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BETHLEHEM

Northampton 1 of longest-participating community colleges in global education program

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By [Lehighvalleylive.com Staff](#)

A national program hosted by community colleges aims to help students gain technical skills in high-need industries.

The Community College Initiative Program is run by the U.S. Department of State, and [Bethlehem Township](#)-based [Northampton Community College](#) is one of two institutions nationwide to have participated every year since its inception in 2007, the department said in a news release.

Last week, nearly 150 participating students convened in Mesa, Arizona, as part of the program. The international came from nine community colleges, including Northampton, and hailed from 16 countries, including Brazil, India, South Africa and Ukraine, according to the release.

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The initiative is designed to tap community colleges' education and technical expertise to support these students in gaining skills for industries such as agriculture, applied engineering, business management and administration, early childhood education, information technology, media, public safety, and tourism and hospitality management.

Northampton and Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, have hosted a cohort of students every year that the program has operated and will continue to do so in the 2024-25 academic year, a State Department representative said.

The program builds on the integral role community colleges play in the United States' broader efforts to support foreign policy goals by expanding access to education and economic opportunity both at home and abroad, according to the State Department release.

The CCI Program recruits participants from select countries worldwide and prepares participants to join their home countries' workforces by providing opportunities for professional internships, service learning, community engagement, and English language proficiency, the release says. Since the program's start in 2007, there have been over 3,700 alumni from 25 countries placed at 81 U.S. community colleges across 25 states.

Along with Northampton and Kirkwood, seven additional community colleges across the United States are hosting these international students throughout this academic year: Bluegrass Community and Technical College in Lexington, Kentucky; College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, Illinois; Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton, Wisconsin; Mesa Community College in Mesa, Arizona; Northern Virginia Community College's Alexandria and Annandale campuses in Virginia; Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio; and Valencia College in Orlando, Florida.

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