

For ACCT September 15 , 2009

Community College of Aurora (Colorado) Examples of Best Practices in Diversity

Diversity at the Community College of Aurora

The Community College of Aurora (CCA) is located in Aurora, Colorado – the third largest city in the state and one where one out of every three people speaks a language other than English at home. Adjacent to Denver, Aurora is a first stop for many arriving in the region as immigrants and refugees. Out of 6,000 students each semester, fewer than half are white, non-Hispanic. A quarter are African American. The other quarter represent a mix including significant populations of Asian-American and Hispanic-American students as well as growing numbers of immigrants from east Africa, Vietnam, Korea, Central and South America, and many others. The median age of students at CCA is just under 30 which adds layer of generational diversity to the mix. CCA has been declared eligible for Title III funding due to its large numbers of economically disadvantaged students.

Outreach by the Community College of Aurora to Those from Diverse Backgrounds:

The college encourages and celebrates diversity in a multitude of ways. Among these is outreach to our diverse community, both to ensure that our student body reflects the community and to contribute to community diversity efforts. Among the college's outreach efforts are the following programs:

The Original Aurora Community Integration Collaboration (OACIC) is a community effort funded by The Colorado Trust, the purpose of which is to assist in integration efforts for immigrants and refugees in a specific area of Aurora. CCA's involvement in this initiative includes hosting events, such as Diversity training; participating in events, such as community Safety and International Fairs located in areas where refugees and immigrants represent a majority of the population; and serving on the board of OACIC in an advisory capacity.

Through the Xcel Energy Foundation Project, immigrant and under-served students from area middle and high schools are transported to the college for a day of college workshops and activities. Faculty from mathematics, the sciences, computer, and other programs lead hands-on workshops on topics such as bridge building, anatomy, energy conservation, and computer programming. Students meet with advisors and financial aid staff during the day to begin planning their college career. Last year over 250 middle and high school students visited CCA thanks to this project. The demographics of students who attend the Xcel camps mirrors the demographics of the Aurora and Denver areas; a large number of the students speak languages other than English as their first language.

In the Aurora Lights Project, a collaboration with the Aurora Public Schools and the University of Colorado Denver, CCA offers tutoring and seminars to students enrolled in one of the college's foundational science courses for pre-health careers. Last year CCA tutored approximately 170 students who reflected the demographics of our Science Department student body, which is highly diverse and includes Native American, Caucasian, African American, African, Pacific Islanders, and Asians. The CCA seminars help students increase their study skills, explore potential careers in health care, and prepare for the transition from the two-year community college environment to the professional school or program of their choice.