



The first Community College in the country is being offered. The initiative is aimed at training industry and commerce professionals, with study programs especially designed for dual degrees in Chile and the US.

By La Tercera.com | 12/30/08 - 15:57

Universidad Central is heading the creation of the first Community College in the country, which came to fruition with the signing of an agreement between the School of Physical Sciences and Math of this university and La Guardia Community College in New York. The institution was represented by its President, Dr. Gail O. Mellow, who met with the principal administrators of the higher education institution to close the agreement and support the university in the design of the degree programs.

In this regard, the rector of Universidad Central, Luis Lucero, stated that "as an academician and a university authority, I am very proud of our 'Community College Central', because of the immense contribution we will make to Chilean education and society as a whole. Through this initiative, we will generate considerable student social mobility, we will make an excellent contribution to continuing education, and we will be training top-level university technicians," he assured.

The professional degrees given by a Community College give students the chance to work with a technical degree after two years and, at the same time, continue their studies in a university degree program of four or more years, without losing the courses they

already took. Community College Central, said the Rector, includes a plan in which students graduate after two years of training with state-of-the-art skills and knowledge, in this way able to join the job market immediately or choose to enter professional degree programs of Universidad Central, with the respective equivalencies of similar courses they already completed.

“The degree will be recognized in Chile by Universidad Central and in the United States by La Guardia Community College, whereby we are offering a range of extremely important possibilities and infinite options so that young people who were prevented from studying can build a better future. That is the social commitment our University has adopted,” added Lucero.

The academic administrator remarked that two-year programs offer students the chance to earn credits that are fully recognized and valid in degree programs of four or more years. Moreover, the professors of these programs come directly from industries or employment sources, which means that students are taught the latest technologies used in industry.

WHY A COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN CHILE?

One of the main factors supporting the creation of “Community College Central” in Chile is transforming the nation into a developed country, promoting comprehensive processes that help invest in the so-called educational pyramid, according to the dean of the School of Physical Sciences and Math, Sergio Quezada. He added that, to this end, we not only need to train top-level professionals, but we also need a work force with knowledge to adapt quickly to a technology that is in a constant state of change and development.

That is precisely one of the fundamental objectives of “Community College Central”, the training that professionals in local industry and commerce need, offering study programs that directly satisfy these requirements.

“According to figures from the US Department of Education, 93% of Community College graduates get jobs in less than one month,” remarked Quezada.

Furthermore, although Chile has a significant number of Professional Institutes and Technical Training Centers, they do not offer students one of the basic characteristics of “Community College Central”: the students’ opportunity to transfer credits to a program offered by the same university.

“By offering that opportunity, students who want to get a more advanced degree should not have to start their education all over again, saving time and money. At Universidad Central, we are fully meeting that need,” assured the Dean.

Moreover, according to the Dean, the Community College of Universidad Central would open the way for a college education for young people from families in Chile who do not have the economic resources to finance a four-year program.

During 2009, courses of study will be defined focusing on skills, as well as the administrative structure and the training of professors at La Guardia Community College, to learn and subsequently apply in Chile the different methodologies incorporated into that US institution.