

Community College Leaders as Inventors of the Future
Assistant Secretary Troy Justesen
Address to the World Congress and International Association of Colleges Conference
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George, thank you for your introduction. I am pleased to be here to talk to you about the global partnerships developed by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) over the course of the past two years. Surely those of you who traveled from afar will take away more than just jet lag...you will develop a collaborative understanding of the challenges we face as educational leaders of our countries. Today, I hope to foster an increased understanding of the power of collaboration.

I am pleased to join Martin in speaking with you today about the importance of global, community and technical college partnerships. I commend the Minister of Education of South Africa, Naledi Pandor, and Martin Mulcahy for their many contributions to vocational education.

I bring you greetings from the President of the United States, George W. Bush, and Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings who believe in and commend you for the service you provide. It is a privilege to promote our nation's community and technical colleges, and to work with our global partners.

I believe that community and technical colleges are well-positioned to respond in a timely fashion to their communities where the only constant is change. The most effective way to strengthen the economies of our countries is to increase access to postsecondary education and to support student success. Globalization and the increasing demands in the workforce dictate that an open door is not enough.

Last week, Secretary Spellings, in her address to the Association of Community College Trustees noted that "Only nine percent of low-income students earn a college degree by age 24..." as compared to 75 percent of students from wealthier families. "Only 60% of Americans have no postsecondary training at all." Anthony Carnevale, research professor and director of Georgetown University, in the most recent Community College Journal, explained that "59 percent of today's workers between the ages of 25 and 54 received some form of post-secondary education". So, what does this mean for U.S. community and technical colleges? Colleges should continue providing quality education to prepare students to compete in today's flat world.

The College Board stressed the need to fully integrate community colleges into the 21st century in their most recent report, "Willing the Skills Race and Strengthening America's Middle Class". The average income of an associate degree graduate of a community or technical college approximately doubles the average income of high school dropouts (\$37,990 compared to \$19,915). One of the College Board's recommendations was to make universal access to two

years of post-secondary training a reality across the U.S. The need for U.S. citizens to pursue post-secondary education is clear.

As noted by Ding-Jo Currie, Chair of AACC's Board of Directors and President of Coastline Community College, in the most recent Community College Journal, "We in education hold the key to the future of the American workforce. Having been entrusted with such a responsibility, we would be remised to shut our eyes to an emerging skills gap created by vast economic shifts on the world stage." Ding-Jo Currie urged community college leaders to "demonstrate our resolve through vision, innovation, solidarity, and action."

I believe that as our countries confront the challenges of economic globalization, community and technical colleges are more important than ever.

Community and technical colleges are the largest sector of American higher education. As reported by the College Board, "America's 1,200 regionally accredited two-year colleges enroll 6.5 million students annually for credit". Last week, Secretary Spellings expressed her support for community colleges noting that "community colleges are well-poised to meet the growing demand to facilitate the economic transition we must undergo" in the 21st century.

The Secretary's appreciation for the importance of community and technical colleges is evident in the higher education commission report that emphasizes accessibility, affordability, and accountability. In support of community and technical colleges and the Secretary's plan, OVAE is structured to further support student success through federal funding and programming.

I would now like to take the time to describe some of OVAE's top initiatives. One of my priorities has been to advance the mission of community and technical colleges. In order for OVAE to serve as a centralized resource for colleges, I made it a top agenda item to create the position of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Colleges.

Our Deputy Assistant Secretary, Dr. Pat Stanley (who is here with us today), has a vast array of experience as college leader. Prior to serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary, she served as president of Fredrick Community College in Maryland. Pat has raised the visibility of community and technical colleges across the globe. Over the course of the past year, Pat has led a number of exciting initiatives including: forums for community college presidents to discuss issues, which inevitably impact the success of our students. These issues include the importance of developmental education, serving low-literacy adults, and establishing statewide articulation agreements.

One of OVAE's main efforts in supporting the global economy has been extensive collaboration with international partners. An action agenda of several important initiatives was developed from these partnerships. These initiatives will emerge over the next five months.

I am pleased that Pat will unite select U.S. community college faculty, trustees, and administrators with their counterparts of Danish Technical and Business Colleges in March. As a result of this meeting and site visits, we hope to increase the number of Danish and American

college exchange students. Danish Technical and Business Colleges provide the opportunity for the U.S. delegation to see first-hand the academic and technical education offered in Denmark. This effort is an extension of a partnership between the Government of Denmark and the Government of the United States. Both governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding on October 11, 2007 to expand and enhance their cooperative education efforts. The goal of our partnership is to improve the quality of community college systems through the sharing of best practices and a regular exchange of ideas. This initiative is contributing substantially to increased collaboration between the Danish Technical and Business Colleges and the U.S. community colleges.

At the end of April, Secretaries Margaret Spellings and Condoleezza Rice will host an International Higher Education Summit in Washington, DC. The intent of the summit is to expand the role and impact of U.S. and foreign higher education institutions in worldwide social and economic development.

The U.S. Department of Education in collaboration with the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development is hosting an international symposium on June 20. The symposium will provide direction for building sound community and technical college infrastructures. The Secretary, in discussion with colleagues around the world, understands first-hand the impact of strong community and technical college infrastructures on the growth of the global economy. The U.S. will co-host a follow-up regional symposium in Morocco in the late summer of 2008.

I am proud of the role the U.S. is playing in collaborating with community and technical colleges internationally. I am pleased that OVAE is a major contributor in advancing these efforts.

On a personal note, I began my post-secondary education pursuits at a community college. I understand, firsthand, the benefits of a community college education. My experiences as community college student provided me with the tools to advance my education and to achieve my professional goals. My dedication to the community college mission stems from the quality of education I received at the college.

I believe that community and technical colleges are the way of the future... As institutions that respond to the needs of the community, they are equipped to adapt to rapid change. The global partnerships that I described today are the tip of the iceberg in comparison to the many partnerships that are emerging across the globe.

I believe we should all be proud of the 20th century accomplishments of the community and technical education. Now, a different era has emerged...the era of the “knowledge worker”...the era of a “creative and innovative class” of workers... And it is important to continue preparing for the challenges of tomorrow...

Together we can more effectively respond to the changes of the 21st century...not only to consider the needs of our local economies but also to explore the possibilities of meeting the needs of the marketplace... Growing the potential of global collaboration rests with each and every one of us in this room.