



The 2022-2023 Year in Review

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In July 2022, the Community College Initiative (CCI) Program welcomed 157 students from Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Cote D'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kosovo, Kyrgyz Republic, South Africa, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Ukraine. Before arriving in the United States, participants took part in virtual pre-departure orientations, where they met with CCI administrators and alumni to learn more about integrating into U.S. culture.

For the 2022-2023 program year, nine colleges across the country hosted participants in the CCI Program. Students took part in a variety of activities throughout the year, including volunteer opportunities, internships, cultural exchanges, celebrations, [community impact projects](#), and more. Participants attended classes and completed coursework in media, engineering, IT, tourism and hospitality, business administration, agriculture, public safety, early childhood education, applied health, and social services. The goal after completion of the program is for participants to utilize the knowledge and skills they learned to give back to their local communities and make a positive impact.

Upon arriving to the United States, students were welcomed by their host colleges and integrated into American life through the Gateway to Success Program, which prepared them for college classes and allowed them to become accustomed to an English-speaking environment. Throughout the year, students took part in non-academic workshops and events such as the [9/11 Day of Service](#), MLK Day of Service, and International Education Week.

During the 2022-2023 program year, CCI participants completed 10,652 unpaid internships hours and 16,055 volunteer hours for a total of 26,707 hours. Below are some highlights of the CCI participants' amazing work and contributions over the year.

Cultural Exchange and Service Learning

The 2022-23 CCI Program participants at Houston Community College volunteered with the Consulate General of Indonesia at the Festival Bazaar Nusantara on August 6, 2022, in Houston, Texas. The festival was in honor of the 77th Indonesian Independence Day and featured authentic Indonesian cuisine and traditional dance performances. CCI participants helped vendors set up stalls; some helped with digital communication; and others captured videos and photos of the event. It was a beautiful event honoring CCI's program pillars of cultural exchange and service learning.

Diplomacy and Peacebuilding

In December 2022, the CCI cohorts at Kirkwood Community College and Valencia College joined virtually for a [diplomacy simulation on peacebuilding](#) as part of their Culture, Society, and Institutions (CSI) class. The participants were mixed up to represent the six different stakeholder groups. Within their stakeholder groups, they identified what resources they had and how they as a stakeholder group could potentially contribute to resolve the humanitarian crisis. After devising their stakeholder strategy, a spokesperson for each group gave an opening statement. From there, representatives connected in breakout rooms to discuss alliances and collaborations. The participants spent time prior to the activity reading through their stakeholder positions, views, and learning more about the humanitarian crisis in Sudan to help prepare. Through this activity, participants were able to develop conflict resolution skills, enhance their leadership skills, and work on teambuilding. The students also gained a deeper understanding of the role of the U.S. Department of State within diplomacy.

Leadership

On February 3, 2023, three College of DuPage CCI participants took part in the [College Leadership Summit](#) at the Illinois Holocaust Museum. There were 18 colleges and universities represented at this summit. Some of the breakout sessions included: Why Does Never Again Result in Yet Again, A Nonviolent Toolbox for Social Justice, B.O.L.D. Conversations, Mobilizing vs Organizing My Block, My Hood, My City. The three participants were Said Muhammad Asoev, Nursen Askarbekov, and Shabnam Duzenji. For the participants, it was a powerful day of leadership and learning.

International Education Week

CCI participants celebrated International Education Week by taking part in numerous activities during the week of November 14th. Across the country, students participated in global education fairs, parades, bazaars, festivals, international fashion shows, and food celebrations. Participants had the opportunity to share and learn about other cultures throughout the week. They also watched international films, taught fellow participants how to make traditional recipes, played games, and prepared poster presentations to enlighten people about their culture.



Fox Valley Technical College participants celebrating International Education Week

MLK Day of Service

In January 2023, participants of Houston Community College volunteered in 2 activities to celebrate MLK Day. One group helped to package and deliver meals with Kids Lives Matter International, while the second group partnered with Bridges International to share their experiences studying abroad with other international students in Houston. The NOVA CCI cohort participated in Volunteer Arlington's MLK Day of Service event, helping to create snack bags for students, make fleece blankets, and prepare emergency kits. The College of DuPage cohort volunteered at the Greater Chicago Food Depository for the MLK Day of Service. The group packed 6,936 lbs. of pinto beans, which is equivalent to 5,780 meals. Each person packed 181 meals in the time that they volunteered.



NOVA participants volunteering with Volunteer Arlington for the MLK Day of Service

The 2022-2023 Class: Participant Highlights

We're so excited for several students of the 2022-2023 program year that have been nominated for awards and been offered fantastic opportunities:

- Four CCI participants from Mesa Community College received academic honors awards. **Louise Amoi** (Cote d'Ivoire, Early Childhood Education), **Samaha Ansari** (Bangladesh, Early Childhood Education), **Maya Damayanti** (Indonesia, Early Childhood Education), and **Sanket Singh** (India, Business Management and Administration) were nominated by their professors for their academic achievements.
- **Grese Sermajah** (Kosovo, College of DuPage, Media) is a [Goldin Global Fellow](#). Grese interned in a Communications Office with the Goldin Institute while participating in the CCI Program. The Goldin Global Fellow is a 6 to 8-month fellowship and Grese will be part of a cohort representing more than 40 countries.
- **Ismayil Makilikov** (Azerbaijan, College of DuPage, Media) completed two internships during the program year, one of which was with Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate Connections where he worked as a video editor. They have offered him a full-time remote position upon his return to Azerbaijan.
- **Ganjala Abbasova** (Azerbaijan, College of DuPage, Media) secured an internship with the US Embassy in Baku.
- **Ibrahim Coulibably** (Côte d'Ivoire, Sinclair Community College, Media) has been nominated as the president of [Junior Achievement](#) (JA) alumni of Côte d'Ivoire for one year. He will be attending the Alumni Leaders Academy in Kampala, Uganda, from June 29–July 1 and serve as president for the next year.

- **Prudence Prins** (South Africa, NOVA, Early Childhood Education) has been accepted to the [Education Changemakers \(ECM\) Programme](#) Cohort 3, which will take place from June 26 to July 21, 2023 in Midrand, South Africa. The ECM programme “seeks to provide leadership development training to young leaders in the education sector, across Southern Africa.”
- **Luisa Tapasco** (Colombia, Northampton Community College, Early Childhood Education) received a scholarship from Harvard University for a program called Aspire Leaders. Since participating in the CCI program, she has implemented a program called United Transforming Lives. The project aims to empower youth in underserved populations. She presented the project to Colombo Americano, a binational center in Colombia that works with Education USA. She has also created a program called Global Leadership Talks, which gives visibility to international leaders and provides leadership workshops funded through nonprofits.

Farewell 2022-2023 CCI Cohort

To celebrate the end to a successful year, participants attended commencement ceremonies and the Launch to Success Program, where they prepared to implement the skills they’ve learned over the past 10 months into their local communities. CCI participants, administrative staff, program coordinators, social hosts, faculty, and community members joined in person and virtually to celebrate the students. After an amazing year, the 2022-2023 CCI participants join over 3,650 CCI alumni to become a part of a close-knit, global community. We are thrilled to see what wonderful achievements they will make back home!



Kirkwood Community College participants at the end of year commencement and celebration

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