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Chile Opens First “American-Style” Community College in Latin America

Written by Laura French

Chile has opened Latin America’s first community college, Community College de Santiago, currently in its first semester.

Many are hoping that the model will expand to other Latin American countries. The US’s Agency for International Development is using grants and exchange programs to help encourage new schools providing technical education and lower-level university courses.

The community college model varies among countries. The Chilean community college is following the US’s archetype and requires two years of course work to get a certificate, diploma or associate degree.

Community colleges thrive around the world in countries like Canada, the U.K., Malaysia, Australia and the Philippines. The US has 1,157 community colleges, which account for approximately 46 percent of enrolment in higher education. Community colleges are also the main mode of continuing education in the country.

Sergio Quezada, the manager of the Santiago Community College, explained that his college was created to help Chile compete in the world. “To strengthen the economic and social development of Chile, technical professionals need to be trained to the highest level with the skills required to function in the international labor market,” he said.

The college’s website explains that, “The Community College allows social mobility and contributes to national development training of technicians so they are capable of adapting to technological changes. In addition, the Community College, through remedial courses, allows students to attain the skills necessary to directly enter a

professional career.”

A partnership with the Community College of LaGuardia, New York, was established, which helped to the Chilean college to get started. Like American community colleges, this school takes has a transfer option for continuing studies after completing a degree or certification.

The college is located in the center of Santiago and boasts computer, physics, construction, and hydraulics laboratories, a learning center, and sports complexes. Students of all ages are welcome.

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