Supporting Skilled Immigrants: An ESL Practitioner’s Toolkit

2013 COABE Conference
March 26, 2013
Today’s Presenters

Paul Feltman
Paul Feltman is the Director of the Global Talent Bridge initiative for World Education Services (WES), a non-profit organization that helps immigrants gain recognition of their academic qualifications earned abroad. He directs and develops Global Talent Bridge outreach and education programs, community partnerships, and policy initiatives designed to help immigrants successfully integrate into academic and professional settings in the U.S. Paul serves on numerous advisory boards and makes frequent presentations related to immigrant integration and credential recognition.

Marilyn J. Rymniak
Marilyn J. Rymniak is the Dean of the LAC Academy and Director of the Professional Certificate Programs and the Contextualized Curriculum Development Services at the LAC. She has been an ESOL specialist and international adult educator for over 35 years, including stints in corporate, workplace, and domestic and international campus-based English language training programs.
Our Organizations

• **Global Talent Bridge** is an initiative of World Education Services (WES) that is dedicated to helping skilled immigrants fully utilize their talents and education in the United States. Global Talent Bridge works with institutional partners and community organizations to help skilled immigrants leverage their training, achieve their professional goals, and contribute their talents to their full potential. It publishes online resources, offers training and technical assistance, and advocates for improved policies and practices to support the work of immigrant-serving agencies and institutions.

• **World Education Services (WES)** is a non-profit organization whose mission is to foster the integration of persons educated outside the U.S. into academic and professional settings. Its primary service is providing foreign credential evaluation reports so that academic credentials earned abroad are understood and fully recognized in the U.S. Since 1974, WES has served more than 750,000 individuals from around the world.

• **Literacy Assistance Center (LAC)** For 30 years, the LAC of New York City has been the principal Professional Development and Education provider for adult educators and adult literacy education programs throughout the five boroughs of New York City.
Some Thoughts From Your Peers on Key Challenges

• “Navigating the complex and expensive system of re-credentialing”

• “Advising them what to do next after they reach a score that disqualifies them for our school, but does not indicate proficiency adequate for entry into their professions and for functioning professionally”

• “Many feel they are not able to utilize degrees from their country. Some would rather start at the GED level because they feel it will be better accepted by employers”

• “No funding to serve them; they get bad advice from other CBOs; they have to earn a living to survive and don’t have time for credentialing activities”

• “No central location for finding pertinent information. It seems that each case demands its own search for appropriate resources”
Supporting Skilled Immigrants Overview

- Skilled Immigrants - Profiles and Barriers to Integration
- Critical Incidents and Exercises
- Adult ESL Classroom Strategies and Lesson Ideas
- Program Models and Best Practices
- Advocating for Skilled Immigrants
- Program and Resource Guide

www.globaltalentbridge.org/toolkit
Chapter 1

• Skilled Immigrants - Profiles and Barriers to Integration
• Critical Incidents and Exercises
• Adult ESL Classroom Strategies and Lesson Ideas
• Program Models and Best Practices
• Advocating for Skilled Immigrants
• Program and Resource Guide

www.globaltalentbridge.org/toolkit
Skilled Immigrants: A Profile

Who are we talking about?

• Immigrants/refugees/asylees with university education and/or professional experience earned abroad, seeking to work in their profession or pursue further education to qualify for a new career.

• Migration Policy Institute estimates that there are 7.2 million college-educated immigrants living in the U.S. (2011 data)

• 28% of college-educated immigrants are Limited English Proficient (LEP)
Educational Attainment of Immigrant Workers in U.S.

22 million = 17% of Total U.S. Workforce

- Bachelor's or higher: 6.9 million (32%)
- Less than a high-school: 5.6 million (26%)
- High school: 5.5 million (25%)
- Some College/Associate: 3.6 million (17%)

The Scope of the Problem

- **1.5 million** college educated, immigrants and refugees who have the right to work in the U.S. are unemployed or in low-wage, unskilled jobs
- Another 1.2 million work in semi-skilled positions
- **50%** have advanced degrees
- **23.6%** of foreign-born U.S. residents with a bachelors degree earn less than **$20,000** annually, compared with **7.6%** of native-born residents with the same education

- *Migration Policy Institute, Uneven Progress, 2008 – data updated 2010*
Why Does This Matter?

Immigrants do fill key roles in our economy

24% of managerial and professional jobs in 25 largest U.S. metro areas; more than half received their education overseas

Immigrants help American companies to innovate and compete in a rapidly changing global economy

More than 40% of Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants or their children.


Immigrants can play an important role in filling current skills shortages

Today, there are 3 million open positions in our economy. Given current skill shortages in critical fields such as engineering and health care, the proper recognition of immigrant skills and credentials is of vital importance to the U.S. economy.
Barriers Facing Skilled Immigrants

- Recognition of foreign academic credentials
  - Credential evaluation
- Systemic issues related to professional licensing
  - Guidance on re-licensing, alternate careers, pathways
- Insufficient support for professional level job search
  - Professional job-readiness (resume, cover letter, interview skills, professional networking)
- English language proficiency
  - Advanced / Contextualized / Profession-specific ESL
Barrier #1: Credential Recognition

Foreign education does have value, and can be utilized, in the U.S. for professional and academic purposes!

- Credential Evaluation enables educated immigrants to gain recognition for their credentials and increases access to opportunities
- Helps licensing boards, employers, academic institutions understand qualifications earned outside the U.S.
  - Required for professional re-certification, licensing
  - Facilitates admission, transfer of credit, advanced standing into academic programs
  - Demonstrates qualifications to employers
- U.S. system is de-centralized, no single standard
- Always check with the institution, employer or board about the evaluation service(s) they recommend or will accept
Sample Credential Evaluation

### UNIVERSITY OF PUNE
GANEKICHID, PUNE - 411 007.

**STATEMENT OF MARKS FOR**
F.Y.B.COM SEM (REVISED JUNE 1999)
W/R/AUG 2002

**SEAT NO.**
**CENTRE**
**DEPT./COLLEGE**
**RANGE NO.**
**PERM. REG. NO.**

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>COURSE NAME</th>
<th>PP/YR</th>
<th>VEX</th>
<th>TOT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>FUNCTIONAL ENGLISH</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ACCOUNTANCY</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td><strong>BUSINESS ECONOMICS (MICRO)</strong></td>
<td>059</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>COMMERCIAL MATHEMATICS &amp; STATISTICS</strong></td>
<td>052</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td><strong>COMPANY LAW AND SECRETARIAL PRACTICE</strong></td>
<td>055</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td><strong>BANKING &amp; FINANCE</strong></td>
<td>056</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td><strong>ADDITIONAL ENGLISH</strong></td>
<td>064</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GRAND TOTAL</strong> = 428</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**COURSE-BY-COURSE ANALYSIS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>SAMPLE, Accesswares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of Birth:</td>
<td>July 29, 1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security #:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>May 25, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ref #:</td>
<td>6163301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page:</td>
<td>3 of 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### INSTITUTIONS - DATES - SUBJECTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Semester Credits</th>
<th>U.S. Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Pune</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2001-2002</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L) English Language I</td>
<td>6.0  B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L) Accounting</td>
<td>6.0  A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L) Business Economics I</td>
<td>6.0  B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microeconomics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L) Commercial Mathematics and Statistics</td>
<td>6.0  A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L) Business Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>6.0  B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L) Banking and Finance</td>
<td>6.0  B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L) English Language II</td>
<td>6.0  A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2002-2003</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L) Business Management</td>
<td>6.0  B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L) Advanced Accounting I</td>
<td>5.0  B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L) Business Economics II</td>
<td>6.0  A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macroeconomics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L) Costing</td>
<td>5.0  B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L) Business Communication</td>
<td>6.0  B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L) Marketing and Advertising I</td>
<td>6.0  B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2003-2004</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(U) Mercantile and Industrial Law</td>
<td>6.0  B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(U) Advanced Accounting II</td>
<td>6.0  A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(U) Indian and Global Economic Development</td>
<td>6.0  A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(U) Business Taxation and Auditing</td>
<td>6.0  B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(U) Marketing and Advertising II</td>
<td>6.0  B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(U) Marketing and Advertising III</td>
<td>6.0  A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### SUMMARY

| Level of Study: Undergraduate | US Semester Credits: 120.0 | GPA: 3.58 |

© 2013 World Education Services, Inc. All rights reserved.
Utilizing Credential Evaluations

• Employment
  – Demonstrates academic qualifications
  – Larger employers usually have formal processes and/or have a preferred service
  – Many employers are unfamiliar with credential evaluation or skeptical of foreign qualifications
  – Refugees and Immigrants need to proactively “market” their evaluation and highlight their US equivalencies to overcome employer concerns

• Professional Licensing / Certification and Education
  – Credential evaluation is well-established
  – Document authentication is critical
  – Detailed analysis of coursework is required
  – Each institution/board sets its own guidelines
Barrier #2: US Job Search

- **Individual Challenges**
  - Language and cultural differences
  - Lack of familiarity with the US job search process
  - Limited professional network in the US

- **Institutional Challenges**
  - Workforce programs geared to fast, inexpensive placement into “survival” jobs, regardless of qualifications, experience
  - Licensing requirements costly, complex, lengthy
  - Employer misconceptions and inability to evaluate foreign education and experience

To help high-skilled immigrants find professional opportunities requires substantial investment, special expertise
Chapter 2

- Skilled Immigrants - Profiles and Barriers to Integration
- Critical Incidents and Exercises
- Adult ESL Classroom Strategies and Lesson Ideas
- Program Models and Best Practices
- Advocating for Skilled Immigrants
- Program and Resource Guide

www.globaltalentbridge.org/toolkit
Critical Incidents

In the Toolkit, you will find case studies profiling skilled immigrants with a variety of professional backgrounds.

The case studies will help you:
• Manage client career expectations in order to build a plan for success
• Identify reliable referral resources and programs
• Develop tips and techniques for better advising
• Improve your program’s intake process
Group Exercise

Directions: Examine the following case study in your group and discuss ways in which you would advise Dorothy.

Dorothy is a very enthusiastic, motivated refugee from Liberia who recently secured her first job in the U.S. as a line cook. Although she enjoys her new job, Dorothy has larger career ambitions. She was a teacher in Liberia and is very anxious to go back to school to become a teacher again in the U.S. She has Master’s Degree in Education from back home, but believes that it is worthless in the United States.

She plans to take the GED exam because her cousin told her that she needs her GED to get a better job or attend college. Although she doesn’t have a lot of time for coursework – she has a full-time job and family obligations – she is willing to put in as much time as needed to teach again.

She went to the local community college and the admissions officers suggested a good first step to teaching would be to enroll in an Associate Degree program in Education so that she can become a classroom assistant.

Is Dorothy getting good advice? If not, how would you advise her differently? What are some of the next steps that Dorothy can take to become a teacher?
Chapter 3

- Skilled Immigrants - Profiles and Barriers to Integration
- Critical Incidents and Exercises
- Adult ESL Classroom Strategies and Lesson Ideas
- Program Models and Best Practices
- Advocating for Skilled Immigrants
- Program and Resource Guide

www.globaltalentbridge.org/toolkit
The Importance of English Language Proficiency

• Framing the issue
• Basic adult education principles – treating adults as adults
• Functional Context Education (FCE) - the importance of contextualized curriculum
• Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) - the importance of developing communicative competence
• Layman's “litmus test”
What Skilled Immigrants Do NOT Need

A GED Diploma: Skilled immigrants have already obtained a high school diploma, and often a partial or completed university degree, in their home country before migration. Their prior education can be recognized in the U.S. by obtaining a credential evaluation.

ABE Classes: Immigrants who have completed the 6th level of NRS ESL should not be placed, for the sake of convenience, in an ABE class with native speakers of English. It is unfair to both the native speakers and the immigrants and produces inaccurate outcomes data for the National Reporting System.

The TABE: It is an inappropriate exam to give non-native speakers of English. It is an exam normed on native speakers of English and produces skewed, inaccurate scores when given to non-native speakers.

A Second Bachelor’s Degree or Associate’s Degree: Skilled immigrants with the equivalency of a Bachelor’s degree in their home country should not be advised to pursue a second Bachelor’s Degree or Associate’s Degree just for the sake of having a “U.S. degree”. Unless they are planning to pursue education in a completely different field, they should instead be encouraged to enroll in a higher level (Master’s or Professional) degree program or pursue relevant professional training in their field.
What Skilled Immigrants **DO** Need

**Contextualized ESL:** Skilled immigrants can master the English that they need best if they enroll in an integrated, contextualized ESL program relevant to their field of professional interest.

**Intensive ESL:** Skilled immigrants can master English faster when enrolled in an intensive ESL program. An intensive ESL program is defined as one which meets at least 12-15 hours or more per week for a fixed number of weeks.

**Managed Enrollment Programs:** Second language learners of English master English faster when enrolled in a managed enrollment program. Skilled immigrants should avoid open-admission and rolling admission programs.

**Proper English Language Assessment:** To assess whether their academic or professional English is good enough to successfully pursue academic coursework or professional opportunities, skilled immigrants should sit for the TOEFL, TOEIC, TSE or the IELTS, not the TABE or Best Plus.
Chapter 4

- Skilled Immigrants - Profiles and Barriers to Integration
- Critical Incidents and Exercises
- Adult ESL Classroom Strategies and Lesson Ideas
- Program Models and Best Practices
- Advocating for Skilled Immigrants
- Program and Resource Guide

www.globaltalentbridge.org/toolkit
Who Does It Best?

• Welcome Back Initiative’s “English Health Train” Curriculum
• I-BEST- Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training
• And many others…
Contextualized Curriculum at a Glance
Welcome Back’s *English Health Train*

- **Overall Goal**
  To provide non-native-speaking health care workers with the English skills needed to communicate and function effectively in the workplace and to help them achieve their professional goals in the U.S.

- **Target Audience**
  Foreign-trained health care professionals, immigrants seeking to enter health care program, and incumbent health care workers with limited English proficiency.

- **Number of Course Hours**
  Approximately 240-320 hours for full program; 6-8 hours per unit.

- **Curriculum Content**
  Integrated English language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) based on themes, issues, and situations of direct relevance to foreign-trained health professionals in the U.S. and diverse communities they may serve through various roles.

- **Curriculum Approach**
  Learner-centered, content-based courses with interactive, problem-solving tasks based on everyday communication in health care settings and current health care issues.

- **Materials Format**
  Custom-designed modules in five theme areas, with eight topics/units per module; listening, discussion, reading, and language focus activities in each unit.
Chapter 5

- Skilled Immigrants - Profiles and Barriers to Integration
- Critical Incidents and Exercises
- Adult ESL Classroom Strategies and Lesson Ideas
- Program Models and Best Practices
- Advocating for Skilled Immigrants
- Program and Resource Guide

www.globaltalentbridge.org/toolkit
Advocating for Your Students/Clients

**Individual**

- Being an advocate for clients as they plan their career path and encounter obstacles
- Develop a referral network and resource library so your client can access appropriate services and reliable information

**Programmatic**

- Advocate internally for advanced/contextualized ESL offerings
- Engage with local partners to share resources and leverage complementary services
- Collaborate on specialized funding proposals
Policy Advocacy

- Work with colleagues to raise awareness with local, state and federal policymakers, funders, employers

- IMPRINT = IMMigrant PRofessional INTegration

- IMPRINT’s new report: “Skilled Immigrants 101” outlines effective strategies for advocacy

- www.imprintproject.org
Increased Recognition of the Issue and Promising Developments

• Policy Interest
  – Migration Policy Institute
  – Brookings Institution – Metropolitan Policy Program
  – IMPRINT

• Programmatic Initiatives
  • NYC Economic Development Corporation’s Immigrant Bridge Program
  • OVAE’s New Immigrant Integration Technical Assistance Project
  • Global Detroit
  • MIRA’s New Americans Integration Institute
Chapter 6

- Skilled Immigrants - Profiles and Barriers to Integration
- Critical Incidents and Exercises
- Adult ESL Classroom Strategies and Lesson Ideas
- Program Models and Best Practices
- Advocating for Skilled Immigrants
- Program and Resource Guide

www.globaltalentbridge.org/toolkit
Programs and Resources

Model programs serving skilled immigrants
• Upwardly Global (NY, CA, IL)
• Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians
• Welcome Back Initiative (CA, CO, WA, TX, MD, NY, RI, MA)

Also featured in the toolkit:
• ESL model programs, resources
• Research and publications
Online Resources to Support Effective Counseling

• **Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians** – Comprehensive professional career guides
  [www.welcomingcenter.org/publications/publication-downloads](http://www.welcomingcenter.org/publications/publication-downloads)

• **Upwardly Global** – Guides to Licensed professions
  [www.upwardlyglobal.org](http://www.upwardlyglobal.org)

• **Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education (CCCIE)** – Resources and promising practices for community colleges
  [www.cccie.org](http://www.cccie.org)

• **Global Talent Bridge** – Comprehensive overview of the issues, along with carefully selected resources and practitioner’s toolkit
  [www.globaltalentbridge.org](http://www.globaltalentbridge.org)
Q&A
Please Join Us Again

• Upcoming Webinar:
  Understanding Credential Evaluation - April 11th, 2013

• Pathways to Success seminars
  – New York metro area, Community Colleges in Washington, DC area and San Francisco
Contact Us

– Paul Feltman, WES Global Talent Bridge
  pfeltman@wes.org

– Marilyn Rymniak, Literacy Assistance Center
  marilynr@lacnyc.org

To download the Toolkit, please visit:
  www.globaltalentbridge.org/toolkit
Thank You