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Every week, education expert Sanjeev Verma will answer your queries on studying abroad. E-mail queries to [features@gulf-times.com](mailto:features@gulf-times.com)

### **What is a community college?**

— Ian Smith

Community colleges developed in the US around the early 20th century with the objective of offering higher education to anyone interested in the local communities. They traditionally offer certificates and associate degrees and serve as launch pads to other four-year colleges as well.

In some instances they are referred to as technical or junior colleges and take on students that are of different stages and background to give them basic required skills and college level education as well as help them prepare to transfer to four-year colleges.

Attending a community college for international students has a great number of advantages.

Community colleges have open acceptance policies that accommodate most applicants, tend to have smaller class sizes, and above all lower fees. In most cases these community colleges also have arrangements with other four-year colleges in the area to accept students on good academic standing and hence facilitate the transitions.

It is important to note here that when students transfer to four-year programmes after having completed their community college studies (usually for two years); they enter directly into the third year of studies. This implies that credits are directly transferable and the student will not be losing out on additional classes or hours to compensate for.

Many students also find that because of the smaller size of a community college, it is easier to receive individualised assistance from faculty. Some community colleges have expanded to include student activities and intramural sports activities.

Generally, there are no time restrictions on a student's educational progress, as there might be at a traditional university. These, combined with a range of other benefits of attending a smaller and inexpensive institution, have helped a great number of international students in their endeavours to succeed while studying in the US.

*(Sanjeev Verma began with Ernst & Young and progressed to set up the Gulf operations of IDP Education Pty. He now leads Intelligent Partners, developing a wide range of solutions in areas of international education.)*