

IEP Adds Diversity to JCCC

At age 18, Rocio Castaneda enrolled in JCCC's Intensive English Program because she says, "I wanted to improve my English skills."

A native of Guatemala City, Castaneda already speaks her native Spanish and fluent German. Smart and ambitious, Castaneda is thinking about engineering or architecture or a combination of the two as careers. She takes a five-hour JCCC credit calculus class along with her Level 3 IEP classes.

"I have a friend who lives here, and she told me JCCC has a very good Intensive English Program," Castaneda said. "I checked it out on the Internet and decided to come."

Castaneda is a typical IEP student.

"Our students are highly educated and highly intelligent," said Jeffrey Couch, IEP program coordinator. "Education is their primary focus in life because they understand the value of an education. For them, education is a privilege not an entitlement."

Castaneda is typical in another way. Word-of-mouth and affordable tuition are two of the main reasons students enroll in JCCC's IEP. IEP charges the same tuition rates as JCCC credit classes, making it a value compared to four-year colleges or universities.

This the tenth year for JCCC's IEP, which began in spring semester 1997. The numbers have increased from 380 students taking 30 classes the first year to 747 students taking 73 classes in 2007. The IEP has served 9,354 students from 68 countries through 917 classes during 10 years.

Couch measures the success of the program in additional ways – the revenue the program brings to the college; the revenue international students bring to the local and state economy; the amount of exposure the program gives the college locally and internationally; and the impact that IEP has on the lives of students when they return to their home countries and gain positions of influence.

According to Couch, students enroll in IEP to improve their English proficiency and cultural understanding for three main reasons – to prepare for degree study at a U.S. college or university, professional development reasons or

personal reasons. At JCCC, students who complete Level 4 IEP classes automatically matriculate to credit classes.

"IEP brings diversity to JCCC," Couch said. "We live it. We teach it. We believe in it."

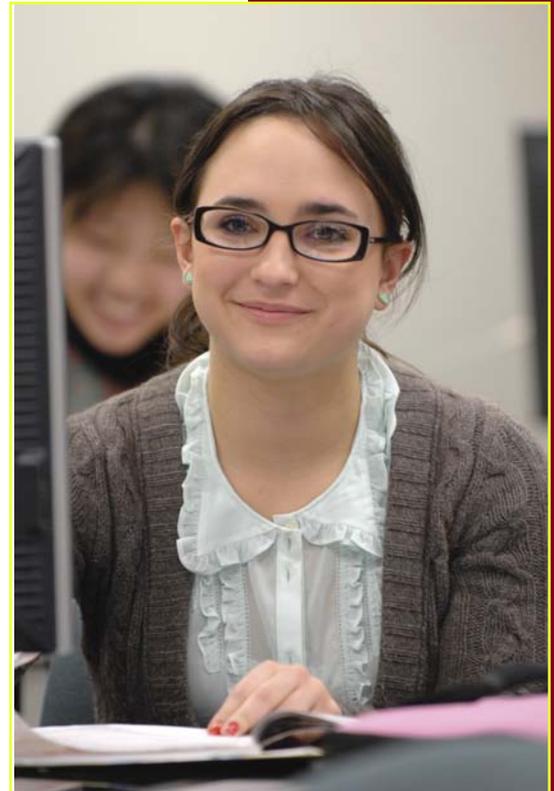
Couch says one of the biggest challenges to international students is the stigma that they need remedial classes because they don't speak English, while just the opposite is true.

"IEP students are among the brightest and best. They return to their home countries to roles of leadership and decision making," Couch said.

Couch, who has bachelor's and master's degrees from Central Missouri State University, has been the director of JCCC's IEP since its inception. He is currently serving two-year terms as both Kansas representative to Kansas International Educators and to Region II of NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

Several receptions are planned throughout 2007 to celebrate the 10th anniversary year of IEP, a program of Continuing Education and Community Services.

Rocio Castaneda takes part in an IEP Level 3 "Structure" class taught by Christine Reinhard.



Masako Khomsi from Japan.