



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

An independent institution established by Congress to strengthen the nation's capacity
to promote peaceful resolution to international conflicts

Community Colleges Essential to the Success of Internationalized Education

For Immediate Release

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(Washington)—The United States Institute of Peace releases a new volume that identifies community colleges as major force in strengthening global education and promoting broad-based educational strategies to advance peace. Edited by David J. Smith and including contributions by 23 experts from the education and peacebuilding field, *Peacebuilding in Community Colleges: A Teaching Resource* is designed to guide educators and administrators in building peace studies, conflict resolution, or global education programs at the two-year college level.

While community colleges have become an important fixture on the American educational landscape, the concept of using education to promote peacebuilding is relatively new but increasingly vital at two-year colleges. A peacebuilding education can offer appreciation and understanding of international events, thereby increasing public engagement, teaching attitudes and skills necessary for employment in a globalized world, and promoting people-to-people diplomacy. Broadening students' network of learning experiences is part of the community college's mission, role, and scope in producing responsible citizens, and peace studies program support those goals.

Reaching students of all ages, ethnicities, cultural groups, and personal circumstances, community colleges currently enroll nearly 44 percent of all American undergraduates. Increasing student cultural and ethnic diversity is challenging educators to focus on personal and group conflict and violence not only in local contexts but also in distant communities where immigrant populations originate. Thus, teaching peace today in community colleges has both local and international dimensions.

"Because of their open enrollment, ethnic and cultural diversity, adaptability to changing societal needs, and focus on community-building, two-year colleges are a critical linchpin to the success of these efforts," says David Smith. "The next generation of peacebuilders can most certainly be found in today's community colleges. The key will be to provide them with the tools necessary to engage them in solving some of the most pressing problems we face today."

ABOUT THE EDITOR

A former senior manager for educational outreach in USIP's Global Peacebuilding Center, **David J. Smith** is a conflict resolution practitioner and educator. He currently serves as chair of the Human Rights Commission of Rockville, Maryland, and teaches at George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution.

ABOUT THE UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

The United States Institute of Peace is an independent, nonpartisan conflict management center created by Congress to prevent and mitigate international conflict through nonviolent means. USIP saves lives, increases the government's ability to deal with conflicts before they escalate, reduces government costs, and enhances national security. USIP is headquartered in Washington, DC. To learn more, visit www.usip.org.

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Peacebuilding in Community Colleges *Questions and Answers with the Editor*

David Smith answers questions about his new book, *Peacebuilding in Community Colleges: A Teaching Resource*. Smith discusses the relationship between community colleges and global education. He also highlights the benefits and challenges of developing peace and conflict resolution programs at two-year institutions.

What commitment should community colleges have to an internationalized education?

Global education is a vital component of every community college mission, given our understanding of the new nature of *community*. No matter the character or location of a college, it is inextricably bound up with international populations through commerce and communication. Community colleges serve students from a wide variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and student body populations often reflect the makeup of the community at large.

Community colleges have an obligation to provide the socio-cultural context that will broaden students' network of learning experiences, giving them the skills and perspectives they need to succeed in a globalized world. Programs in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and peace studies can coincide with second-language education, geography, world religions, history and culture, and international travel. Not only does this play an important role in raising awareness of the world at large, it provides students and public audiences with the skills and foundational knowledge to further both their professional careers and their personal engagement with the world.

How do communities benefit from peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and peace studies programs at community colleges?

When communities are prone to conflict or violence, education can play an important role in promoting more peaceful worldviews, teaching personal and professional skills, and supporting other organizations and agencies that foster stability.

Peacebuilding and peace studies academic programs cover the array of processes and stages in transforming conflict and creating or maintaining sustainable relationships. Learning about peacebuilding also involves learning about other cultures, human rights, humanitarian relief, security, nonviolent conflict resolution, reconciliation processes, mediation, and many more topics that can contribute positively to community wellness. Such education programs can encourage more civic involvement from community college students and graduates.

How has the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) supported community colleges in expanding their capacity to teach about global conflict and peacebuilding?

USIP includes teaching and training within its mission statement, and it has sponsored faculty and administrative development opportunities for community colleges since the 1990s, including weeklong seminars, curriculum development support, and teaching

materials. The Institute has collaborated with community colleges and associations around the United States, and has hosted seminars at community colleges around the country on regional or ethnic conflict or on a specific discipline. The Institute has also sent staff to assist colleges in designing programs for their institution.

How widespread are peacebuilding, peace studies, and conflict resolution programs and initiatives at community colleges, and what advantages do they have?

Until recently, there have been few established programs at the community college level that focus on teaching students about peaceful approaches to conflict and skills of conflict resolution. As of 2012, twenty-one programs exist across the United States. With nearly 1,200 community colleges currently enrolling eight million credit students, there is much room for growth. The lack of peace and conflict programmatic efforts available for either career or transfer students does not reflect a lack of faculty and institutional motivation or innovation.

Community colleges are uniquely poised to develop curricula and training programs quickly in response to changes in our world. One particular advantage of peace studies programs at community colleges is that they do not dictate what field a student will go into—they simply, yet powerfully, provide perspective and practical skills. Students in these programs can fulfill requirements for general education, certification, and transfer programs, and in doing so, they also gain knowledge, experience, and skills that will make them at once better citizens and more attractive to transfer institutions and future employers in all types of fields. As the field of peace studies evolves, it must keep pace with the social issues of the time. Community colleges have the flexibility to respond to changing needs in our communities and our world.

How might institutions choose which type of approach works best for their population?

The second section of this volume demonstrates several approaches for creating engaging programs. The type of program depends on many variables, including student demographics, size of the college, interest from faculty members, support from administration, financial considerations, the curriculum development process of the institution, and student interest.

Some community colleges choose to develop formal academic programs, which can be full-fledged degree programs or certificate programs. Several of the volume's contributing experts discuss the process of developing introductory courses, creating a curriculum, and garnering support from their institution. Many of them report having much success when emphasizing the interdisciplinary nature of the program and coordinating with other college initiatives.

Others discuss alternative programming options, including not-for-credit courses, continuing education courses, and extracurricular student activities, such as sponsoring a "peace week" or art festivals. Several chapters incorporate experiential learning, such as study abroad, humanitarian training, and service learning.

What are some of the challenges of implementing a peace studies, social justice, or conflict management program, and how can they be overcome?

There are many challenges inherent in the administrative process, and each institution faces unique circumstances. Successful programs require committed leadership, broad faculty engagement, professional development in related areas, and a willingness to scale up small projects. A significant consideration is the transferability of credits to four-year programs for those students wishing to continue their education after completing the community college program. The creation of a new program of any kind requires some change in internal culture, and the chapters in this volume are awake to this hurdle and provide excellent guidance, both formal and anecdotal.

Once the project is created, institutions face the challenge of marketing the new program and enrolling sufficient students. The name of the program itself sometimes sparks controversy or confusion. Peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and peace studies programs should be clear about the skills and qualities they produce, and institutions can work with employers and collaborate with other colleges to ensure that students fully benefit from this type of education.

Praise for *Peacebuilding in Community Colleges*

“While many in the world of U.S. community colleges innovate, few have led in international innovation, and fewer still in international innovations that directly contribute to peace. David Smith has been a leader in this arena, recognizing the realities as well as the potential of community colleges and their programmatic adaptability for this critical application. *Peacebuilding in Community Colleges* is at once practical and visionary, urging the community college beyond its local mission toward global impact by displaying approaches for making a direct and literal difference in the world. Unquestionably, a useful text for campus internationalization.”

—**Paul McVeigh**, associate vice president, Global Studies and Programs, Northern Virginia Community College

“*Peacebuilding in Community Colleges* is a groundbreaking volume that skillfully unites the voices of experts and emerging peacebuilding practitioners in redefining the role of education and positioning educational policy and practice at the core of peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts. Animating peace theory with authentic and practical examples from a broad cross-country range of U.S. community colleges, Smith and the contributing authors highlight the importance of innovative curricular approaches in affirming the interconnectedness of local and global experiences and narratives, and in fostering peace-driven social activism. This 17-chapter volume is a major contribution to the peace education discourse and a very rich resource for any academic program or institution interested in initiating curricular transformation to empower students and faculty to develop the dispositions, skills, and commitments necessary to further the enduring quest for peace.”

—**Elavie Ndura**, professor of education and academic program coordinator of the Multilingual/Multicultural Education program, George Mason University

“This volume conveys not only practical guidance and models for those interested in creating a place for peace studies in the community college curriculum. It also shows how courses and programs focused on peacebuilding connect students, institutions, and communities to what is happening in the rest of the world in meaningful ways. Beyond its intention to offer specific examples of curriculum development and creative pedagogy to community colleges, it shines a wider light on using peace studies as a way to effectively bring global studies to students through substantive issues.”

—**Patti McGill Peterson**, presidential advisor, Internationalization and Global Engagement, American Council on Education

“Smith and the impressive group of assembled contributors make a persuasive case that community colleges can serve as frontline academic institutions in the development of globally focused peace and conflict studies programs. Each chapter tells a compelling story with practical lessons for program developers, faculty, and students of peace and conflict studies. Throughout the book one finds insightful responses to program challenges, enhanced collaborative teaching methods, powerful descriptions of experiential learning programs, and the enriched use of technology in delivering courses that engage students in new ways.”

—**Brian Polkinghorn**, distinguished professor and executive director, Center for Conflict Resolution, Salisbury University