

**Meeting Summary**  
**British Council Community College Breakfast**  
May 31, 2012  
NAFSA Annual Conference  
Houston, Texas



### **UK Representatives**

Suzanne Alexander – *University of Leicester*  
Charlotte Ayres-Hill – *University of Portsmouth*  
Richard Barnes – *Robert Gordon University*  
Jessica Guiver – *York St. John University*  
Lesley Hayman – *University of London International Programmes*  
Dr. David Law – *Edge Hill University*

### **US Representatives**

Alice Blayne-Allard – *American Association of Community Colleges*  
Dr. Geoff Bradshaw – *Madison Area Technical College*  
Dr. Carol Stax-Brown – *Community Colleges for International Development*  
Dr. Paul McVeigh – *Northern Virginia Community College*  
Dr. Rosalind Raby – *California Colleges for International Education*  
Wayne Wheeler – *American Association of Community Colleges*

### **British Council USA Representatives**

Richard Everitt, Deputy Director USA  
Janice Mulholland, Higher Education Manager  
Tamsin Thomas, SIEM Regional Business Coordinator

### **Key Questions**

- What do community colleges see as the opportunities in partnering with UK universities?
- What are the challenges both from the UK perspective in partnering with community colleges and from the US community college perspective in partnering with UK universities? Are these real or perceived challenges?

### **Summary of Discussion**

Given the attention on higher education in the US and UK at the moment, it was noted that this discussion hosted by the British Council was taking place at an opportune time. Although US community colleges are more locally driven than globally focused, there are opportunities for international collaboration between community colleges and UK colleges and universities. In fact, a strong US-UK relationship at all levels of tertiary education makes a lot of sense.

The US community college sector is in the spotlight right now not only for its role in the national access and completion agenda, but also because of its major role in workforce development and skills training. Although community colleges in the United States are driven mostly by local industry needs and have little global focus, some institutions are starting to look more seriously at opportunities for international engagement. However, it is difficult to identify where those activities are happening

and can be even more of a challenge to identify the institutions that are not yet internationally engaged, but looking to begin. This view was shared by US and UK representatives.

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) issued a challenge to the group to think differently – and more innovatively – about what is possible. Traditional concepts of internationalisation may not always be appropriate for community colleges or the diversity of students attending such institutions.

The need for mission alignment was reiterated throughout the discussion. The education structures between UK universities and US community colleges are completely different and this needs to be acknowledged in approaching all partnership opportunities. In order to build a sustainable partnership, institutions in the US and UK need to make sure they share a vision and mission for the partnership, which goes beyond the challenges of curriculum mapping. Involvement and support from the highest level on campus is critical, as is faculty engagement. Available resources and the financial sustainability of the partnership also need to be considered at the onset.

In some ways 2+2 arrangements between US community colleges and UK universities make sense, but more thought needs to be given to how to do this. Institutions in the US and UK need to better understand how these relationships could work. Robert Gordon University spoke briefly about a newly formed 2+2 (or 2+1) partnership with four community colleges in the US, including Metropolitan Community College, for students studying International Business Management. The partnership was formed out of contacts developed through the Community Colleges for International Development (CCID). The first cohort of students will arrive in Scotland in September. While it is too soon for Robert Gordon University to share their experience, the model being developed could potentially serve as a pilot.

The discussion also focused on other types of partnership opportunities that US community colleges and UK universities should explore, including:

- study abroad programmes (there is still room to develop opportunities for community college students in this area – community colleges want to give students the opportunity, but acknowledge that its an option only open to a smaller number of students);
- short term faculty to faculty programmes (faculty development opportunities should play a central role in partnerships);
- private sector and industry partnerships (these collaborations could speak to employer needs and provide resourcing opportunities);
- familiarization trips for US community college leaders (to be most beneficial these should include community college presidents and other senior leaders); and
- co-curricular activities involving technology and distance learning as well as other models such as the international negotiations modulation sponsored by the California Colleges for International Education (potentially a lower cost option that would serve as an access point to global engagement for students and faculty).

It is clear that there is interest on behalf of UK colleges and universities and US community colleges in continuing this dialogue to better understand the challenges as

well as opportunities for collaboration. It is also clear that more information should be shared between sectors. Just as UK institutions would benefit from more information about the US community college sector and its role in higher education, US community colleges would benefit from a better understanding of the structure of further and higher education in the UK as well as the institutional interests for developing linkages with community colleges. Dr. Law from Edge Hill University offered his campus as a possible location to host a follow on conversation to the morning meeting.

The British Council has agreed to continue facilitating this conversation in coordination with AACC, CCID, and the Association of Colleges (AoC) and plans to develop a strategy for sector level engagement.