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Integration and Belonging Hub

2021

'Seeding an Integration and Belonging Hub', Academic Innovation Fund Application

Integration and Belonging Hub

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Project Description: Seeding an Integration and Belonging Hub

a. Project Need and Alignment

This proposal plants a seed for the development of a wider project, an Integration and Belonging Hub, to promote collaboration among departments, engagement between academic and community partners, student involvement, and innovative research towards understanding multi-directional processes of migration and social cohesion. Establishing such a Hub responds to steadily growing interest among Clark students for experiential and career opportunities in both the non-profit refugee and municipal services sectors and with migration policy actors, in Worcester and elsewhere.¹ Such a Hub would also generate synergies among Clark and other researchers investigating integration as an inclusive relational process and contribute to new thinking around mobility and belonging. And a Hub will serve as a space to gather currently scattered Clark resources² for use by Clark community members and other community groups in Worcester. Building upon models of urban sustainability, an Integration and Belonging Hub views migrants and refugees as a vital part of 21st-century transformation in the face of significant social, economic, political, and environmental strain.

For this first phase, we envision a pragmatic “hub nub” that mobilizes our professional networks in Worcester and elsewhere, connects learners to community-led initiatives through internships, and builds knowledge based upon on-going integration research and praxis. Our Academic Innovation project begins through establishing Clark University as a site for nurturing our existing connections with Worcester agencies and organizations who play key roles in welcoming and providing services to refugees and forced migrant newcomers, with an eye to building capacity in other sites of refugee and migrant integration. Initially, we offer a cluster of activities designed to enhance undergraduate and graduate learning in the area of “social/urban issues” while strategically leveraging our field-based knowledge to strengthen student career opportunities and develop visibility and reputation for the Hub. Our Academic Innovation funding request supports the development of other grant opportunities, including planned proposals to the [Nellie Mae Education Foundation](#) and the [Russell Sage Foundation](#).

This seed project includes the following activities:

Guided Internships Program

- A Guided Internship Program will place students in experiential internships with refugee service and humanitarian agencies in Worcester, other USA cities, and internationally.
- Interns will be supported by regular group workshops to learn about the unique characteristics of refugee resettlement in the United States and elsewhere, the ethics of care in the refugee service profession, cultural humility, and other relevant topics in social justice, forced migration and integration.
- This program will be supported by 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.

Develop implementation plan for Comparative Integration Policy International Exchange

¹ Example of possible placement organizations: Refugee resettlement organizations, nonprofit immigration assistance agencies, non-documented immigrant support network organizations and others locally, within MA, or within US; Appropriate ethnic mutual assistance organizations; City of Worcester, such as the human rights office, employment assistance department, the mayor’s office; MA Office of Refugees and Immigrants, any federal or international organizations if appropriate for the student access; Migrant health providers if possible

² Examples include the Refugee Research Repository at Kasperson Library and the Clark Scholars at Risk program.

- The Integration and Belonging Hub will develop a plan for a student 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.
- IDCE's and Clark's existing alumni working in the fields of social justice and forced migration can be leveraged as potential site sponsors for student placement
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Integration and Belonging Speakers Series

- The Hub's speaker series will primarily focus on forced migration and cultural and other integration issues both in the US context and other societies
- These individual and panel discussions will be open to the public

Inventory and Outreach -- Establishing partnerships in the field

- The primary facilitators of this Academic Innovation grant bring together many decades of professional and academic work with refugee and humanitarian agencies, university researchers and refugee studies programs, and policy makers in a variety of settings.
- A key requirement to develop an Integration and Belonging Hub is to inventory existing connections, relationships, and professional contacts and to systematically reach out to build the networks we need to place interns, develop university partnerships, and invite speakers.
- This activity also prepares the stage for strategic grant application development

b. Project Approach

We ask the Academic Innovation Fund to fund this portion of the larger Hub project which aims to facilitate opportunities that empower students to learn by supervised and informed contributions within forced migrant communities to address the issues that impact the receiving community, and the members of the forced migrant community.³ Students will learn the multifaceted realities of working within the social justice and forced migration field of interest. While students learn much about the academic aspects of forced migration worldwide and locally, this activity creates the opportunity for students to apply theory to practice. Providing this immersive experience will provide essential experiential learning and preparation for careers in humanitarian aid and refugee assistance.

Objectives:

1. Advancing student learning by combining academic and experiential learning about the practical side of working with forced migration persons
2. Creating a framework for international student exchange to promote comparative refugee integration policies knowledge
3. Establishing a speakers' series that draws upon community and professional knowledge about refugee integration and belonging
4. Developing and securing stakeholder partnerships and formalizing administrative and communication systems.

³ The forced migrant communities include refugees, recipients of Special Immigrant Visas, asylum seekers and grantees, human trafficking survivors, unaccompanied refugee minors, undocumented immigrants if eligible (such as NACARA, Cuban & Haitian entrants).



Methods or Procedures:

Internships: With the help and guidance of the internship coordinator and faculty, students will choose the organization for their internship for one semester. The internship components are comprised of 3 integral parts: 1) student orientation prior to placement; 2) monitored progress during the placement; 3) summary of learning outcomes

Exchange program: Identify university and community partners (including Clark alumni) that are working in the refugee integration field and build exchange partnerships with our international counterparts.

Speaker series: plan and organize at least 4 speakers and one stakeholder conference over the course of the grant.

Inventory and Outreach: promote interdisciplinary collaboration within local, national, and international academic and other communities by cataloging and reaching out to relevant networks. This work will be critical to supporting the other 3 proposed elements. Our efforts to establish the Hub includes development of further grant proposals.

Innovative Elements:

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

c. Project Outcomes

This project deepens community engagement for the University and students because it cultivates a commitment to partnerships with local organizations providing essential resources, for individuals and families who are refugees, to overcome challenges and barriers to education, job opportunities and housing. This project also facilitates learning outcomes, essential to careers in humanitarian assistance: empathy, communication, adaptability, motivation, compassion, and negotiation of complex processes.

d. Project Timeline

Milestone	Date
Project Start Date	January 2022
The internships - 7 students are placed per semester	January & September 2022
Speaker series - 4 speakers, 2 each semesters	February, April, September November 2022
Stakeholder conference held	May 2022
Project End Date – final evaluations	December 2022

e. Evaluation:

To evaluate the program success and to improve its implementation, we will collect and analyze:

1. Participating organizations and students’ feedback on internships
2. Attendance and stakeholders’ feedback to the speaker series
3. Stakeholders’ participation and feedback for the conference



Budget items, if needed: (Provide clear justification for how each budget item will facilitate the work of the project, using additional pages as necessary.)

Item	Amount	Justification
Student support	\$1,875	Budgeted \$1,875 throughout the year for reimbursement of student expenses when due to the location of the chosen internships such College Semester UPASS or other incidentals. Reimbursements will be approved by the student's professor and the coordinator, and as needed on an individual basis. Priority will be given to students with recent refugee background, international students, and the individual level of the support needed by each student. Budgeted \$125 (cost of WRTA student pass) for 15 students.
Speakers' series	\$2,100	For 4 planned guest speakers, 2 per semester @ #350 per participant for a total of \$2,100. Community space rental -- The Village (formerly Stone Soup) at \$700 total rental fee for the year
Part Time Project Coordinator	\$16,205	Budgeted total of \$16,205 for the salary for the internship coordinator, of which the \$1,923 is for the fringe benefits calculated at 12% of the salary. This part time position is calculated for 8 hours per week @ \$33.90 per hour for 52 weeks of the program, for a total of \$14,102. The salary, while calculated on hourly basis, is meant to be a stipend, and the coordinator will be responsible for the totality of work, with the understanding that not all weeks will require the same amount of work time. The coordinator will be responsible for recruitment and screening of the participant organizations and student placements and the initial student orientation and follow up; the recruitment of guest speakers; for organization of the 1-day academic conference; for development of the academic and community collaborations; and for final evaluation of the project.

Total Budget Request: \$ 20,000 _____