college programs.

➔ Have you checked out the new [Financial Aid Guide to Success](#) issued by the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics? It's full of links to a wide variety of scholarship resources that would be helpful for foreign-educated immigrants, especially those interested in pursuing careers in teaching and STEM fields.

➔ If your community college is located in a state that allows undocumented students to pay in-state tuition rates or to receive state aid, are these facts prominently highlighted on your website? The National Training for Counselors and Mentors program offers a fact sheet on [counseling undocumented students about financial aid](#) that includes information about states that offer in-state tuition at public colleges and lists organizations that provide scholarships or lists of scholarships.

Are Your Students – And Your College – Leaving Money on the Table?

An additional source of funding that may be available for certain vocational courses offered at many community colleges are tuition vouchers from your local workforce development agency or [One-Stop Career Centers](#).

Foreign-educated immigrants who are legally authorized to work in the U.S. and who are interested in training in certain high-demand technical fields may be eligible for free training vouchers under the Workforce Innova-

tion and Opportunity Act (WIOA) (the successor to the Workforce Investment Act). These vouchers can be used to pay for college coursework if your college is an eligible training provider.

SUNY Orange County Community College website includes a section that explains to prospective students that if they qualify as unemployed or displaced workers, they may be eligible to receive money to cover the cost of select courses and certificate programs.

The “[Check Out A College](#)” web page maintained by the **Community & Technical Colleges of Washington State** carefully spells out the eligibility criteria for Worker Retraining benefits, and makes it easy for prospective students to contact a worker retraining specialist at each of its campuses.

➔ If your college is an eligible WIOA training provider, does your website invite students to learn more and to followup to find out if they are eligible for WIOA training vouchers? ✨

Chapter Links

Federal Student Aid Toolkit

<http://www.financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov/tk/outreach/target/noncitizens.jsp>

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (“FAFSA”)

<http://www.financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov/tk/outreach/target/noncitizens.jsp>

7 Easy Steps to the FAFSA

<https://www.finaid.ucsb.edu/Media/FAFSASimplification/index.html>

State Grant Agencies

<http://www.fafsa.com/student-financial-aid/state-based-aid-programs>

Educators for Fair Consideration

<http://e4fc.org/>

Highline Community College

<http://english.highline.edu/developmental/jumpstart.php>

Financial Aid Guide to Success

http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/hispanic-initiative/files/2014/04/English_%C2%A1Grad%C3%BAate-Financial-Aid-Guide-to-Success.pdf

One-Stop Career Centers

<http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/training/onestop.htm>

SUNY Orange County Community College

<http://www.sunyorange.edu/ce/special/workforce.shtml>

Check Out A College

<http://checkoutcollege.com/ExploreCareers/WorkerRetraining.aspx>

Khalid

In 2009, Khalid Mounsef came to the United States from Morocco with a 4-year degree in physics and a 2-year degree in IT networking. Despite his educational background, the only work the 38-year old immigrant could find were low-wage, dead-end jobs in the restaurant and retail sectors.

Khalid was working two jobs and studying English as a Second Language at a trade school when a Moroccan friend told him about [Training Futures](#), a partnership between **Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA)** and Northern Virginia Family Service that offers a 25-week comprehensive job training and internship program aimed at entry-level administrative positions with career advancement potential. Training Futures offers a business immersion approach that resembles actual work practices, and includes comprehensive support services such as access to counseling, accent reduction, a support community of peers, interaction with corporate volunteers, and individualized tutoring and coaching.

Khalid's friend had completed the Training Futures program himself and urged Khalid to pursue the opportunity to position himself for a better job. Khalid spent a preparatory term studying in the ESL Bridge Program that NOVA had established with Training Futures.

By 2012, Khalid's English was good enough to begin NOVA's Training Futures program, which offered the opportunity to work in an office environment, a step up the career ladder from his "survival" jobs. A 6-week internship landed him at NOVA's Office of Community-Based Co-Enrollment Programs. It also got him noticed by the Workforce Development Division office next door.

Shortly after completing the Training Futures program, he was hired by NOVA. His smile and positive attitude made him a natural for working at the Workforce Development customer service window on the Alexandria campus.

Khalid is now an Education Support Specialist II, proctoring CLEP tests for the Workforce Division. Khalid has continued to work on his English with additional study at NOVA. He made the Deans' List in summer 2014 and is taking another writing course in fall 2014.

He plans to continue his education, to have his Moroccan transcript evaluated, and to pursue IT studies at the Master's level. He would recommend his path to other immigrants: prepare for additional study by improving your English language skills, then find a community college program like Training Futures that sets you up to enter the professional work world.



• CHAPTER 6 •

A Clear Roadmap

Recommendations for Action

This Guide has been designed to give you practical ideas, suggestions and resources you can use to help internationally-educated immigrants forge a viable career pathway in the U.S. using the credit and non-credit programs available at your community college and existing resources as a launch pad.

To stimulate a wider conversation at your college on how best to serve this population of students, here are some specific recommendations for action:

Build Alliances

Many foreign-educated immigrants working in survival jobs in your area may have never heard of your community college and have no idea what it has to offer them. Cultivate your relationships with immigrant-serving organizations in your community: refugee resettlement agencies, community-based organizations and service providers, adult literacy groups, local libraries, and houses of worship. Launch coordinated marketing campaigns for your college's programs in collaboration with these community-based organizations.

Enlist your faculty, current students and alumni to help spread the word in their respective immigrant communities about the kinds of degrees and certificate programs your college has to offer, and about the networking opportunities available on your campus.

Re-Visit Your Website

Your website is your college's public face. Make it easy for immigrants to find out what your college has to offer

them. Use Google Translate to share the information on your website with non-English speakers. Make sure that the landing page for your ESL courses displays links to other important programs at your college. Immigrant students need to know more than just how to apply to your college. They need to know how to get their foreign college transcript evaluated. They need to know about your continuing education programs, career counseling, student clubs, financial aid, mentoring, entrepreneurship, and workforce development programs. Celebrate immigrant student success stories and provide role models by profiling how students have navigated community college opportunities.

Take a Fresh Look at Your Admissions and Placement Process

Pay close attention to the processes used to admit, assess, and place foreign-educated students. Standardized tests are rarely the best way to gauge the readiness of foreign-educated immigrants for college in the U.S. Consider fleshing out your assessment and placement process with more comprehensive approaches, such as personal interviews and individualized prior learning assessments that build on these students' international education and professional work history. Encourage students to get started early on having their foreign educational credits formally evaluated.

Keep track of these students. Improve collection of immigrant student data by gathering and tracking the educational background and work history of students enrolled in your ESL programs so you can help them connect to your college's academic and career pathway resources.

Raise Awareness on Your Campus About These Students

Your college doesn't need a host of new counselors to advise foreign-educated immigrants. Identify advocates for immigrant students among your entire faculty (including adjuncts), college librarians, student support services staff, academic and career advising departments, and workforce development staff. These champions of immigrants can help raise awareness, promote services, and build collaborative networks both on and off-campus. Create email list-serves to keep these champions up-to-date on both credit and non-credit programs on your campus and to provide a vehicle for ongoing idea sharing and brainstorming. Offer periodic staff development workshops that tap into WES Global Talent Bridge's Pathways to Success seminars and its professional development webinars.

Showcase Your Career Pathways

A foreign-educated immigrant working in a survival job may not be able to make the leap back into a professional life in a single bound. But there are concrete steps they can take along the way. Many of the programs at your college can serve as important stepping stones to good jobs that offer better pay and important networking opportunities. Make sure your immigrant students are aware of the full range of your college's degree and certificate programs, on both the credit and the non-credit side of the house. Help them learn about any of your college's workforce development programs they may be eligible for.

Connect Immigrant Students To The Rest of Your Campus

Immigrant students can easily find themselves isolated from what's happening on the rest of the campus. It's important to connect them to existing resources on your campus that aren't yet on their radar screens. Visit their ESL classes to showcase the degrees and certificate programs your college has to offer. Put them in touch with your student clubs and mentoring programs. Make sure that if they are eligible, they know about the full range of available financial supports, from federal student aid to tuition vouchers through your local One-Stop Career Center.

Keep Tabs on What Other Community Colleges Are Doing

Community colleges all around the country are hotbeds of innovation. Many are looking for new and better ways to serve immigrant students. Join the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education. Stay abreast of new collaborative techniques for accelerating the speed at which immigrants learn English, like contextualized ESL courses and programs that encourage immigrant students to co-enroll in ESL and academic or occupational training courses.

Don't Do It Alone

Finally, don't forget there are national organizations dedicated to helping foreign-educated immigrants succeed in the U.S. Make sure you are aware of them. Sign up for their e-news alerts. Participate in their webinars. Link your college's website to theirs. Tell your students where to find the information and support they need — WES Global Talent Bridge is a good place to start. ✨

Community colleges are natural partners and allies in the effort to help foreign-educated immigrants move forward with their education in their communities and establish careers that build upon their previous experience.

— Paul Feltman, Director, WES Global Talent Bridge



Global Talent Bridge®

Global Talent Bridge is dedicated to helping foreign-educated immigrants fully utilize their talents and education in the United States. It is a program of World Education Services (WES), a non-profit organization that helps immigrants gain recognition of their academic qualifications earned abroad. Global Talent Bridge joins with institutional partners and community-based organizations to publish resources and train practitioners who work with skilled immigrants, and reaches out directly to immigrants through Pathways to Success® seminars and information on its website. In addition, Global Talent Bridge is a founding member and host of IMPRINT, a coalition of organizations that advocates for policies that facilitate skilled immigrant integration at the local, state and national levels.

www.globaltalentbridge.org

Community colleges are charged with supporting their local communities, so it stands to reason that they take the lead in providing services and programs that bridge education and training gaps for immigrants. Skilled immigrants represent an enormous untapped talent pool. Let's get them into appropriate career pathways that are commensurate with their education and experience so they're able to contribute to our local economies.

— Teresita Wisell, Executive Director of the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education (CCCIE) and Vice President and Dean for Continuing Education and Workforce Development, Westchester Community College



The Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education is a national network of community colleges and other organizations that have joined forces to increase educational and career opportunities for immigrant students. CCCIE's mission is to raise awareness of the important role community colleges play in immigrant education, and to promote and expand the range and quality of programs for immigrant students among community colleges around the country. National in scope, CCCIE receives primary financial support from the J.M. Kaplan Fund and is supported and led by Westchester Community College, in Valhalla, New York.

www.cccie.org