A TECHNICAL COLLEGE’S RESPONSE TO THE NEED FOR INTERNATIONALIZING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

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Part of the mission of the American Association of Community Colleges addresses the need for a curriculum emphasis on international and intercultural education (Wismer, 1994, p. 77). Considering that (a) 2-year colleges exist primarily to prepare students for jobs, (b) many American businesses operate in an international environment, and (c) a growing proportion of companies in the United States are foreign affiliated, the internationalization of our curriculums is necessary for the fulfillment of institutional missions of preparing the workforce for businesses. However, to fully internationalize college programs and services, the focus must be on more than courses and curriculums. The everyday life of college students, faculty, and staff must present evidence of cultural diversity. Internationalization, therefore, must be infused at every level of college activity. Such an infusion is occurring at Florence-Darlington Technical College in Florence, South Carolina. There are four broad categories within which activities are planned or are underway: (a) resource development, (b) awareness development and information dissemination, (c) faculty and staff development, and (d) curriculum development. The importance of the need for this South Carolina college to undertake internationalizing initiatives is underscored by the multicultural business environment that exists in the state. For many years, international investment has created record levels of new employment opportunities for South Carolinians and has contributed significantly to statewide economic and industrial growth. The economic impact of international business in the state is apparent. However, there is also a cultural impact that is less obvious, yet profound. These factors present some definite implications for the need to internationalize technical college programs and services.

Few would argue that the world has effectively become a smaller place. Telecommunications, computer and fiber optic networks, and high-speed conveyances have either eliminated or substantially les-
sened the barrier of distance that formerly encumbered our awareness of and our ability to participate in global activities. Moreover, the ethnic diversity that exists in most American towns has created a host of international communities. As American communities have undergone a demographic transition, so too has the business environment, where the levels of international trade and the production of goods and services in foreign countries have increased dramatically in recent years. The workplace for many Americans now reflects an ethnic diversity that is unprecedented and growing. This multicultural representation is an outcome not only of immigration and naturalization, but also of the expansion and relocation of foreign-affiliated–foreign-based businesses. As a consequence of these factors, there is now a social and economic interdependence within American communities and among worldwide communities. Becker (1989–1990) acknowledged that “international trade, foreign investment, immigration, and cultural exchange affect virtually every community and every segment of our society” (p. 89).

As citizens of the world, Americans must understand and interact with all cultures, many of which comprise local communities. Of equal importance is the need for American businesses to compete internationally. Isolationism is not an option for American companies. In fact, their survival is dependent on the conduct of business in the world marketplace. To participate effectively and affectively in the United States’ international communities, business arenas, and culturally diverse workplaces, Americans must be inculcated with an international perspective, an awareness and understanding of global issues, ethnic diversity, and the implications of global citizenship. Becker (1989–1990, p. 89) contended that “international literacy has become essential to the social and economic well-being of every community across the country.”

THE ROLE FOR 2-YEAR COLLEGES

There is no doubt that education has a major role to play in the preparation of American youth. More acute, though, is the need for higher education, specifically 2-year colleges, to equip students for immediate entry into the international workplace and to provide training for current workers. It is essential that students and business employees acquire the skills to interact and compete with international integrants. “The time is ripe for American community colleges to become more proactive and make a commitment to the economic development initiatives that will stimulate community growth—especially international education and training-for-trade programs” (Wismer, 1994, p. 77).

Part of the mission of the American Association of Community Colleges addresses the need for a curriculum emphasis on international
and intercultural education (Wismer, 1994). Considering the facts that (a) 2-year colleges exist primarily to prepare students for jobs, (b) many American businesses operate in an international environment, and (c) a growing proportion of companies in the United States are foreign affiliated, the internationalizing of community colleges' curriculums is necessary for the fulfillment of institutional missions to prepare the workforce for businesses. Indeed, according to Wismer (p. 78), “We have a responsibility to develop global awareness and work force skills among our students and business community.” Furthermore, Jaschik (1989, p. A17) reported that the National Governor’s Association declared “International education must be an integral part of the education of every student.” It was the association’s consensus that state governments must expand and improve international education programs in order to strengthen the linkages between individual states and other countries.

There are a number of options available for providing students with internationally oriented social and occupational skills. The integration of international issues, concepts, facts, and so forth into existing curricula is a primary strategy. Florence-Darlington Technical College in Florence, South Carolina, is engaged in several initiatives designed to internationalize its educational programs and services.

THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN SOUTH CAROLINA

The importance of the need for Florence-Darlington Technical College to undertake internationalizing initiatives is underscored by the multicultural business environment that exists in South Carolina. Indeed, the state is infused with multinational flavors, as evidenced by the many foreign-affiliated businesses located in South Carolina, such as Bosch, Hoechst, Schlumberger, Beneteau, Fuji, Hitachi, La Roche, Nanya, Isumi, Kunja, La Merle, and Ryobi (South Carolina State Development Board, 1993).

For many years, international investment has created record levels of new employment opportunities for South Carolinians and has contributed significantly to statewide economic and industrial growth. On the basis of data compiled by the South Carolina Department of Commerce (1994b), it is noted that between 1963 and 1993, approximately $10.7 billion was invested in the state by foreign-affiliated companies. Through these capital investments, almost 68,000 jobs were created. Between 1990 and 1993, the approximately $4 billion invested created about 13,000 new jobs.

During 1992, historical records for the state were set by foreign capital investments totaling almost $1.4 billion, creating more than 5,000 new jobs (South Carolina Department of Commerce, 1994a). For that year, international investment represented 48.5% of the total investments in 1992,
and the employment share of foreign-affiliated firms was 33%. Notably, three of the top five investment announcements and two of the top employment announcements were from international companies.

In 1993, foreign-affiliated firms announced more than $670 million in capital investment and created almost 3,400 new jobs. Foreign investments represented more than 26% of the total investments in 1993. Moreover, almost 27% of the new jobs created in 1993 were attributable to foreign firms. During this year, 2 of the top 10 capital investment announcements in state history were made by foreign firms (BMW and Hoffmann-La Roche). For 1993, the trend of diversification within the international sector continued. Investments were from Germany, Japan, Belgium, Luxembourg, Canada, Taiwan, United Kingdom, Venezuela, Switzerland, Netherlands, Italy, France, Denmark, Australia, Austria, Korea, Norway, and Sweden. As of 1992, there were a total of 457 international companies in South Carolina, representing 26 different countries. These facilities employed approximately 85,000 individuals.

Another factor contributing to the strength of the state’s international economy is the level of import and export activity, predominantly through the port of Charleston, the second largest port on the eastern seaboard. Of the businesses listed in the Industrial Directory of South Carolina (South Carolina State Development Board, 1991), approximately 110 companies were engaged in importing, 450 were engaged in exporting, and about 500 others were engaged in both.

The economic impact of international business in South Carolina is obvious. However, there is also a cultural impact that is less apparent, yet profound. Although most foreign-affiliated businesses bring their upper management teams from their native countries, the majority of employees are local. Considering the 85,000-plus jobs that exist in international firms in South Carolina, one can quickly deduce that there are definite implications for the need to internationalize technical college programs and services.

**RESPONSE TO THE NEED FOR INTERNATIONALIZING**

South Carolina’s Technical and Comprehensive Education System, composed of 16 technical colleges, played a significant role in attracting these companies to the state. Moreover, the individual colleges have contributed substantially to the preparation and upgrading of the workforce by providing specialized, industry-specific training and by developing new curricula. In fact, the technical college system educates the majority of the state’s total workforce (*Student competence in international education*, 1991).
In continuing to fulfill their mission of providing comprehensive technical education and industry training for South Carolina's workforce, 10 of the state's technical colleges formed the South Carolina International Education Consortium (SCIEC) in 1991 to address collectively the issues and implications of interacting in South Carolina's multinational communities, workplaces, and business marketplaces. The primary goal of the consortium's efforts is to enable students to achieve global competence through the internationalizing of technical college curricula. More specifically, the purpose of the consortium is to provide a broad framework within which consortium members will promote activities, programs, and resources to increase international awareness among and opportunities for college students, faculty, and staff. Activities are to include faculty and staff development, curriculum development, student activities and programs, and community outreach and partnerships.

The need for internationalized programs at Florence-Darlington Technical College is as consequential as it is statewide. The college serves a three-county area with approximately 250,000 residents. Although fewer than 1% of the total population is foreign born, the percentage of service-area residents who are of races other than White and Black has increased dramatically. According to 1990 census data (Carullo, 1993), between 1980 and 1990 the proportion of "other" races-nationalities rose by more than 71%. In comparison, during the same period, the statewide increase was more than 53%. Of interest, too, is the fact that, as of 1990, 16% of the Florence-Darlington Technical College service-area residents were from outside of South Carolina.

Regarding the economic aspect of international activities, there are 10 foreign-affiliated businesses in the three-county area that employ more than 2,800 individuals. These companies represent six different countries (France, Germany, and Taiwan are represented by one company each, Sweden and Switzerland are represented by two companies each, and three companies are based in the United Kingdom; South Carolina State Development Board, 1992).

Currently, about 1% of the student population at Florence-Darlington Technical College is foreign, primarily Hispanic and Asian. Although this represents a small proportion of the total student body, national trends and the increasing number of foreign-affiliated companies moving to South Carolina indicate that the percentage will continue to rise. In addition, an undetermined number of students were foreign born but are now considered local residents. Thus, these students are not classified as foreign.

In support of the college's students are faculty members of various origins. Collegewide there are 11 nationalities represented. Owing to
the growing diversity among the college's faculty and students and in
the service area communities and businesses, the mission statement
was revised in 1994 to add “The educational experience at Florence-
Darlington Technical College will have an international perspective which
will enhance the student's marketability in today's global economy.”

INTERNATIONALIZING ACTIVITIES

In the past, Florence-Darlington Technical College was involved in a
student exchange program and provided a study-abroad program for
faculty and administrators. Although these were important activities, they
represented the extent of efforts to introduce an international perspective
at the college. Unfortunately, as a result of obligatory budget cuts in recent
years, these activities were suspended. Today, though, the college is serious
about internationalizing curricula and providing services for its increas-
ingly diverse constituents. There are four broad categories within which
activities are planned or are underway: (a) resource development,
(b) awareness development and information dissemination, (c) faculty and
staff development, and (d) curriculum development.

Resource Development

On joining the SCIEC, a campus coordinator for international curricu-
lum development was appointed. This person chairs the newly formed
International Committee and serves as liaison to the state consortium.
The committee has been quite vigorous in initiating internationalizing
activities. The primary purposes of the International Committee are to
represent the interests of students and employees of foreign origin, to
plan internationally oriented programs and activities, and to provide
guidance for the internationalizing of courses and curricula.

To make available supporting information for faculty and staff use,
a variety of internationally related resources were collected and
catalogued. The library established an international education section,
and a directory of reference materials and faculty resources is being
assembled from which faculty members can draw to internationalize
their courses and programs. Nine periodicals, about 30 books, computer
software, videotapes, and other miscellaneous materials now exist in
the college library.

Awareness Development and Information Dissemination

Through discussions with some of the college's foreign students, com-
mittee representatives identified overseas contacts, and the college is
now actively recruiting students from Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries into the Aircraft Maintenance Technology program from which three students from Turkey graduated in 1993. Foreign embassies and other international agencies will be contacted to add Florence-Darlington Technical College to various lists of colleges for foreign students. In addition, a formal articulation agreement was established with a college in Canada, and three Canadian students attended the College during 1996–1997 and took courses that will help them earn certificates in their respective curricula. Contacts have been established with college representatives in China and Trinidad.

The college hosted a Japanese intern for 6 months in 1992–1993. Many curriculum courses were enriched through her topical presentations. She also taught special continuing education courses on cooking, fashions, architecture, and so forth and offered workshops on a variety of subjects for college faculty and staff.

An International Student Club was established in 1994–1995. The majority of foreign students at the college have been surveyed about their interest in joining, and college faculty of “other” nationalities have been contacted to solicit their involvement. In addition to planning culturally oriented college–community events and programs, the club contributes information for publication in both the student and the employee newsletters. Featured in the newsletters are the college’s progress toward internationalizing curriculums and the promotion of special internationally related activities.

Continuing education classes will be conducted regularly for the college service-area community. Offerings include conversational foreign language training in Spanish, German, Chinese, Japanese, and English (for foreign residents). An international sign language course is planned. Sessions on cultural differences are provided as part of the language courses. Also, representatives from foreign-based firms in the college service area will be invited to campus to present information on jobs at their companies as well as on the cultures of their native countries.

Last, the college, in cooperation with the Florence Family YMCA, has hosted the Florence International Festival in the fall for the past 4 years. The festivals included dancing, singing, arts and crafts, cultural attire, and a variety of ethnic foods. In 1993, approximately 1,200 people attended the event. In 1994, the attendance almost doubled, to more than 2,000 participants; and in 1996 the attendance exceeded 2,400. During these years, 15 countries or nationalities were represented. As an outcome of this successful event, the college is considering featuring ethnic food on a weekly basis in the cafeteria.
Faculty and Staff Development

A variety of faculty and staff development opportunities are provided to nurture an international awareness and appreciation among the college community. An initial effort involved sponsorship of a cultural diversity workshop on campus for all college employees. In addition, a nationally recognized speaker on cultural diversity presented a half-day program as part of in-service training.

A faculty foreign exchange program at Florence-Darlington Technical College has been reestablished. During 1996–1997, faculty members from Marketing, Criminal Justice, and Paralegal were exchanged with their counterparts at Niagara College. As a result of their studies abroad, courses will be enriched by their experiences and new insights. Faculty will be better informed about international issues, and they will be more knowledgeable about methods of infusing the curricula with a global perspective. Through the SCIEC, the college sponsored faculty members for participation in statewide cultural workshops to discuss the history and culture of particular areas of the world. A president's exchange visit is also being discussed. This activity will be in addition to other visits the president makes in support of the training needs of foreign-affiliated businesses in the area.

Notable, too, is a professional development opportunity for foreign language faculty. A workshop on oral proficiency testing will be conducted specifically for this group, and graduate courses on the following topics will be offered by a senior institution: current trends in foreign language methodology, integrating technology in the foreign language classroom, and the role of culture in the foreign language classroom.

Curriculum Development

Continuing the focus on foreign language offerings, existing courses will be improved and offerings expanded. A plan for the improvement of foreign language education will be developed as a result of classroom observations, faculty and student interviews, and materials review. This will be particularly beneficial considering the fact that the number and types of foreign language course offerings have been recently expanded.

New interdisciplinary courses will be implemented, existing courses will be revised to include international modules, and annotated bibliographies will be available for use across the curriculums. For example, a module was written for Engineering Graphics I to present a series of sample problems showing how international content can be introduced into the curriculum. Exercises in measuring and calculating areas are
typical elements of the Engineering Graphics I course. However, instead of measuring and performing calculations on objects that students observe every day, the students are asked to measure and perform calculations on objects that are international, not local. For example, students are asked to measure distances on maps of various countries, and for calculations involving areas, the students might be asked to calculate the floor area of the Taj Mahal. This method of wording problems to make the students think globally can easily be adopted to most courses. In fact, instructors in various curricula, from sociology to engineering technology, have adopted this methodology.

Last, two new courses reflecting international themes have been developed: Industrial Psychology and Global Women's History. Industrial Psychology is a course designed to prepare the student to work within culturally diverse business environments. Global Women's History is designed to make the student aware of the world history of women and their roles in society from ancient to modern times. Both Industrial Psychology and Global Women's History will be taken by a cross-section of curriculum students, and therefore these courses will have a broad impact on the student population.

SUMMARY

When one ponders the notion of internationalizing, the focus is usually on integrating international content into courses and curriculums, developing new internationally oriented courses or course modules, or both. However, to fully internationalize college programs and services, the everyday life of college students, faculty, and staff must present evidence of cultural diversity. Internationalization must, therefore, be infused at every level of college activity. This infusion is occurring at Florence-Darlington Technical College through activities and programs such as student and faculty exchanges, by offering ethnic food in the cafeteria, by providing ongoing faculty and staff development activities, and through the student and employee newsletters.

Steven Muller of the 21st Century Foundation (cited in Desruisseaux, 1993, p. A39) charged that “the greatest opportunity to contribute to America’s future, is to help build global awareness into all aspects of the college curriculum.” Florence-Darlington Technical College has accepted this challenge and has proudly exceeded meeting the need for providing an international perspective by internationalizing curricula and by offering various other internationally oriented programs and services.

As a result of internationalizing its educational programs, students at Florence-Darlington Technical College will receive an education that
prepares them to more fully participate in a multicultural and economically integrated world and to compete in a world marketplace.

REFERENCES


