

# **Skyline College**

## *International Student Program*

### **Program Review**

### **Executive Summary**



#### **Short Summary of Findings**

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The International Student Program at Skyline College has contributed to a global perspective on campus. This program has been successful in offering an American educational experience to students from all over the globe. Students have benefited from a small-personalized program to assist them in achieving their educational goals. In addition, to bringing a global perspective to campus, these students contribute valuable and sorely needed revenue for the district.

International students represent 25 different countries each semester with the majority of students coming from Asia. These have been increases in students, from Europe and the Philippines. The program serves both men and women in equal numbers. Students range in age from 18-22 up to ages 40-49. The majority of students are in the 18-28 age range. All students are high school graduates and some have completed a foreign college degree. Over half the students choose to complete an Associate's degree prior to transferring to a four-year college or university.

After the September 11<sup>th</sup> tragedy, international student's applications and numbers dropped. Concerns about personal safety here in the U.S., fingerprinting, profiling and the implementation of a SEVIS student-tracking system have contributed to this decline. The program has seen a drop in program participants and is doing everything possible to rebuild the international student population.

However, with the current budget climate, loss of full time staff, counseling time and use of the budget discretionary for staff only, a rebuilding of the program has not been easy. Running the program without the necessary resources, which were available in previous years, has curtailed recruitment, travel, development of new articulation agreements/ materials and outreach activities.

Several programmatic suggestions have been made in an attempt to restore and rebuild the program. A realization and appreciation of increased financial resources would lead to increased program viability. An increase in staff time would allow the program to respond to all inquiries and process information in a time efficient manner. Central location of staff would also contribute to program effectiveness.

The Skyline College International Student Program will continue to operate within the budget limitations and interact with all federal national and local agencies to obtain and pass along all current relevant immigration information. This effort combined with strong, on-going counseling services should allow the program to continue on a limited budget. The International Student Program staff continues to be committed to providing quality services and will make every attempt to work with the college in an attempt to provide direction in the attainment of students achieving their educational goals. Advocacy for program needs will continue across all levels spectrums of the San Mateo Community College District.

### **Three Strengths of the Program**

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- Small program easier to provide personal service.
- Experienced counseling faculty to provide service.
- Program has adhered to all new federal and immigration regulations. (Current in all area)

### **Three Suggestions for Improvement**

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- Increased budget for outreach and update of materials.
- One full time counselor and one full time staff assistant.
- Better program location/ office structure.

## **PART A: Overview of Program**

1. State the goals/focus of this program and how the program contributes to the mission and priorities of the College and District.

The goal/focus of the Skyline College International Student Program is to provide students who reside outside of the United States with the opportunity for a cultural exchange to occur in an educational setting. This program provides international students the unique experience of temporarily living in the United States for the purpose of obtaining an Associate's degree/ Certificate and/or completing lower division general education courses to complete the transfer process towards a four-year college or university. The educational setting provided by Skyline allows international students to bring their cultural background into an American classroom. The exposure of ideas and perspective between American students and international students serves two purposes:

- 1) It provides all students with the chance to participate in an exchange of cultural values and ideas.
- 2) It provides international students the opportunity to experience American culture first hand in an American classroom.

Throughout the world an American education is highly regarded in the world and many international students seek the opportunity to pursue. By having a classroom filled with members of the world's population, the international student program provides the perfect vehicle for providing learning centered education that is culturally socially and rich. The international student program provides the campus with the chance to build communication and educational bridges for both American and international students.

2. Discuss how this program coordinates, impacts, and/or interacts with other programs in the College.

The International Student Program at Skyline College interacts and coordinates with almost every other program on campus. International students are accepted into all academic, transfer programs and all vocational programs except Respiratory Therapy and Emergency Medical Technician. Due to the increased applications from resident students in many programs the international student program has had to carefully interact with programs and departments to monitor program availability for international students.

International students participate in all aspects of campus life. Students from other countries have served on the Associated Student Governing Council, participated in varsity sports, worked as student assistant on campus in a variety of work sites. As full time students, international students are enrolled in all courses taught in Skyline's Curriculum. These students to utilize and receive student support services, including the Learning Center, Library, Transfer and

Career Center, and Mesa. International students participate in the matriculation process and avail themselves of, psychological services, the Computer Center, Honor's Transfer Program, WEB Smart, DSPS, and the Health Office.

The international student program office provides advocacy for students so that they can achieve their educational goals. During the initial specialized orientation for international students, students are provided with a campus directory and tour of the campus so that they can locate needed services. As district students, they also interconnect with services offered at College of San Mateo and Canada College. At times, students use college resources after the completion of their educational program.

3. If the program utilizes advisory boards and/or professional organizations, describe their roles.

The Skyline College International Student Program is very fortunate to utilize key groups in the coordination and utilization of information pertinent to the program. The San Mateo Community College District International Student Advisors and staff meet every other month to problem solve and support district programs. The role of these groups is to implement each college following program new federal guidelines and procedures. This has become even more critical due to the new SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System). This new reporting system has been extremely complicated to implement and maintain. Due to the newness of student data input, the District Advisors group has been a place to share concerns, get feedback and to support each other during this transitional period. The importance of this supportive and collaborative environment cannot be stressed enough.

Another group, which acts as a clearinghouse for immigration and international student issues, is the Bay Area International Student Round Table. This group is composed of a majority of language school, community colleges, all universities, California state universities, private colleges, and vocational schools. Meetings are held every other month on different sites to interpret and discuss difficult immigration issues that pertain to students. The Bay Area is known for the expertise available on many of our local colleges and university. UC Berkeley, Stanford and San Francisco City College are examples of some campuses of the larger schools that participate in the round table meetings. They share their expertise with respect to legal and programmatic issues. In addition, several International Student Advisors work closely with Department of Homeland Security – Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement Services. This government agency has been restructured and revamped after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. In the past, international student advisors had a contact person with whom to review difficult cases. However, this service has been curtailed; thus, groups such as District International Student Advisors and Bay Area International Students Advisors play a key role in keeping programs current and up-to-date.

Skyline College has been a member of the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors (NAFSA) since the early 90's. This nationwide group

also operates on the regional level. Its role is to provide members with the most current trends, rules and regulations regarding international students. They hold regional training workshops, professional development seminars and have a direct link to the Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. They produce essential resource materials, which may be found in every international student advisor's office. There are both regional and a once a year national conference that includes international educators from all over the world. These conferences provide excellent networking opportunities and attract people from all areas of international education.

4. Explain how this program meets the needs of our diverse community.

By accepting international students into our college, are adding to the diversity of the student population at Skyline, adding richness to all classes and programs and promoting an environment of mutual respect and understanding. Currently we have 25 countries represented in our program. The global perspective that international students bring to the classroom can contribute to open a communication between all students. This mutual understanding leads to a mutual tolerance in the exchange of ideas and perspectives. This benefits both American and international students. In order to promote mutual respect between cultures, there is a critical need to provide the educational opportunity for an exchange of ideologies.

Many world leaders have been former international students and have demonstrated an appreciation and understanding of American cultures and values. American students benefit from meeting and establishing friendships with men and women from all over the world. Both sets of students can become enlightened by the similarities and differences that exist between cultures.

There is also a benefit to faculty and staff who work with international students. Working with a variety of different cultures can expose staff to becoming better equipped in understanding that each culture has subtle and overt differences which must be respected and valued. Whether there is a language issue or misinterpretation in communication, all people need to be treated with respect and dignity. International students educate us by the exposure of a different perspective and approach. Through adding an international dimension to classroom and campus community, the exchange of a global perspective, benefits all parties both on campus and off.

5. If the program has completed a previous self-study, evaluate the progress made toward previous goals.

The International Student Program has never completed a formal self-study. In 1997 the International Student Program was fortunate to have a full time counselor and full time staff assistant. Prior to that time the program had been coordinated by a part time counselor. With the addition of new staff the program

had the opportunity to grow in student numbers, update procedures, and forms, and conduct outreach (which included international travel) and recruitment. The program was given a discretionary budget of \$20,000.

The current budget crises combined with the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack and the implementation of SEVIS has created major changes in the program. Student enrollment is down and the majority of the current discretionary budget covers the cost of a permanent part time, 18 hours per week, staff assistant. Counseling time has been reduced due to the need to have the International Student Counselor provide general counseling and outreach activities curtailed. The goal of the program is to return to a full service program with full time staff.

## **PART B: Curriculum**

1. Describe how the courses offered in the program meet the needs of the discipline(s) and the students. (This may be answered through descriptive narrative evaluations or quantitative research).

In the 1980's a CRER 650, International Student Seminar was offered to all incoming international students. In an attempt to decrease student costs, this seminar was replaced with a one day, five-hour orientation session, followed by one hour initial counseling appointment.

The orientation presents a variety of topics, including, maintaining status as an international student, federal immigrations regulations, details about student life on Skyline campus, campus services, student responsibilities, fees, forms and transfer and program information. Each student is given a packet of information, which includes materials to assist the student in adjusting to life on an American community college campus.

With the implementation of the SEVIS System, monitoring full time student status has become even more critical. Information for each international student, both personal and academic must be entered into the government tracking system on an on-going basis. All international student programs have had to become extremely vigilant in the processing of information. Failure to do so could result in an institution losing its certification to admit and enroll F1 International Students.

2. State how the program has remained current in the discipline(s).

Beginning in the 1990's Skyline's International Student Program Advisor attended every possible service center site visit, workshop, seminar and conference regarding changes in international student education. This focus has been extremely important in keeping abreast of on-going changes in the federal regulations and the manner in which programs provide services to international students.

Prior to September 11<sup>th</sup>, most international student advisors were opposed to a government tracking system of F-1 Visa students. For years the tracking system was debated and reviewed. Once the terrorist attacks occurred, the tracking system was implemented. The new system required all schools to be re-certified and included a site visit and file review from a Department of Homeland Security agent. Through the participation in the learning and design process, Skyline College completed its site visit and file review on March 29<sup>th</sup> 2004. A new certification visit was conducted. If we had not participated in the previous trainings or were unaware of current requirements, the college might have been lost of the program.

3. If the student population has changed, state how the program is addressing these changes.

The International Student population has changed significantly in the past several years. Students from such countries as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iran, Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries have diminished up. The political climate in the U.S. and abroad has contributed to this decline in numbers.

When one combines the tighter restrictions on Visa approvals, fingerprinting, political climate, increase tuition and Health Insurance costs and personal safety issues, one can better understand the reason for the decrease in international student applications.

Skyline continues to receive a large number of students from Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Myanmar. The program has seen a slight increase in students from South America and Europe. This program continues to work with agencies such the International Education Service in Los Angeles to respond to world wide educational referrals. The program also uses an extensive website to put forth current information. Every e-mail, phone call, referral and inquiry is responded to as quickly as possible. By keeping the website current we our web site hits increased from 1605 in 1999 to 5,248 in 2004. Thus, the information is being accessed and utilized by students on a regular basis. The program will continue to keep information current and accessible.

4. All courses in this program should be review and, if appropriate, modified every six years. If this has not occurred, please list the courses and explain.

There have been no recent courses in the program, thus no review or modifications have occurred.

5. If extended accreditation or certification is required, please state the certifying agency and status of the program.

All international student programs must be certified by the Department of Homeland Security. As mentioned above all three campuses have completed submission of the Form I-17, which includes specific campus information and allows the school to enroll F-1 students. There is also an immigration certification fee of \$580.00. The site visit program and file review have been completed. College of San Mateo, Canada College and Skyline have completed all steps mentioned above and are waiting for final approval.

It is important to remember that the Immigration and Naturalization Service has gone through a major re-organization and there may be new changes to current rules and regulations.

6. Discuss plans for future review and program modification.

In the future the International Student Program would like to move in the direction of consolidate logy program into one office with one full time program coordinator and full time staff. Currently, the program is separated; one part of the program is in the counseling office and all paper work, program files and student files are housed in Admissions and Records with the part time staff assistant. The ideal situation would be to follow College of San Mateo's model that has two offices connected where students can access information and staff at the same time. The lack of space at Skyline may be a factor in the achievement of this goal. Interested students would be better served if there was "one stop" for information. This would also compliment our Student Services One Stop philosophy.

The International Student Program will continue to evolve and will maintain a constant review of services in an attempt to continue to provide excellent service to students seeking the F-1 Visa.

### **PART C: Faculty and Staff**

1. List major development activities completed by faculty and staff in this program in the last six years and state what development is needed or proposed by faculty in this program.

As mentioned above, the preparation and implementation of the SEVIS System has been the largest and most important recent activity. The tracking and accountability of each student has never been so structured in the history of the program. The time spent on learning, utilizing and training new staff to use the system has been enormous. There are constant changes and upgrades to the system. Fortunately, there is an excellent help-line staff to assist with difficult situations. It is important to note that the immigration advising that is part of this program plays a critical role in the service provided to students. The consequences of misadvising students could result in an immediate departure from the United States or a bas from entering the United States. Thus, the Skyline

program must be vigilant in keeping student records up to date and accurate. New immigration rules and regulations must be adhered to and followed. We will continue to receive current immigration rules and regulations in an effort to better serve our students.

Since the time the International Student Program began in 1988 there has never been an inspection by any governmental agencies. The program has been run in adherence to all federal regulations and makes every attempt to provide current information regarding immigration issues.

Ten student folders were to be inspected and were prepared for the agent's review. The significance of this visit was simple; if Skyline College were not recertified, it would lose its ability to enroll international students (F-1 Visa holders). This would be a major loss to the campus, not only in terms of lost revenue, but for the loss of the global perspective for our students.

Although we were one of the many schools waiting for approval, the program was ready, for inspection. The necessary paperwork and forms, along with available resource materials, including recent and current manuals, federal regulations and the security of files were examined and found intact. It was a proud moment for the coordinator who was very grateful for the assistance received from staff in all parts of the campus. This was the culmination of several years of work.

In the wake of the site visit, a closer review of the program revealed several areas, which could be developed and improved. As mentioned above, this program has shifted from a paper-based program to an increasing use of on-line materials. The program application forms, including a request for service, health insurance are currently available online. However, the program needs to update and re-vamp immigrations forms and include those on our web page. The program needs to expand its webpage to include vital information new students can utilize.

In prior years, the International Student Program had a full time staff assistant to keep all student information current. During that time all handouts, brochures, flyers and student orientation kits were packed with information. When the reduction of the staff assistant's time, the complexity, design and quality of these materials has diminished. The staff assistant shuttles between Admissions and Records and the International Student Program to keep in contact with the coordinator. The majority of time is spent on managing the new applications and current students.

2. Describe the orientation process for new faculty and staff (include student workers such as tutors and aides).

The program has had only two full time faculty members coordinating the International Student Program. Orientation for new faculty includes professional training with the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors. This comprehensive training gives the faculty the basis of international student advising. It is important to remember parameters that this program is not only

academic advising, but knowledge and mastery of federal immigration rules and regulations.

Cultural competence, or the ability to interact in a respectful, sensitive and inclusive manner, is another important requirement for all new staff. One must be comfortable, respectful and open to all members of our global society. Patience and tolerance are some of the first prerequisites for anyone working in this field.

Both new faculty and staff will need to be trained to work with the SEVIS system. There are several excellent trainings offered and current manuals are available. SEVIS users have access to an outstanding help line and the staff that manage the phones provide assistance with both technical and data information.

Staff working with international students has experience in all functions of admissions and records. Knowledge of the Banner system, WebSmart, WebExtender, and other data entry and retrieval are also important. Use of these systems must be presented to new staff due to the admission component to the staff assistant job.

It should be noted that during the 2003-2004 academic year the program secured a permanent part time classified position. This position was filled until August of 2004 but vacated to July. The replacement for this position has stepped into this new area and has provided invaluable assistance to the program.

3. If recruitment of new and/or diverse faculty is needed, suggest recruitment techniques.

One of the best recruitment techniques would be advertising on the Bay Pier Website. Institutions utilize this service to attract international education specialists. A diverse faculty and staff who are well prepared and trained in the areas mentioned above would provide an excellent service to the students, college and the district.

## **PART D: Facilities, Equipment, Materials and Maintenance**

1. Discuss the effectiveness of the facilities, equipment, equipment maintenance, and materials for the program to meet its goal and focus. Included if they impact success and if they are accessible to all students.

The program shares some equipment with the Admissions and Records department at Skyline College. The copy machines and laser printer are regularly maintained by the college technical support staff. Prior to budget restrictions, the program had been able to purchase a few equipment items, which soon will require replacement or repair.

The design and creation of new materials will add to program effectiveness. Several handouts and our International Student handbook need to be updated. The program brochure needs to be re-vamped and re-printed. In the

future the student application will also need to be re-structured to include more SEVIS information. Once our budget is restored these tasks will be completed.

2. List projected needs.

As mentioned above, a consolidation of the two separated offices would lead to providing a better service to students. Also, funding is needed to cover not just staff time, but recruitment, which includes travel, outreach and materials. The program also needs a fax machine, maintenance of computers, a laser printer, small office zerox machines, a shredder, and regular office supplies such as paper, folders, and binders.

3. Describe the use of technology in the program and discuss if technology is current and comparable to other college and business or industry.

The use of the computer technology, i.e. Banner and SEVIS, are operated using the most current versions. Large colleges tend to use a batch version of SEVIS; however, Skyline uses the real time system, where student information is individually entered in the system.

4. If appropriate, describe the support the program receives from industry. If the support is not adequate, what is necessary to improve that support?

The International Student Program receives strong support from the International Education Industry.

## **PART E: Budget Request**

1. What resources (staff, facilities, equipment and/or supplies) will be needed in the next six years?

The ideal arrangement would be to have a two-office location, one for the staff-assistant and one for the program coordinator/counselor. All files, paperwork, rules and regulations would be in one location. This developmental step would be the first of many. The next would be to hire an additional counselor with immigration experience to allow the counselor/coordinator travel, tries to do recruitment and to attend trainings and conferences. Thus, the program would become a stronger, more attractive, comprehensive program. With a more substantial budget, increased space and availability of staff this goal could be accomplished.

2. If appropriate, discuss methods the program could share resources with other programs in the College and District.

There have been recent discussions at the district regarding the consolidation of the three International Student Programs into one. These discussions have been the result of a decrease in district international student numbers, student referrals, loss of budget resources and loss of full time staff. Canada and Skyline are basically one-person programs and these two schools have the fewest number of students. College of San Mateo has a two person (full time) staff and has twice the number the amount of F-1 students. However their numbers are also down.

There has been a major loss of referrals from English as Second Language Schools, due to the certification process and the overall decline of international applicants. This, combined with the high cost of living in the bay area, increased tuitions costs, statewide educational budget crises and the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack have made discussions regarding program consolidation important. The three colleges only receive 8% of all revenue brought in by this student population. An increase in this allocation would enable more direct services for students and program support.

All three programs compliment each other in terms of student referrals and services. One concern about the possible consolidation would be the loss of the personalized self-contained service that is currently being provided. There is a reluctance to consolidate programs for the following reasons: students can begin their studies in a smaller program and began their American educational experience with on-site personal guidance; all programs are self-contained and emphasize personal service; the SEVIS systems need to be frequently updated and require constant data input and programs are intergraded with other campus services and each student must be accountable to the school that issued their I-20. Each school would need to consolidate all information regarding their program and somehow manage all student information.

There is also reluctance to consolidate because each school wants to maintain program uniqueness. There are experienced staff on each campus that take pride in providing quality, personalized service. There is also a campus climate which values international programs and there is concern that this value would be lost.

Aside from program consolidation, there are other ideas regarding how resources might be share. Each campus in the SMCCD has articulation agreements in place for language schools. These agreements allow schools to waive TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) requirements. The bonds between programs and language schools need to be solidified and shared. This will help increase student referrals, which strengthen program numbers.

There also has to be a better connection between Skyline International Student Program and other campus programs, particularly the International Trade Program. Application packets should be included on all international trips and located in a variety of campus locations. When there is only one full-time faculty member running the international student program, a great deal of time is spent on serving students and there is insufficient time for program development. Currently a better plan for this development is being discussed and designed.

## **PART F: Access**

1. Discuss how and to what extent has this program contributed to expanding access to students.
  - Increased use of website
    - All program forms and application are on-line.
    - All e-mails inquiries are responded to in a timely fashion.
  - Expanding use of articulation agreements with Bay Area Language schools.
  - Foreign newspapers ads.
  - Expanded use of program information in Guides to American Educational Institutions. (Available overseas)
  - Extension of application deadline to accommodate more applicants.

## **PART G: Student Satisfaction Survey**

The program is in the process of designing a student satisfaction questionnaire. Information regarding the status of this questionnaire will be presented during the program presentation.