



# Supporting International Education Opportunities for California Community Colleges Students

Prepared by:

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## INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

International education is essential to developing culturally competent and globally informed leaders. Such education expands the perspectives of Americans, preparing future leaders to work across languages, cultures, and borders to solve global challenges. International students benefit California community colleges by bringing unique perspectives, providing cultural exchange, and enhancing academic and cultural richness.

In 2021, the U.S. Departments of State and Education issued a [joint statement](#) supporting a renewed commitment to international education and highlighting the many benefits of international education to American and international students, colleges and communities, and local economies. The report highlights the need to exchange people and ideas to address shared challenges, enhance American prosperity, contribute to global peace and security, and concludes that:

*All Americans need to be equipped with global and cultural competencies to navigate the ever-changing landscapes of education, international business, scientific discovery and innovation, and the global economy.*

Providing opportunities for international education supports the goals of Vision 2030 to expand equity in access, success, and support for current and prospective California community college students. As described below, California community colleges have become recognized leaders in international education.

## STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS AT CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

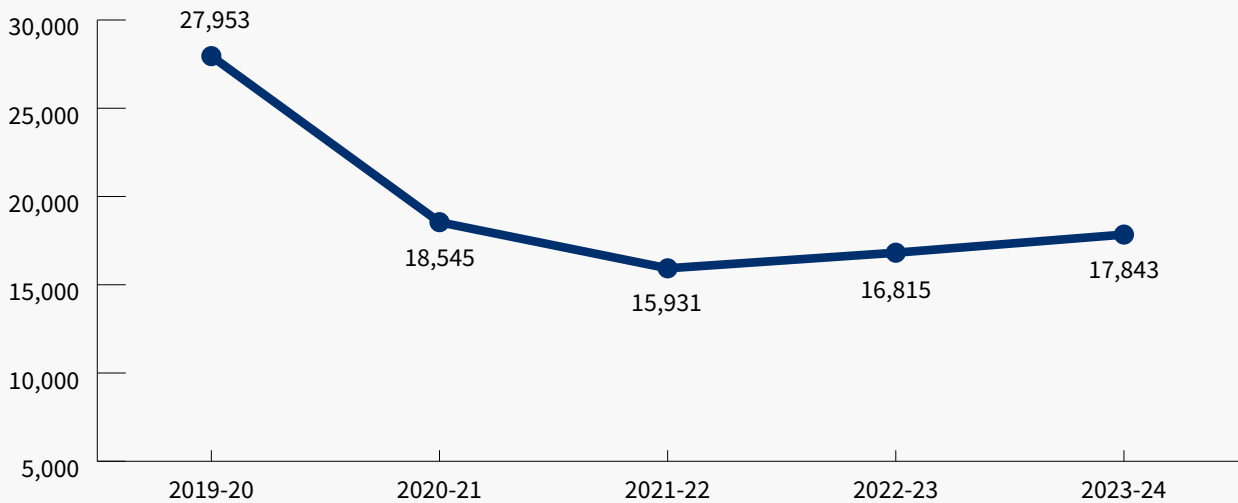
Many California community colleges offer study abroad programs that provide California community college students with the opportunity to travel and learn in foreign countries. For example, San Diego City College offers [intersession programs](#) in Spain and Costa Rica. Glendale offers [winter programs](#) in Italy, Austria, and the Czech Republic, and summer programs in Bali, Armenia, and Greece. Several consortia, including the [Northern California Study Abroad Consortium](#) and [California Colleges for International Education](#), support California community colleges in establishing and enhancing international programs. California community college study abroad programs have been the subject of [comprehensive research](#) which found that California community college students who study abroad have higher outcomes in retention, degree and certificate completion, and transfer rates.

## FACULTY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP

The [Education Partnership for Internationalizing Curriculum](#) (EPIC) Community College Faculty Fellowship program brings together a cohort of community college faculty and academic staff from various disciplines (humanities, social sciences, mathematics, hard sciences, international programs, etc.) to work collaboratively with Stanford staff for one academic year (August-May) on self-designed projects aimed at internationalizing core curricula and developing global competencies among community college students.

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Many California community colleges prioritize enrollment of international students, with more than 17,000 international students in 2023-24. California community colleges have become so well-known internationally that national organizations have [ranked](#) the top California community colleges for international students. Many California community colleges feature [international student programs](#) and promote themselves to international students as means to secure upward economic mobility, transfer to four-year universities, and experience living in the United States. At the most popular California community colleges, international students make up 7% of the student body.



Source: Chancellor’s Office Management Information System Data

# CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS AT CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

California community colleges have created numerous programs that enable students and faculty to exchange ideas, develop global relationships, and build a sense of cultural belonging. Such examples include:

## Partnership with Kansai University

In 2024, College of the Canyons [formed a partnership](#) with the Kansai University of International Studies in Kobe, Japan. The partnership allows students and faculty from each institution to travel to their counterparts for education, cultural exchange, language learning, and personal development. The program identifies key focus areas for each session based on student and faculty interest. The partnership lasts through 2029.

## All-African Diaspora Education Summit

Since 2022, the All-African Diaspora Education Summit has brought over 600 educators and administrators, primarily connected to California community colleges and in partnership with the [African American Male Education Network and Development](#) (A2MEND) organization, to Ghana to learn about African-centered education, Pan-Africanism, and Black student success. Through professional and personal development, participants gained new tools and opportunities to enhance the success of Black California community college students. The effort led to new initiatives to boost Black student success and increase African-centric education at several California community colleges including Cerritos College, Long Beach City College, Mission College, Orange Coast College and Santa Monica College. Another summit is planned for 2026.

## Korean Studies Associate of Arts

Los Angeles City College (LACC) is the only community college in the United States to offer an [Associate of Arts in Korean Studies](#), as well as a Certificate of Achievement in Korean Language and Civilization. LACC is also finalizing an agreement with the Yonsei University Korean Language Institute that will allow Yonsei international students to receive credit for prior learning at LACC for the language skills they learn at Yonsei. The Korean AA program focuses on understanding Korean language, culture, and civilization, and is designed to prepare students for university transfer and to support numerous career paths. The program is one of the top-ranked Korean studies programs in the country.

## Pan-African Virtual College

The Pan-African Virtual College seeks to establish a virtual college that connects California community colleges and Ghanaian higher education institutions, fosters cultural understanding, promotes African-centered knowledge, and provides high-quality, accessible education. In partnership with the African American Male Education Network and Development, the effort includes a consortium of California community colleges that will partner with Ghanaian institutions to use the California Virtual College platform to support bi-directional faculty and student exchanges and provide African-centered pedagogy in lower division and career technical education courses.

## CONCLUSION

With increasing focus on international education through Vision 2030, the California Community Colleges system will continue to build on the foundation of these and many other cultural opportunities. A design team for the Pan African Virtual College began on-going meetings on June 4, 2025, with representatives from universities in Ghana and California Community Colleges leaders. As these and other opportunities develop, the California Community Colleges will continue to embed international education into colleges' missions and prepare students as global citizens to secure upward economic mobility in an international marketplace.