

DRAFT PROPOSAL

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THE CARIBBEAN FOCUS AT R.C.C.

One unique aspect of Roxbury Community College is its large Caribbean community reflected in students and faculty from almost every Caribbean nation. The curriculum has long included courses in Caribbean history and literature and the College has sponsored many forums, concerts, art exhibits and other events with Caribbean themes. In 1986, RCC sponsored a major conference on political and economic issues in the Caribbean. Several hundred people representing twenty nations and including major leaders and scholars from Jamaica, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Central America and from the Caribbean communities in New York, Miami and other U.S. cities, attended the conference, which was one of the first tri-lingual forums to address issues of concern to the entire region.

Participants in that conference indicated in their evaluation comments the hope that RCC would continue a special emphasis on the Caribbean. RCC seemed to be an excellent center for linking the several language and cultural groups of the Caribbean, including Spanish, Haitian Creole, or French and English-Speaking peoples with each other for linking those communities in greater Boston with the Caribbean itself, and for linking academic Caribbean studies with neighborhood and community action groups.

During the Spring Semester of 1988, faculty and administrators met in a Caribbean Work Group to consider ways in which RCC could draw upon its Caribbean strengths and serve its Caribbean communities. The Work Group considered but has not emphasized creation of a formal "Caribbean Studies Degree Program," at least at this time, since several such programs already exist, since such a program is more appropriate for a 4-year University, and since there does not seem to be a current need for AA graduates in area studies. Rather, the Work Group proposed that Roxbury Community College as a whole should have a Caribbean **focus** so that every student coming through the College will be exposed to the richness of Caribbean history and culture. The group also proposed that RCC become a **focus** for the Caribbean communities of greater Boston, helping the several cultures network with each other and fostering a wide range of research, community action projects, concerts, exhibits, plays and conferences on Caribbean topics.

This college may be the best place in Boston to bring the diverse language groups and cultural traditions of the Caribbean together. Spanish-speaking, Haitian Creole-speaking and English-speaking Caribbean students together make up nearly a majority of our student body. Even on campus, however, they do not automatically communicate with each other. The Caribbean focus would help bridge the language and cultural gaps which exist on campus as well as providing a genuine multi-cultural literacy for our students.

A community college is the ideal location for a program which links academic study and community action by bringing community groups and events into the college and by taking college programs and research into the communities we serve. It is assumed that the Caribbean Focus would be the first of several foci at RCC which reflect our unique strength as a multi-cultural, inner-city community college. This draft proposal for an RCC Caribbean Focus is intended as a starting point. We actively seek the input of Caribbean community groups and agencies and from academic Caribbean Studies programs and institutes as we imagine what such a Focus would be.

Such an ambitious proposal obviously will require major institutional support from the College and from the Board of Regents - in other words, from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. That support can only be generated by enthusiastic support from our students and the communities from which they come. A key step toward that support will be refining and amending the specifics of the proposal to fit the real needs and desires of the Caribbean communities within a realistic framework which fits within the RCC mission.
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PROPOSED CARIBBEAN FOCUS AT RCC

Specific proposed aspects of the "Caribbean Focus" include:

I. RCC Curriculum

1. All RCC students should be required to take at least one 3-credit course on a Caribbean topic OR enroll in one semester of the courses with a special "Caribbean Focus," this requirement will satisfy either 3 credits toward humanities' requirements OR 3 credits toward social sciences requirements, depending on the specific Caribbean course taken. (To be proposed to Academic Affairs Committee, Fall 1988; effective, Fall 1989.)
2. This requirement will demand multiple sections of the existing courses in Caribbean topics (Caribbean History & Caribbean Literature) as well as development of additional Caribbean courses.
3. The introductory Caribbean courses should always include materials from the several language/culture groups in the Caribbean.
4. Additional courses should be developed in each distinct culture - such as Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Haiti, etc., and in areas of common concern such as economic development, colonialism, political independence and cultural topics.
5. The Caribbean courses at RCC should be taught by Caribbean natives or others who have lived & worked there.

6. A "Caribbean Focus Semester" will be an option at least once per year, beginning in Fall 1989, with 3 courses taught by 3 faculty who will work as a team: any 1 of the Caribbean courses offered(see above); any 2 other courses such as Eng.Comp.I, Sociology, Psychology, Music, Drama, etc., for which a Caribbean theme is appropriate. Students in this Focus will enroll in all 3 courses (9 credits). Some events and lectures will be shared by students from all three courses. There will be a variety of formats, including small groups, and students may participate in various activities, research and organizing related to the Caribbean theme. Faculty in the Focus will receive compensation or released time prior to the Focus in order to plan it and to assure a genuine team approach. An attempt will be made to include Caribbean and non-Caribbean students in the enrollment of the 3 courses.

7. Eventually, some sections of the Caribbean courses and the Focus Semester should be offered in Spanish and in Haitian Creole, depending on student demand.

II. RCC Exchange Program with Caribbean Institutions

1. Initially, there will be yearly Exchange Programs for periods of 3 weeks to 1 month, involving 10-15 students and 1 full-time faculty member.
 - a. The RCC students & faculty will visit one site in the Caribbean for the entire period of 3-4 weeks during the January Intercession. Students might attend classes at the host college or be involved in other educational/cultural programs at the host agency. Other events, tours, discussions, etc. would be specially arranged for the RCC group. Housing arranged by the host college or agency.
 - b. Caribbean students & faculty from the college or agency which hosted the RCC visit will spend 3-4 weeks at RCC either in the following summer or fall, with similar arrangements and housing provided through RCC.
 - c. Exchanges could involve either educational institutions or community organizations, unions and other non-governmental organizations, and could involve education, work projects or both.
2. The first Exchange would take place in January 1989 if funding could be arranged at the rate of about \$1500 per student (\$18,000 annually). The University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica, is a possibility. Prof. Beverly Manley, who spoke at the RCC Caribbean Conference, has offered to help arrange the Exchange. (1990 if 89 not possible).
3. The Exchange sites should rotate yearly among the 3 culture/language regions (Spanish-, English-, Haitian Creole, etc.)

RCC Exchange (continued)

4. RCC students in the Exchange should have at least 1 course in the language and 1 Caribbean course prior to the Exchange, should raise SOME of their own expenses, and should include a mix of Caribbean and non-Caribbean students.
5. Future exchanges might include a semester-long exchange for 1 full-time faculty from RCC and 1 from the Caribbean, as well as for 3-5 students.
6. In 3-5 years, RCC might provide access for students coming up from the Caribbean to spend 2 years here before attending programs at U.Mass. and elsewhere (agriculture, etc.).

III. Community Outreach & Linkage

1. The RCC Caribbean Focus should be strongly linked to the Caribbean immigrant communities in greater Boston, with input from community organizations and agencies.
2. A Community Advisory Board should help develop and guide the Focus with representatives from community groups as well as Caribbean studies programs in colleges and high schools, including Spanish-speaking, English-speaking and Haitian-Creole-speaking participants.
3. One emphasis of the Focus should be to link and network AMONG the several culture/language communities.
4. Another emphasis of the Focus should be on immigrant issues such as legal problems, housing, language issues, adult education, etc.
5. Institutional links between RCC should exist with other Caribbean Studies programs and Departments both in this area, around the country and in the Caribbean.
6. Public forums, conferences, concerts and other events on Caribbean topics should be sponsored regularly by the College as part of the Caribbean Focus.

Community Outreach (continued)

7. Community action by RCC students as interns should be encouraged as part of the Focus.
8. RCC support for Caribbean activities and campaigns should be part of the Focus.
9. Research by RCC students and faculty for Caribbean community groups in Boston and in the Caribbean should be fostered by the Focus.
10. Regular participation by RCC faculty & students in Caribbean conferences and other important activities should be sponsored by the College.
11. RCC might sponsor a Caribbean Focus Newsletter with the specific purposes of (a) helping the language/culture groups network and interface by informing them of each other's issues and events (b) bridging the gap between the academic world of Caribbean studies and the realities of urban life for Caribbean immigrants.
12. RCC students could serve as interns (for credit) in Caribbean community organizations, language programs and other related activities.