

[https://www.citysuntimes.com/news/mcccd-approved-as-sponsor-of-j-1-visa-exchange-visitor-program/article\\_dc967238-03b2-11ee-ba44-afb056916e84.html](https://www.citysuntimes.com/news/mcccd-approved-as-sponsor-of-j-1-visa-exchange-visitor-program/article_dc967238-03b2-11ee-ba44-afb056916e84.html)

**LOCAL NEWS**

# MCCCD approved as sponsor of J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program

written by Kelly Mixer

Published on Jun 5, 2023

1 of 2



Courtesy of Paradise Valley Community College

The Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) announced its official sponsorship of the U.S. Department of State J-1 non-immigrant Visa Exchange Visitor Program.

This program will allow international students, scholars and professors to attend college in the United States gaining valuable experience in their field of study.

MCCCD hopes to expand opportunities for curriculum globalization across its 10 colleges, further develop faculty professional development and participate in other international exchanges through the J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program.

“We are excited for this opportunity to bring international students and scholars to our 10 campuses and communities,” said Bettina Celis, MCCCD acting vice chancellor and provost of academic and student affairs. “International education holds great importance for Maricopa Community Colleges, and we look forward to providing our students and faculty with a new level of uncharted experiences.”

---

The J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program promotes cultural exchange between international countries and the United States. The program fosters mutual understanding by allowing students, scholars, professors and other exchange visitors to experience American culture while sharing their unique perspectives with local communities.

“This is an incredible opportunity for MCCCD,” said Jen Sydow, MCCCD International & Intercultural Education Office program manager. “By hosting and involving international students, scholars and visitors in various learning processes, we are achieving our global engagement mission by enhancing our students' and community members' international perspective and cross-cultural understanding.”

Through a collaborative effort, a Maricopa Community Colleges team prepared the application for the J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program. This sponsorship will be renewed every two years as long as MCCCD meets the program's requirements.

Annually, MCCCD hosts an average of 550 international students on F-1 Visas and 15 J-1 Visa students from 80 countries. In the past, Maricopa Community Colleges have organized, administered and hosted a number of short-term exchange programs involving 33 countries.

According to the U.S. Department of State, each year, the J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program provides opportunities for approximately 300,000 foreign visitors from 200 countries and territories per year to experience U.S. society and culture and engage with Americans. Furthermore, 86% of exchange visitors are 30 years old or younger, and 54% are women and girls.



For more information about Maricopa Community Colleges International and Intercultural Educational Programs, visit [maricopa.edu/students/international-intercultural-education](http://maricopa.edu/students/international-intercultural-education).

Aziz Alhadi, director of the Mesa Community College International Education Office, said the Mesa Community College International Education Program is a nationwide leader in international education in community colleges and worked with the MCCCD Office of International and Intercultural Education and representatives from other colleges within the system to complete the application process for the designation.

“This is a major achievement which enables us to collectively compete for an array of government grants and other multilateral and American public and private sponsors seeking to train foreign nationals in the United States,” Alhadi said.

“We look forward to transitioning the management of the program to MCCCD’s International and Intercultural Office who will work to promote the expanded involvement of all Maricopa colleges in international exchange. By mobilizing district-wide capabilities and technical resources, we hope to develop programs of interest to clients the world over for the benefit of all concerned – bolstering our system’s education and workforce development initiatives by enabling us to administer programs for international and private sector participants.”

Preparation of the very detailed application was completed with strong support of MCCCD leadership with input from other colleges, Alhadi continued.

“In the application process, MCCCD was required to demonstrate how proposed programs align with the vision and mission of the U.S. government’s strategic plans and initiatives; demonstrating extensive knowledge of the state department’s publications and work; detailing previous experience in the field of international exchange and providing evidence of having personnel with experience in the field capable of managing the program; and that financial resources are available to sponsor programs.”

Alhadi said MCC study abroad programs are providing opportunities for 110 students from multiple MCCCD colleges to participate in academic programs in the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, Mexico and Ireland and currently administers degree programs for more than 200 students from 54 countries.

MCC recently received notice that another group of 16 students from 10 countries sponsored by the state department’s Educational and Cultural Bureau, under a grant to the Northern Virginia Community College-administered Community College Initiative Program, will arrive in mid-July.

In August, MCC will begin administering new scholarship programs funded by foreign governments, including the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and other sponsors.

“With the approval of MCCCD’s designation as a J-1 sponsor and our current base of activity, we are closer to realizing our mission to develop a global center through study abroad programs, international student services, event programming, service excellence and opportunities for globalizing the campus with faculty partnerships to encourage global citizenship and student success,” Alhadi said.

“We greatly appreciate the amazing level of support and encouragement provided by MCC and MCCCD leadership for our globalization efforts.”

---

Written By

**Kelly Mixer**

[kmixer@ourkemediagroup.com](mailto:kmixer@ourkemediagroup.com) |