



Community College Initiative Program 2025-2026

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Program Overview

What is the Community College Initiative (CCI) Program?

The Community College Initiative (CCI) Program is a U.S. government international exchange program that has received funding as a Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs exchange activity from the U.S. Congress since 2007. The CCI Program provides participants from underserved areas and underrepresented groups with a one-year, non-degree academic program at a U.S. community college. The program is designed to build participants' technical skills in applied fields, enhance their leadership capabilities and strengthen their English language proficiency. The program also provides opportunities for professional internships, service learning, and community engagement activities that build mutual understanding through immersion in the culture and day-to-day life of the United States.

Why is the U.S. government interested in funding programs for citizens of other countries to study in the United States?

The U.S. government believes that exchange programs foster mutual understanding and good relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.

What is a community college?

In the United States, community colleges are higher education institutions that welcome all who desire to learn, regardless of wealth, heritage, or previous academic experience. Community colleges offer individual courses (credit and non-credit), certificate programs, workforce development training, and associate degrees. Associate degree coursework at community colleges is roughly equivalent to that offered in the first two years of a four-year bachelor's degree program. Community colleges specialize in postsecondary education in applied fields, technical skills development, and job training. Community colleges respond to a local economy's need for trained workers in the city and state where the college is located.

What expenses are covered by the program?

The CCI Program scholarship covers all basic expenses of arriving to and living in the United States for the duration of the program. The scholarship provides J-1 visa support, round-trip travel from the participant's home country to host institution in the United States and return travel at the end of the program, tuition and mandatory college fees, housing and meals, a small allowance for books and incidental expenses, limited accident and sickness coverage that is J-1 visa compliant, and a variety of personal and professional development activities.

Eligibility

Which countries participate in the CCI Program?

The CCI Program will recruit from these 17 countries for the 2025-2026 academic year: Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

Can I still apply if am from a different country? No. To research other exchange opportunities offered by the U.S. Department of State, please visit <https://exchanges.state.gov/>.

What is the minimum age requirement for participation? Applicants must be at least 18 years old by July 1, 2025.

What is the minimum education level required to apply? A diploma from a secondary school.

I have already graduated from a university. Am I eligible to apply?

Yes, however, you may not pursue study in a field for which you already have a degree. A community college provides the equivalent of the first two years of university study. Nominees without a university degree will be given placement priority.

What level of English proficiency is required to apply?

Applicants are expected to have basic working knowledge of English language as demonstrated by a minimum TOEFL score of 420 to be accepted into the program. Each college has unique English language requirements that a participant must meet in order to enroll in academic credit-bearing coursework in a field of study (typically 500-550 TOEFL score). Applicants who have lower levels of proficiency in English must be excited about studying English language because they may not be eligible to take courses in their field of study.

Which fields of study can I pursue during the program?

The CCI Program offers six fields of study, however each country may elect to offer fewer fields based on local workforce needs. Refer to your specific country application for fields offered. Applicants should have some demonstrated academic or professional interest or experience in their chosen field of study.

1. Agriculture
2. Applied Engineering
3. Business and Entrepreneurship
4. Early Childhood Education
5. Information Technology
6. Creative Economy and Media

Can I apply for the CCI Program if I have already been to the United States as a participant on another U.S. government sponsored program?

Yes, however, nominees with no prior overseas study or travel to the United States will be given placement priority. Candidates who were previously on sponsored J-1 visas must have completed the 2-year home residency requirement.

May people with disabilities apply? Why does the application ask if I have a disability?

Yes, individuals with disabilities may apply and are encouraged to do so. The CCI Program does not discriminate against applicants on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, or any other protected characteristic as established by U.S. law. The application includes a question about disability so that we are aware of what kinds of reasonable accommodations might be needed if you are interviewed or selected. Your answer to the question will not affect your chances of acceptance. All candidates must receive a medical clearance from a licensed physician as a part of the acceptance process to ensure that they can fully participate in all aspects of the program.

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If I have a pre-existing physical or mental health condition, will that impact my selection for the program?

The purpose of the medical form is to confirm health status for review and medical clearance, upon which a grant is contingent. The information will also help your program staff be of maximum assistance to you should the need arise while you are on a grant. Mild physical or psychological disorders can become serious under the stresses of life in an unfamiliar environment. It is important that we be made aware of any medical, emotional, or psychological problems, past or current, which might affect you while on your program. Your award is contingent upon your submitting the Medical History and Examination Form and Physician's Statement to your program staff by stated deadlines and remains contingent until the information is reviewed and medical clearance is issued.

The Medical History and Examination Form and Physician's Statement should be completed in English by a licensed physician, doctor (MD, DO, or foreign equivalent), or nurse practitioner who is not a member of your family and mailed to your program staff before your participation in the program can be confirmed. Violation of this policy may result in the revocation of your award. If the forms are completed by a health practitioner who is not an MD, DO, or nurse practitioner, it must be cosigned by an MD or DO.

If any information provided on the medical is found to be substantially *inaccurate or incomplete*, it may be grounds for termination of a grant.

Participants must notify their contact at the U.S. Embassy or Fulbright Commission in the country of their nomination about any changes in their medical status or overall health and wellness that may occur prior to their departure for the CCI Program. During the CCI Program, they must notify their host campus program coordinator immediately of any change in their medical status or overall health and wellness.

Application

What is the application timeline?

Applications usually open in the fall but depend on each program cycle. Application deadlines vary by country, so it is important to check with the U.S. Embassy or Fulbright Commission in your country for exact deadlines.

After the application deadline, an in-country panel will select the strongest candidates to be interviewed. Applicants will be notified of their selection and placement statuses on a rolling basis from spring to summer 2025.

What is the selection process and what are the main selection criteria?

Recruitment and nomination of candidates is administered by the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy or the Fulbright Commission in eligible countries. Selection criteria may differ by country but includes:

- demonstrated interest and professional goals in the field of study
- full commitment to participate in all five pillars/components of the program
- emotional readiness to participate in an intensive program
- cross-cultural interest
- leadership potential
- flexibility and suitability as an exchange student
- commitment to return to their home country after completion of the program to share what they learned with others in their home communities
- additional criteria described on the application form

How can I apply?

The application process for the CCI Program is handled in each participating country, so questions you have about the application process will be addressed by the U.S. Embassy or Fulbright Commission in your country. To contact your U.S. Embassy or Fulbright Commission, please follow the following instructions:

1. Visit <https://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/community-college-initiative-program>,
2. Scroll to the "Country-Specific Information" section,
3. Select your country from the drop-down menu,
4. Contact the provided Embassy or Fulbright Commission for your country.

I have a physical disability or other special need. May I have another person assist me in completing my application?

Yes. Applicants with physical disabilities or special needs who require another person's assistance to complete an application may do so. However, the thoughts, ideas, and content of your application must be your own.

Program Participation and Program Requirements

How long is the CCI Program?

CCI participants come to the United States for an academic year, typically 10 months.

Can I arrive in the United States before the program begins?

No. Participants will be provided with a flight that arrives just before an orientation program at their host college.

Can I choose which U.S. community college will I attend?

No. Each participant is placed at one of the hosting colleges based on their field of study and placement availability.

Where will I live?

All participants live in shared apartments or dormitories on or near the campus of their host college. The CCI Program will arrange your housing.

Will I earn a degree?

No. Some participants may earn an academic certificate in their field of study. Certificate programs are not available for all programs at all campuses and are contingent upon multiple factors, including the participant's level of English.

Are the five pillars of the program of equal importance?

Yes, the CCI Program is not solely an academic or professional experience program. Participants are expected to give equal importance to the five pillars of the program: Academics, Volunteering, Internship, Cultural Exchange, and Leadership and Community Impact Projects.

Are there English requirements for courses?

Participants must meet the minimum language requirements of the host college—usually 500 on the TOEFL test—to take credit-bearing courses in their field of study. Participants who do not meet the host college's requirements for credit-bearing courses may be enrolled in a combination of English language and non-credit, field-specific courses based on the participant's level of proficiency in English.

What are the program requirements other than academics?

All participants are required to participate in a variety of professional and personal development activities: leadership development, volunteering, an internship, cultural exchange, CCI-wide and campus-specific events. Program requirements will be across the five pillars of the CCI Program. **Academics is of equal importance to all other pillars.**

Can I make plans to travel during the program and breaks?

Yes. Participants may plan their own travel **in the United States** during breaks from courses and required program activities. All travel must be approved by the program coordinator and is contingent on the participant's progress in the program. Participants are expected to remain in the United States for the entire program except in cases of emergency.

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Will the CCI Program provide funding for travel while in the United States?

Participant travel costs for any CCI-wide and campus organized events will be covered by the program. Participants will need to cover the costs of any other personal travel while in the United States. Participants are encouraged to wisely manage their finances in order to maximize additional opportunities for travel.

Can family members come with me to the United States?

The CCI Program does not permit or provide any support for dependents including visa sponsorship, financial allowances, housing, health benefits, or other means of support for dependents.

What will happen if I get sick?

Health benefits coverage during the scholarship period will be provided by the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) in compliance with requirements of the J-visa program of the U.S. Department of State. All participants are encouraged to familiarize themselves with ASPE benefits. Information about coverage and limitations is available online at <https://www.sevencorners.com/gov/usdos>.

After the Program**Will my credits transfer back to my home institution?**

Applicants should check with their home institutions in advance to determine whether credit for the program is possible. Participants should also create a portfolio of their work (copies of their U.S. community college transcript, syllabi for each of their courses, and graded papers and assignments) to support their request for transferability of their work to their home institution. There is no guarantee that institutions in a CCI participant's home country will give credit for academic work completed in the United States as part of the CCI Program.

Will the CCI Program provide funding after I complete the Program for other projects?

No, the CCI Program provides funding for participation in the 10-month U.S. program. During the program, however, participants will learn about a variety of public and alumni resources that publish opportunities for grant or private funding. Alumni are responsible for researching and applying for any separate funding opportunities.

Can I stay in the United States after the program ends?

No. At the end of the program, participants are required to return to their home countries on the flight provided by the CCI Program.

Can I return to the United States after the CCI Program to pursue further studies?

Individuals may apply for any visa for travel to the United States for which they qualify. Participants will not be able to reenroll in any CCC host institution for a period of 18 months following CCI Program completion.

Tell me more about the two-year home residency requirement.

All CCI participants are subject to the J-visa two-year home residency rule, which prohibits returning to the United States under certain visa categories until the participant spends at least two years in their home country after completion of their ECA program. The two-year home residency requirement is a time when ECA hopes that you will share what you learned during the program with others in your home country. More information about J-visa requirements is available at <https://i1visa.state.gov/>.