

HOME

STORIES



Subscribe via Email

Enter your email address to subscribe to this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email.

Pathways to Success Program 2024: The Butterfly Effect – Unpredictable Ripples of Small Actions

Posted on January 23, 2024

In January, the Community College Initiative (CCI) Program reaches its halfway point. Following the conclusion of the fall semester, CCI participants engage in the annual mid-year Pathways to Success Program (PSP). This program is designed to strengthen participants' skills in leadership, interpersonal skills, analytical reasoning, and introspection. Additionally, the PSP provides opportunities for self-contemplation, defining objectives, and expanding professional networks.

This year, all 155 CCI participants came together during January 8th-13th in Arizona. The week-long conference took place in three locations, including Page, Sedona, and Phoenix. The theme, "The Butterfly Effect: Unpredictable Ripples of Small Actions" focused on the significance of small, sustainable actions that lead to big changes over time. The butterfly effect is often studied alongside chaos theory, and it relies on the concept that the world is intricately interconnected. Through cultural exchange, shared educational experiences, cross-cultural interactions, and collaborative learning, CCI participants' interconnectedness extends beyond geographical boundaries. The PSP is a time for students to embrace their interconnectedness, fostering a global network where they come together, share perspectives, and engage in a mutually enriching exchange of ideas and experiences.

Categories

- [10th Anniversary](#)
- [Academics](#)
- [Action Plans](#)
- [Alumni](#)
- [Community Impact Project \(CIP\)](#)
- [Cultural Exchange](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Internships](#)
- [Leadership](#)
- [Participants](#)
- [Press Coverage](#)
- [Social Hosts](#)
- [Uncategorized](#)
- [Volunteering](#)

The Pathways to Success Program was kicked off in Page, Arizona, an ideal setting for learning about sustainability and humanity's connection to the natural world. Participants were immersed in the program through a Native American showcase, featuring a grass and hoop dance. They learned about the symbolism involved in the dances and the significance of the dances, which have been passed down the generations through storytelling.

Archives

Select Month ▼



Native American Showcase

The following day, students volunteered at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, helping with trash collection, graffiti removal, and trail marking, all of which help to preserve the natural environment. The group also participated in a leadership development workshop with Scott Geddis, who empowered the audience to embrace their strengths and understand how teamwork requires people with different abilities and talents.



Participants Volunteer at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area

Next, they took part in the Community Impact Project Panel, which featured projects from participants excelling in their Community Impact Project (CIP). Masuda Moutushi (College of DuPage) presented on her initiative to provide reusable female hygiene and menstrual products to impoverished women in the Chicago area; Puja Thota (Kirkwood Community College) has been working with the Cedar Rapids city government to improve public transportation access; Diego Perez Diaz (Northern Virginia Community College) connected with WMATA (Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority) to increase safety for those using the bus system by increasing lighting and building a bus shelter, and the project is now under construction; Thembi Mosimango (Kirkwood Community College) partnered with a local school to educate youth about sustainable farming, sharing simple everyday practices that teach people to individually grow their own food! Following the panel, all participants got a chance to network with their peers, share ideas and find collaborators.



CCI Participant Puja Thota Speaks about her Community Impact Project

Later in the evening, all nine host colleges participated in a cultural showcase, featuring traditional dances and clothing, songs, music, and creative skits. Some participants even sang and played instruments, showing off their talents.



Cultural Showcase

On Wednesday, the cohort departed for one of the seven wonders of the world: the Grand Canyon. Participants and staff were in awe of the canyon's beauty and geological history. Next, participants headed to Sedona, Arizona, hearing from a select alumni panel, featuring Karla Nicole Barrera (Colombia, Northampton Community College, Early Childhood Education, 2022-23), Muhammad Ferdaus

(Bangladesh, Bunker Hill Community College, Public Safety, 2014-15), Gomolemo Mohapi (South Africa, Northern Virginia Community College, Information Technology, 2017-18), and Priyanka Nighot (India, Northern Virginia Community College, Business Administration, 2018-19). All four alumni shared their incredible achievements, ranging from starting their own non-profits, working in the development and education sectors, fighting inequality, and working in IT with one of the world's leading technology companies. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions and interact with them for the remainder of the week.



Alumni Panel, Moderated by Kelsi Ward

The following day, participants heard from retired international education specialist, Syedur Rahman, who urged them to think critically and creatively about the problems their communities are facing, as well as individual dilemmas students face each day. He encouraged them to think about their individual purpose and the kind of lives they wanted to lead, motivating them to develop small habits that may completely change their outlook and success.



Syedur Rahman Addresses the Students About Their Impact

After a fantastic lunch in downtown Sedona, four Ukrainian alumni that attended the College of DuPage in 2021-22 presented on media literacy, empowering students to analyze and take action when being presented with media, whether it be on social media, the internet, textbooks, or even in the classroom. The interactive presentation was eye-opening for both participants and staff, who learned how to use critical thinking to regularly examine and question various forms of media.



Ukrainian Alumni Speakers Talk with Former CCI Program Director Leeza Fernand's Father, a Fellow Ukrainian

Finally, on the last day of the Pathways to Success Program, the cohort traveled to Mesa, Arizona, where they finally met the newest addition to the CCI Program, a group of 11 Mexican participants who just arrived to the United States to begin their program. This special cohort will focus their academic program on semiconductor technology at Mesa Community College. Arizona is home to the largest semiconductor companies, and the MCC cohort is well positioned to learn from field experts. The skills and experience gained through this program will contribute to advancing economies and strengthening the global workforce when participants return home to share their knowledge and experience.



Participants From Mexico Work in the Lab at MCC

Lastly, participants attended the final workshops, including a community impact and social entrepreneurial panel, led by CCI Program Support Associate Kelly Forbes. Darren Chapman and Kevin Keleher, both MCC alumni, talked about how their experience at MCC shaped their career paths and led them to found

organizations that develop sustainable solutions to needs faced by their targeted communities. Next, ETSU Research Corporation CEO, David Golden, facilitated a workshop called “Empowering Innovation”, where he expanded on the week’s theme of the butterfly effect through his discussion of chaos theory and the steps people can take to achieve their goals. For the last session, CCI Program Assistant Director Sara Mohamed, Mesa Community College’s Executive Director of AzAMI Workforce, Leah Palmer, and Daniel Barajas, District Deputy Chief Director for Workforce and Economic Development at the Maricopa County Community College District conducted a discussion on closing skills gaps in the workplace.

To end the program, students engaged in a closing ceremony, where they absorbed words of wisdom from the CCI Program staff. Excited and freshly motivated to tackle the spring semester, the cohort danced the night away and celebrated the completion of the PSP.

In closing, the culmination of the Community College Initiative (CCI) Program’s Pathways to Success Program (PSP) marks not just the midpoint of an educational journey but a transformative experience for all 155 participants. From the symbolic Native American dances in Page to the impactful community projects and the awe-inspiring Grand Canyon visit, the week embodied the theme of “The Butterfly Effect.” As new participants from Mexico joined in Mesa, Arizona, the global network of interconnectedness expanded, fostering a shared commitment to positive change. The alumni panel, insightful workshops, and cultural showcases underscored the program’s impact, preparing these participants to make meaningful contributions to their communities worldwide. As they begin the spring semester, the echoes of wisdom and motivation throughout the week resonate, setting the stage for a future shaped by the small, sustainable actions initiated during this unforgettable week.

Written by Holly Calhoun, Alumni Relations & Communications

Posted in [Alumni](#), [Community Impact Project \(CIP\)](#), [Cultural Exchange](#), [Events](#), [Leadership](#), [Participants](#), [Volunteering](#).

← [CCI Program Participants Celebrate International...](#)

This is a [program](#) of the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government, administered by Northern Virginia Community College in cooperation with the Community College Consortium.

Connect With Us!

