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Two New Books Feature Community Colleges' Positive Impact on Immigrant Integration and Postsecondary Success

Valhalla, NY---Community colleges serve as a critical gateway for many immigrants and refugees looking to gain an economic foothold in the labor market and integrate into the social fabric of their communities. At a time when our nation is facing bitter political divides over its immigration policies and gridlock at the federal level, the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education (CCCIE) is pleased to announce the publication of two new books that tell a different story.

The books, co-published by Rowman & Littlefield and the American Association of Community Colleges, showcase the exemplary initiatives of CCCIE member community colleges and their partners working together at local and state levels to integrate immigrants and refugees by helping them further their education, succeed in training programs, and launch new careers in high-demand fields. The two volumes also illustrate the various ways immigrant and refugee students enrich campus life, strengthen communities, and benefit the economy.

[CCCIE](#), founded in 2008 and comprising community colleges and other professional organizations committed to building the capacity of colleges to advance immigrant and refugee integration through education and workforce development, is hosted and led by Westchester Community College in Valhalla, New York. “Our commitment to the local immigrant community is reflected nationally through our college’s role as the host institution for the CCCIE,” notes Belinda S. Miles, president of Westchester Community College, whose chapter on the role of leadership appears in one of the books.

“CCCIE is an important vehicle through which our sector has stepped out as a leader in the national arena on the topic of immigrant education,” according to Miles. In her chapter, she writes that the college’s Gateway Center, which opened in 2010, serves as a “central starting point for new Americans. Providing intentional support to this population transitioned the college from being a gatekeeper of educational and workforce opportunities to becoming a bridge builder.”

Innovative and practical models of change

Community colleges have faced significant challenges in adopting, sustaining, and scaling programs that successfully align immigrant and refugee education and workforce development initiatives into the college system as a whole. The two companion volumes—[*Working toward an Equitable and Prosperous Future for All: How Community Colleges and Immigrants Are Changing America*](#) and—[*Working Together: How Community Colleges and Their Partners Help Immigrants Succeed*](#) share innovative and practical models of change with an emphasis on what makes programs work, as well as the most critical challenges. The books include a foreword by Walter Bumphus, president and CEO of AACC. “The books illustrate how initiatives to serve a growing, diverse immigrant student population not only reflect a college’s commitment to diversity and inclusion, but also contribute toward—and, in fact, are critical to increasing—overall student retention, college completion, and employment outcomes,” said Bumphus.

The two volumes, co-edited by Jill Casner-Lotto, CCCIE director, with Teresita B. Wisell, CCCIE executive director and vice president for workforce development and community education at Westchester Community College, include 23 chapters written by community college educators who serve on CCCIE’s Blue Ribbon Panel and other leading experts and practitioners in the fields of immigrant and refugee education, workforce development, and integration. “The books capture the expertise and dedication of colleagues across the country in community colleges, community agencies, and nonprofit organizations who have joined us in our work. It is through our collective efforts that our immigrant and refugee students have found their success,” notes Wisell.

Executive-level and front-line perspectives

The books address immigrant and refugee student success from different points of view, examining top-level executive strategies and best practices in the classroom, workplace, and community. Perspectives of senior leaders, faculty, students, and front-line staff are shared, and partnerships with a diverse group of stakeholders are described. Recommendations for actions relate to principles described in CCCIE’s [Presidents for New American Success Pledge](#).

“We believe these two books provide a valuable set of resources illustrating case-study examples that have strengthened educational and career opportunities for a diverse immigrant and refugee student population, including ESL adult learners who may lack high school diplomas, foreign-educated immigrants seeking professional opportunities, Dreamers, and other undocumented immigrant youth interested in transitioning to four-year institutions,” according to Casner-Lotto. Among the common elements of successful programs are educational and career pathways that include English-language instruction integrated with job skills training, employer-recognized credentials, college and career navigators and coaches with expertise that specifically applies to immigrants, and critical wrap-around supports, such as financial or scholarship aid, childcare, and transportation.

“It is a recognition of the potential of immigrants to contribute to our communities, our economy, and our nation that has motivated the CCCIE network to advance this work and galvanize the community college sector in support of all members of our communities,” said Wisell, who immigrated with her family to the US from Cuba in 1963.

Overview of contents

Working toward an Equitable and Prosperous Future for All: How Community Colleges and Immigrants Are Changing America shares the perspectives of community college CEOs and examines the role of leadership in adopting institution-wide strategies and allocating resources that have advanced immigrant and refugee integration on campus and in the community. The book also examines how front-line practitioners make those strategies work through educational and career pathways that have enabled immigrants and refugees to pursue their academic and career goals and contribute to the economic prosperity and cultural vibrancy of their communities.

Working Together: How Community Colleges and Their Partners Help Immigrants Succeed focuses on two key components of successful immigrant and refugee integration: multisector partnerships that have been essential for increasing immigrant and refugee students’ college and career readiness and assuring their transition to further education, training, or jobs; and strategies related to replicating and scaling best practice models and the policy implications involved.

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