

Community colleges more globally focused

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Community colleges in the United States have made huge strides since 2008 in cultivating a global workforce, according to a first-of-its-kind study co-led by a Michigan State University researcher.

In 2008, about 51 percent of community colleges offered a basic course in [international business](#). Four years later that number has jumped to 85 percent, said Tomas Hult, director of MSU's International Business Center, who led the study with Lansing Community College professor William Motz.

"The most important takeaway is that we as a nation appear to be putting funds into community college education to infuse a global mindset in a much larger way than in the past few years," Hult said. "International business education is really starting to flourish at two-year schools."

Forty-four percent of college students – about 13 million students – attend about 1,200 community colleges in the United States, so the schools play a pivotal role in educating the 21st-century global workforce, he said.

The study analyzed international business offerings at community colleges in all states (with reliable data from 49 states), using the International Business Education Index. New Mexico ranked No. 1 on the index while Michigan ranked No. 29. Grand Rapids Community College ranked No. 1 in Michigan and also was ranked in the top 20 nationwide.

Designed by Hult and Motz, the IBEX measures the degree to which community colleges emphasize international business education in their curricula and education activities.

"The world is becoming more globalized and integrated, and it is important that we educate students to think logically, be creative and be global citizens," Hult said.

The study also found:

- If community colleges continue along their "old" path of international business education – in which few, if any, global business classes are offered – they will fall behind and lose a competitive edge in the college selection process.
- The tough economic times that started in 2008 took a toll on community colleges, but the uptick in international business education and the refocusing of priorities indicate that [community colleges](#) are more confident in the economy.
- Investment in faculty proves to be the most important part in achieving credible international business education programs at the community college level.
- The increase in international business programs, courses and knowledge is a testament to the wants and needs of the global marketplace.

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Provided by Michigan State University

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