

range of overseas degrees. But it also has a well-equipped campus, opened in 1997, that would put many U.K. campuses to shame. SIM is privately funded but with government backing.

Alternatively, there are the overseas degree programs offered by the British Council, the Singapore Human Resources Institute, the Singapore Productivity and Standards Board, and the Institute of Marketing. Because they are run by professional bodies, these institutions possess a greater adherence to academic and professional standards. Likewise, the programs offered by the bigger and often more reputable companies, or *K* strategists, which are underpinned by a more appropriate level of investment, tend to be of a better quality. But don't depend on it.

Meanwhile the CEO of one school has started offering students who enroll in their MBA program the chance to win a Mercedes Benz. "Because our students deserve the best!" What a nice man! So why doesn't he give them all a Mercedes? Sorry, does the Merc come with the MBA or is it the other way round? I'm confused!

And what of the prof? Last I heard of him he was cruising the Med. Happy cruising and give my regards to the Queen. . . .

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Foreign Students' High Tuition Spurs Eager Junior Colleges to Fudge Facts

Daniel Golden

Daniel Golden is a staff reporter of the Wall Street Journal. This article is reprinted from the Wall Street Journal.

It is only a 10-minute drive to Stanford University from Foothill College in Los Altos, California. In Foothill's marketing materials, the academic journey to the elite university looks almost as easy. Foothill, a two-year community college, has attracted 1,462 international students via aggressive marketing. A brochure it distributes abroad promises prospects their "choice of the most selective universities in the U.S." after they graduate, citing Stanford and Harvard as "common transfer destinations."

Foothill's website says international students transfer "every year" to Harvard. George Beers, dean of international education, said in an interview that Foothill

placed two graduates at Harvard and one at Yale last year, and that Stanford takes more transfers from Foothill than anywhere else.

Actually, Harvard has rejected all 15 of Foothill's transfer applicants in the past five years. Nobody from Foothill has entered Yale since 1998. And Stanford enrolls an average of three Foothill graduates a year, counting domestic and international students—fewer than it does from at least eight other schools.

"The numbers I use are not specific," Mr. Beers acknowledged in a later interview. "I have to be honest about that." Janice Carr, director of Foothill's honors program, says she interprets "destination" in the brochure to mean "that's where they'd like to go. It doesn't mean they get there."

By any definition, a growing destination for community-college recruiters is overseas. Since the September 11 attacks, they have curtailed some of their recruitment in the Middle East, though they still view the area as a source for students—chiefly because the financial rewards are so great.

International students overall spend \$11 billion a year on tuition and living expenses in the United States. With endowments and state support shrunk by the economic downturn, more colleges are wooing foreigners, who generally pay full tuition and receive no financial aid.

Surprisingly, community colleges are among the most aggressive recruiters abroad, despite the fact that the primary mission of these public two-year schools traditionally has been to serve their localities by offering open admissions, vocational training, and low tuition.

Since 1996, the number of international students at such community colleges increased to 91,727 from 64,920 and now accounts for 36 percent of all foreign undergraduates in the United States.

But some community colleges buttress their recruitment by misrepresenting transfers to more celebrated schools, waiving English-language requirements, or paying recruiters commissions, a practice discouraged by the best-known ethics code of the admissions trade, since such payments can lead to students enrolling in schools they can't handle.

"Community colleges are often more interested in income than enrolling students who are a good match," says Linda Heaney, president of Linden Educational Services, in Washington, D.C., which organizes college-recruiting tours overseas.

The website of Green River Community College in Auburn, Wash., says its international students "have transferred to top universities all over the U.S.," listing Georgetown, Cornell, and Boston universities, among others. Ross Jennings, Green River's executive director

of international programs, says that no one there has transferred directly to Cornell. He says an international student last transferred from Green River to Georgetown six years ago, and to Boston University nine years ago.

Glendale Community College in Glendale, California, acknowledged that a claim on its international student website that it has an “articulation agreement” with Stanford is wrong. Articulation agreements generally mean that graduates who meet specific academic standards are guaranteed or given priority in transfer admission. Stanford says it has no articulation agreement with any school.

In a recruiting publication, community colleges advertise that students can finish the “first two years of college, then transfer to Harvard, MIT, or Boston University.”

In “Study in the USA,” a widely read recruiting publication, three community colleges in California’s Ventura Country—Moorpark, Oxnard and Ventura—advertise jointly that students can finish the “first two years of college, then transfer to Harvard, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology or Boston University, among others.” However, those universities have no record of international student transfers from the three community colleges.

“It could be perceived as inflating expectations,” said Dennis Cabral, international coordinator for the Ventura community-college district. “We’re trying to encourage our students to set their sights high.” Administrators at Foothill say their main aim is to diversify the student body. But foreign students yield financial dividends, too. First, they pay higher tuition than in-staters. Secondly, community colleges in California and most other states get to keep those extra sums on campus. Generally, tuition from local students goes straight into state coffers, and then is redistributed throughout public higher education.

Foothill, with 18,627 full- and part-time students, is close to an enrollment cap on subsidies for in-state students. So foreign students are about the only way it can grow. They pay \$4,500 annual tuition, more than 10 times the in-state fee. Mr. Beers estimates that the 3,000-plus international students at Foothill and its sister college, De Anza, in nearby Cupertino, contribute \$10 million in revenue and \$5 million in net income.

Foothill doesn’t restrict recruitment to the best foreign high schoolers. After failing their college-entrance exams last year in Hong Kong, Mian Wong and Amy Hung each paid \$250 to an agent, CJR Educational Services, to be placed in a U.S. college.

To expedite their admission, Foothill waived its requirement of a 500 score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language, a widely used test score on a scale of 310 to 677. Based on Foothill’s own language test, both students were placed in an upper-level English as a Second Language class last September. Ms. Wong failed and Ms. Hung received a “D.”

Mr. Beers says the Foothill test is a “very accurate evaluation” and the two students “may not have applied themselves” in the class. The two young women, both 19 years old, are retaking the ESL course, and have abandoned Stanford dreams.

Green River Community College says it no longer uses one of its Hong Kong agents, Stephen Lo, partly because he assured several students they would be placed in higher-level ESL classes than their fluency merited. Once at Green River, they failed its language test and were assigned to lower-level courses. Asked what he told the students, Mr. Lo declined to answer the question directly but said it isn’t his job to decide course placement.

Trade-school recruiters signed up the homeless straight out of shelters—and often delivered little education.

Green River paid Mr. Lo what it still pays other agents, a commission of 10 to 15 percent of first-year tuition, or about \$750, for each student they recruit.

A decade ago, in response to scandals in which trade-school recruiters signed up the homeless straight out of shelters—and often delivered little education—the U.S. government banned commission-based recruiting of students who qualify for federal aid. But the ban doesn’t apply to international students, who are ineligible for financial aid. Recruiting foreign students on commission does violate the guidelines of the National Association of College Admissions Counselors, to which Green River belongs.

Green River’s Mr. Jennings says using agents on commission was once considered a “dirty business,” but it is now widely accepted that they can help students find a good educational fit. ■