

Chapter 55

Peacebuilding as a Means to Global Citizenry

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this chapter is to illustrate approaches that can be used by community colleges to promote both global knowledge and global engagement—often taking the form of education abroad—using peacebuilding means. To make the case, examples and models from several U.S. community colleges will be shared. Examples from community colleges from throughout the country are given.

INTRODUCTION

Remarkably in the United States, a country fraught with conflict and violence, promoting peace is often viewed as controversial and misunderstood. The reasons for this dichotomy are many and beyond the scope of this chapter. But it can be said that those who advocate for peace-oriented approaches and strategies to curbing violence and conflict are at times viewed either as impractical idealists or political (and possibly unpatriotic) subversives. A constructive counterview is that they are realistic professionals looking to solve serious challenges to peace using research-based and tested methods (Fitzduff & Jean, 2011).

Our notions of peace are often taken from depictions and symbols of political and social activism. The ubiquitous peace symbol designed by graphic artist Gerald Holtom in 1958 for an anti-nuclear march in the United Kingdom frames the sensibilities of many about peace: We are either drawn to the symbol and what it represents (e.g., nonviolence, social justice, environmentalism, and human rights) or are put off by it and might use the American flag as a juxtapositional symbol (Smith, 2002). Symbolic standoffs typify political and social debates and can lead to (hopefully) civic (and civil) discussions on how to deal with the challenges shared by Americans and internationals alike.

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The presence of violence in our society is undisputable. It often takes the form of overt violence but includes “exploitative social relations that cause unnecessary suffering” (Maill, Ramsbotham, & Woodhouse, 2011, p. 31). This later form is referred to as structural violence and focuses “on the systemic disadvantages conferred on marginalized groups in society” (Liu & Opatow, 2014, p. 692). Examples include “hunger, political repression, and psychological alienation” (Barash & Webel, 2002, p. 7). Violence is equally present in elite colleges and state universities, as in community colleges. But because community colleges enroll Americans of all social backgrounds, cultures, and income groups, and are often viewed as democracy’s colleges because of their open doors and affordability, the consequences of failing to address overt and structural violence on community college campuses has dire consequences for societal stability, human rights protection, economic prosperity, social mobility, and social justice.

Global citizenry has taken on a range of interpretations including being linked to global peacefulness (Farnsworth, 2013). They are considered entwined with each other, with peace a “precondition for global citizenship” (Noddings, 2005, p. 17). Global citizenship education looks to empower all “to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure societies” (UNESCO, 2018). To be “global” is considered an essential characteristic of a liberally educated learner (Sterns, 2010). Programs, initiatives, and strategies are present in institutions to help students achieve global knowledge as well as foster active global engagement. While global knowledge might include foreign language proficiency, geographic savviness, or an understanding of cross-cultural behaviors and expectations, to be globally engaged can be viewed as the active pursuit of opportunities to further one’s global personal and professional interests. While this can be done in a range of ways, typically in 4- year institutions, and less often in community colleges, study abroad provides that opportunity.

In community colleges, the availability of opportunities to advance global education has not been as available as in 4- year institutions (American Council on Education, 2012). One reason for this may be the low level of support and lack of prioritization in many community colleges (Raby, 2016). However, as community college populations transform due to the arrival of foreign multicultural and multiethnic students – some having legal status and others not – there will be increasing pressures on these institutions to support meaningful and measurable ways to advance global education. Since community colleges reflect the demographics of local communities, this seems an expected evolution.

The objective of this chapter is to illustrate approaches that can be used by community colleges to promote both global knowledge and global engagement – often taking the form of education abroad – using peacebuilding means. To make the case, examples and models from several U.S. community colleges will be shared.

PEACEBUILDING

Peace can be viewed as a means to an end, as Mahatma Gandhi famously remarked, “as the means, so the end.” Though his reflection was offered in viewing how Indians might achieve independence from the British with the use of nonviolence, his means/end construct can be applied in considering peace to achieve global awareness goals and fostering engagement in learners. In today’s community colleges, where students of all backgrounds, ethnicities, experiences, and aspirations are found, this is more important than ever. Society’s present challenges are immense, and graduates of America’s community colleges will take on the important work of shaping local, state, national, and international policy, and implement strategies that will seek to build bridges with others across political, geographic, and virtual

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