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Integration & Belonging Hub

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Concept Note – Draft

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Concept Note--DRAFT

The Integration and Belonging Hub at Clark University is a nexus for fostering migrant and refugee-inclusive communities locally, nationally, and globally. The Hub focuses on new ways to imagine how societies and the forced migrants among them (refugees, asylum seekers, and others) can continually ‘become together.’

The Hub promotes collaboration and engagement among academic and community partners, involves students in discovery and creating change, and supports innovative research to understand multi-directional processes of movement, migration and social cohesion. The Hub views migrants and refugees as a vital part of 21st-century transformation in the face of significant social, economic, political, and environmental strain.

The Integration and Belonging Hub at Clark University is located in Worcester, Massachusetts, a small city with a long history of migrants of all kinds. A fifth of Worcester’s 180,000 current residents were born in countries other than the United States, and its eleven universities and colleges receive 40,000 students each year. Worcester’s settled residents also claim heritage across dozens of national, ethnic, racial, religious, and Indigenous identities. While our work overlaps with other efforts to address structural marginalization and inequality, we do so primarily through the lens of migrant movement and social cohesion. The Hub generates synergies among Clark and other researchers investigating integration as an inclusive relational process and contributes to new thinking around mobility and belonging.

The Integration and Belonging Hub establishes Clark University as a site for nurturing existing connections with Worcester agencies and organizations who play key roles in welcoming and providing services to forced-migrant newcomers, with an eye to building capacity in other sites of refugee and migrant integration. Additionally, Hub researchers and practitioners draw upon professional networks in a growing number of other US cities, as well as urban settings in Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America. The Hub provides university students with experiential and career opportunities in both the nonprofit migrant and municipal services sectors and with migration policy actors, connects learners to community-led initiatives through internships, and builds knowledge based upon on-going integration research and praxis.

Current Hub activities:

- Guided Internship Program: This program places undergraduate and graduate students in experiential internships with refugee service and humanitarian agencies in Worcester, other USA cities, and internationally.
 - Interns are supported by regular group workshops to learn about the unique characteristics of refugee resettlement in the United States and elsewhere, the ethics of care and partnership in the refugee service profession, cultural humility, and other relevant topics in social justice, forced migration and integration.
 - This program includes an annual conference of collaborating organizations, universities, and other identified stakeholders, to promote, support, and assess the academic and community needs for this program, and to promote collaboration among academic institutions and the community.
- Integration and Belonging Speakers Series: The Hub’s speaker series primarily focuses on forced migration and cultural and other integration issues both in the US context and other societies. These individual and panel discussions are open to the public
- Visiting Scholarthink Program:
- Scholars at Risk Program:

Future Hub activities:

- Comparative Integration Policy International Exchange:
 - The Integration and Belonging Hub will develop a plan for academic and practitioner exchange partnership with sister universities in Europe, Canada, and the Middle East to explore similarities and differences in refugee and migrant integration policy.
 - International students from partner universities would join our Guided Internship Program in Worcester to learn about the US model of migrant assistance, while Clark students will receive placements abroad and learn chosen country refugee and migrant integration practices.
- Research
- Workshops

Innovative Elements:

- The project enriches academic knowledge and professional expertise of refugee integration with a community-engaged component.
- The Integration and Belonging Hub and its student exchange component connects local and global integration context.