



## SUMMARY REPORT

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# Official Launch of the University Alliance for Refugees and At-Risk Migrants

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University Communities Engaging in the Global  
Compacts on Migration and Refugees

**2018**  
JULY, 23

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>Welcome Remarks:</b> How Can Universities Contribute to the Global Compacts?	3
<b>Keynote Opening:</b> Overview of the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees	4
<b>Panel 1:</b> Reducing Barriers to Higher Education for Refugees and At-Risk Migrants	5
<b>Panel 2:</b> On-Campus and Community Empowerment	7
<b>Panel 3:</b> Advocacy - Student to President Engagement	11
<b>Panel 4:</b> Developing Research Agendas to Shape Policy, Public Perception, and Humanitarian Intervention	14
<b>Panel 5:</b> Changing Hearts and Shaping Minds in the Digital Age	17
<b>Closing Remarks:</b> Where to now?	19

## Welcome Remarks:

# HOW CAN UNIVERSITIES CONTRIBUTE TO THE GLOBAL COMPACTS?

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Dr. Kyle Farmbry, Dean of the Rutgers Graduate School-Newark, and Dr. Rick Garfunkel, Vice President for Global Affairs at Rutgers Global, both welcomed a group of over 120 attendees to the Official Launch of the University Alliance for Refugees and At-Risk Migrants (UARRM), entitled “University Communities Engaging in the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees.” The launch was held on July 23, 2018 at the New Brunswick campus of Rutgers University, and was co-sponsored by Rutgers Graduate School-Newark and Rutgers Global.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Garfunkel noted the long tradition of Rutgers University’s support for refugees, demonstrated both in the past - through the support of Hungarian refugee populations - and now, by the active participation of Rutgers Global in immigration and support services. Through its extensive network Rutgers Global provides services to over 900 immigrants and 1500 international scholars. The department also supports intercultural events and has many international partnerships, with students and faculty actively engaged with refugees abroad. The formation of the UARRM also turns empathy into meaningful action on behalf of refugees and at-risk migrants. Dr. Garfunkel highlighted the UARRM as a dynamic and growing regional coalition, emphasizing multi-sectoral collaboration between faculty, students, think tanks, government agencies, NGOs and DREAMer groups. This collaboration

is focused on the wellbeing, educational opportunity, and advancement of refugees and at-risk migrants. As co-chair of the UARRM, Dean Farmbry applauded the efforts of researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers seeking to shape the evolution of refugee and at-risk migrant policies. He noted that in spite of challenges faced, the UARRM continues to build traction among governments and NGOs. He also highlighted to the attendees six “Action Areas” identified by the UARRM that specify how universities can play a role. These include building legal pathways for refugees and at-risk migrants, reducing barriers to education, empowering them through provision of housing and psycho-social services, promoting advocacy on their behalf, focusing on evidence-based research initiatives, and by playing a central role in shaping narratives about their situation. Dean Farmbry highlighted the launch as an opportunity to showcase prominent initiatives across each of these action areas to demonstrate the role universities can play with the further goal of inspiring and mobilizing others to take action.

Both Dean Farmbry and Dr. Garfunkel acknowledged and thanked UARRM members, Steering Committee members, and members of the Rutgers Global and Rutgers Graduate School-Newark communities for their outstanding commitment to the UARRM and efforts made on the official launch event.

## Keynote Opening:

# OVERVIEW OF THE GLOBAL COMPACTS ON MIGRATION AND REFUGEES

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In her opening remarks, the event's keynote speaker, Suzanne Sheldon, Senior Policy Advisor at the International Organization for Migration (IOM), first invited attendees to reflect on the reasons why migration has become such a key issue, and the challenges posed by broader societal discomfort surrounding refugees and at-risk migrants. In today's climate, people are nervous about what is unfamiliar - and refugees and migrants are the outsiders.

The Syrian conflict has been a major pivotal event in the recent history of the refugee and migration phenomenon, which has drawn international attention. Further catalysts include refugees fleeing the effects of climate change and the devastating activity of traffickers that have caused thousands of migrants to lose their lives at sea. In spite of the current international focus on this issue, not all of these people on the move are defined as refugees under the Refugee Convention. Ms. Sheldon then addressed this incongruence, which has prompted the emergence of two planned global compacts. The Global Compact on Refugees is designed to more fully address the content of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) identified in the New York Declaration of 2016. In contrast, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) to be adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2018, seeks to facilitate safe and orderly mobility for people trying to improve their chance for long-term sustainability.

The GCM also marks the recognition of the need to improve governance on migration, and respond to abuses by addressing the rights and needs of refugees through a set of 23 non-binding objectives for safe, orderly and regular migration. These are a signal of political commitment, albeit at this time non-binding in nature. In spite of

differences in opinion among states, especially related to the extent of access that migrants have to basic services, and the controversial non-refoulement policy, Ms. Sheldon emphasized that this compact is a historic step forward in the recognition and consensus on the basic rights of migrants. The document includes recognition that climate change and environmental challenges are drivers of migration, that migrants have the right to a legal identity, and its conclusions are drawn from a transparent review of evidence-based research.

To continue the momentum generated by these compacts, Ms. Sheldon emphasized the need for continued growth and expansion of partners, especially at the community-based level. Social media activity, useful to promote awareness especially through its ability to extend communication at the grassroots community level, can play a special role in this area. The continual growth of awareness on the issue is especially important as the December 2018 Marrakesh Conference nears.

In closing, Ms. Sheldon emphasized the progress associated with these Compacts as inspirational, and evidence of a common vision that can shape migration for years to come. Although we recognize major challenges associated with progress on migration, Ms. Sheldon emphasized that society has a moral imperative to work with the issue - especially since migration is a reality that will only increase. Countries therefore will have to engage - and advocates such as the UARRM will have to promote active dialogue with those on both sides of the issue, essential as a key step toward progress. In a final note, Ms. Sheldon stated that this is "the end of the beginning," which now gives us the opportunity to move forward collectively to progress further.

## PANEL 1:

# REDUCING BARRIERS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES AND AT-RISK MIGRANTS



Panelists: Jeremy Adelman, Sarah Willcox, Rama Chakaki and Annetta Stroud.

The first panel of the day was moderated by Annetta Stroud, Associate Director for Training and Program Development at the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), and focused on Action Areas 1 and 2. Ms. Stroud provided background on these Action Areas, the first of which aims to broaden safe, legal pathways for the purposes of study, research, and work, while the second addresses other types of barriers to higher education, ranging from financial obstacles to lack of educational credentials. Panelists included Sarah Willcox, Director of the Institute of International Education's (IIE) Scholar Rescue Fund, Dr. Jeremy Adelman, Director of Princeton University's Global History Lab, and Rama Chakaki, founder of edSeed.

The first panelist, Dr. Jeremy Adelman, provided background on The Global History Lab

at Princeton University; a space where students and faculty experiment and learn with peers and colleagues around the world. The Lab integrates, through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and research projects, both undergraduate and graduate students and faculty in "cross-border, collaborative ventures—in effect, exploring global history globally." The goal of the Lab is two-fold: to develop narrative mapping skills in refugee students living in countries such as Iraq and Kenya, and to encourage Princeton students to learn from refugees. Dr. Adelman then spoke about the experiment on learning sessions between refugees and Princeton students. To conclude, he emphasized the need to do much more beyond MOOCs, and that we cannot rely on rescue operations in the new global refugee regime.

The second panelist, Sarah Willcox, presented IIE's initiatives protecting and

promoting higher education for scholars, students, and artists in emergency situations around the world. Through IIE's global leadership, notable initiatives like Scholar Rescue Fund (SRF), the Artist Protection Fund, and the Emergency Student Fund have advanced scholarship, built economies, and promoted access to opportunities. Though SRF was established in 2002, IIE's history of scholar rescue goes a hundred years back. Thomas Mann, the Nobel Prize Winner, fled to the U.S. in 1939 with the help of the IIE. Since 2002, SRF has assisted 761 scholars from 58 countries, placing them in more than 43 countries around the world. It has 380 partners. SRF has supported scholars and artists mainly from Syria, Iraq, and Turkey. The top five supporters are the U.S., Canada, Germany, U.K., and Jordan. The U.S. has been the most supportive of all, assisting over 41 percent of scholars since 2002.

The third panelist, Rama Chakaki, is the founder of edSeed, a venture philanthropy fund that invests in youth programs and youth-focused startups. Established in 2015 as a USA 501c (3) non-profit organization, edSeed promotes youth empowerment, education and employment through innovative, disruptive technologies. Ms. Chakaki stressed the importance of reaching out to millennials for support and funding, as well as giving vulnerable youth a platform to tell their stories. According to Ms. Chakaki, one way to effect change is to reach out to millennials, who tend to be more supportive of initiatives for underprivileged refugee youth. In this regard, partnerships with universities, where most millennials happen to be, are essential. By sharing compelling stories, she added, we can inspire young people about the possible, positive impacts

of their contributions and influence them to support the refugee cause.

The panel and the ensuing discussion raised a number of important questions for the UARRM. For example, how can we assess the sustainability and long-term impact of initiatives that seek to increase higher education opportunities for refugee students and scholars? This means going beyond access to higher education, and ensuring retention, psychological wellbeing, and employment access upon graduation. It also means expanding initiatives that mitigate brain drain in rescued scholars' home countries, which IIE has done by live streaming rescued scholars' courses at their former universities. IIE hopes to expand this important initiative, to promote higher education among college students remaining in crisis situations.

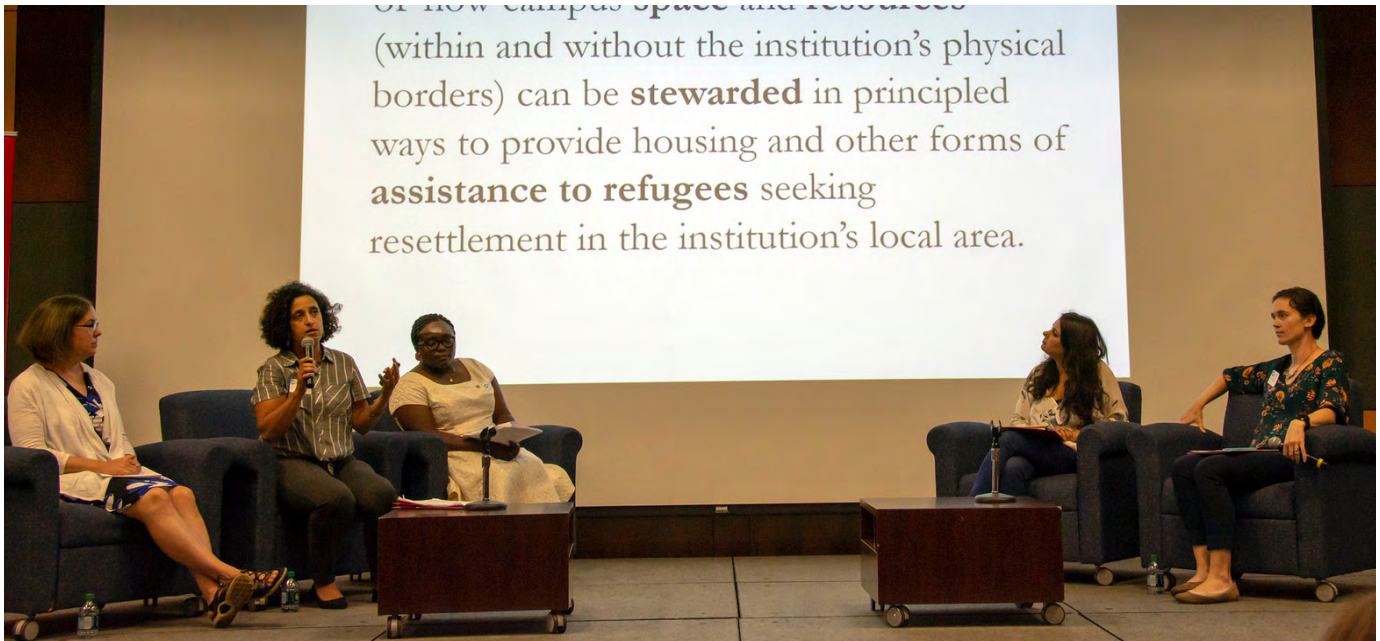
Furthermore, how do we effectively convince U.S. universities to open their doors to students and scholars from crisis countries, despite state legislation or federal policies that limit their capacity to do so? Is it possible to sidestep federal policies that block certain international students and scholars from entering the U.S.? In grappling with some of these questions, Dr. Adelman emphasized that engaging and building partnerships with university presidents is more effective than "pressuring" them to open their doors to displaced students and scholars. When this becomes impossible due to policies like the travel ban, Ms. Stroud highlighted possibilities for opening alternative legal pathways for entry into other safe countries, through international satellite campuses (e.g., Bard Berlin), exchange programs, and partnerships with universities and stakeholders overseas.

You can access panel one presentations on:

[Link to panel one presentations](#)

## Panel 2:

# ON-CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT



Panelists: Janet Reilly, Diya Abdo, Agnes Nzomene, Anju Gupta and Courtney Madsen

The second panel of the day was moderated by Courtney Madsen, Director of Church World Service's (CWS) Jersey City Immigration and Refugee Office, and focused on Action Area 3. This Action Area seeks to leverage campus resources for the provision of various support services (e.g., pro-bono legal services; psychological support; housing; employment support) for displaced students and scholars, as well as vulnerable migrant populations more broadly. Panelists included Dr. Diya Abdo, founder of Every Campus a Refuge (ECAR), Anju Gupta, Professor of Law and Director of Rutgers-Newark's Immigrant Rights Clinic, Agnes Nzomene, Education and Employment Trainer at Catholic Charities, and Dr. Janet Reilly, Politics Faculty and Director of Refugee Initiatives at Sarah Lawrence College.

The first panelist, Dr. Diya Abdo, founded ECAR in 2016 at Guildford College in Greensboro, North Carolina. Inspired by the Pope's call for

"every parish in Europe to host a refugee family," Dr. Abdo called for every campus to do the same. By "radically reimagining" what can be done with campus resources, she believes that the academic community can increase and improve the quality of resettlement. Since its founding, ECAR has hosted 42 refugees on campus, and has inspired six other campuses to join the ECAR movement. In addition to supporting refugee resettlement, ECAR educates the community and shapes public discourse. For example, Guildford's ECAR Minor program enables college student volunteers to learn about and conduct research on local refugee issues, and acquire credit for their service. Moreover, the mere act of joining the ECAR movement campuses sends a powerful message during today's era of rampant xenophobia, potentially shifting public attitudes toward migrants.

When campaigning for other campuses to join the ECAR movement, Dr. Abdo pointed out

that “each campus culture is different” and is not always able to steward resources in the exact same way. However, campuses can ask for support from community partners. As Dr. Abdo noted, “There is always some resource that someone isn’t using.” Most importantly, campuses must partner with their local refugee resettlement agency. Because campuses are co-sponsors and do not have legal authority to provide resettlement services, partnering with resettlement organizations is crucial.

The second panelist, Anju Gupta, discussed three Rutgers Law School programs for lawyers-in-training, who provide pro-bono representation for refugees and other vulnerable migrant populations in exchange for credit. At Rutgers-Newark, Professor Gupta directs the Immigrants Rights Clinic, where cases involve detained and non-detained individuals seeking asylum in the U.S., U visas for victims of particular types of crimes, visas for victims of domestic violence, as well as T visas for victims of trafficking. Her colleague, Randi Mandelbaum, directs the Rutgers-Newark Child Advocacy Clinic, which supports undocumented youth. At Rutgers-Camden, Joanne Gottesman runs the Immigrant Justice Clinic, which serves mostly youth and victims of crime, and handles special immigrant juvenile status cases, U visa cases, and asylum cases.

Responding to the times, faculty and students at Rutgers Law School have been heavily involved in community education, advocacy work, and more recently, on-campus assistance. Following the travel bans and the cancellation of DACA, Rutgers Law School started the Rutgers Immigrant Community Assistant Project (RICAP), which aims to support the Rutgers immigrant community, including Rutgers students, faculty, and staff in need of legal assistance. In terms of advocacy, the law school engages on both local and national levels. As one example, they wrote an amicus brief to Jeff Sessions about his decision in *Matter of A-B*, which will eliminate asylum for

victims of domestic violence and gang violence. Rutgers Law School has strengthened their services and advocacy work through cross-disciplinary and multi-sectoral partnerships across campus. The law school aims to harness all resources across campus, for example, by utilizing on-campus psychologists or by consulting with experts in other departments for court proceedings.

The third panelist, Agnes Nzomene, discussed the work of Catholic Charities Community Services (CCCS), a non-profit, charitable organization that services diverse populations throughout NYC, Long Island, and the Lower Hudson Valley. Their immigration and refugee programs serve populations originating from a range of countries including Guinea, El Salvador, and more recently Venezuela. Clients may be refugees, asylees, Cuban/Haitian Entrants or Parolees, Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Holders from Iraq and Afghanistan, Certified Victims of Human Trafficking, or Unaccompanied Minors.

CCCS has an Immigration Legal Services Program and a refugee resettlement program, the former of which houses a number of initiatives including the New American Hotline (800-566-7636), Naturalize NY, Liberty Defense Project, ACTION NYC, and the Unaccompanied Minors Program, while the latter has both federal and state programs. Federal programs include Reception and Placement (R &P), Match Grant, and Safe Passages. These programs provide a range of services including initial financial assistance, cultural orientation, and employment support. Because federal programs serve clients for up to 180 days, CCCS’s state program, the Refugee Social Services Program (RSSP), provides longer-term support.

Ms. Nzomene strongly recommends that resettlement organizations and universities partner with one another to develop joint projects, internship programs, and support programs. Agnes Nzomene offered several recommendations for how resettlement organizations might engage



with campuses to support the integration of clients. First, universities and college students can help with cultural orientation, interpretation, and translation services. Second, campuses can increase availability of health and mental health resources. Third, they can improve systems for recognition of foreign academic credentials. Fourth, they can assist with securing employment opportunities. Finally, they can increase availability of on-site legal services.

Responding to the recent changes in asylum law, Ms. Nzomene also urged university students, scholars, and faculty to engage in community education, volunteer work, advocacy, and research. Resonating with the work of Rutgers Law School, she gave the example of Jeff Sessions' recent decision in *Matter of A-B*. Scholars specializing in various topics (e.g., gang violence; systemic domestic violence) are needed to assist immigration attorneys in strengthening these asylum applications.

The final panelist, Dr. Janet Reilly, discussed three initiatives at Sarah Lawrence College (SLC), a small liberal arts college in Yonkers, NY. These initiatives aim to leverage college resources to support refugees via service learning, advocacy training, and a family summer program. Borrowing Jeremy Adelman's words from Panel 1, SLC's initiatives look to refugees as agents and knowledge producers, aiming to create spaces for refugees to engage with campus resources, and for students to engage with refugee issues directly. Dr. Reilly has run SLC's serving learning courses since 2012. For this year's course, "People on the Move: Narrating Displacement, Critiquing Crisis, and Advocating for Refugees and Forced Migrants," students volunteered at various organizations that serve refugee, immigrant, or undocumented women and children. One of the objectives of this course was to foster discussions around different types of migration crises beyond the "refugee crisis" in Europe. Students had opportunities to reflect on their service work in

connection with their classroom experience, and to conduct advocacy-oriented research.

SLC's second initiative is an advocacy course, in partnership with an organization called Scholars At Risk (SAR). Like Scholar Rescue Fund, SAR matches threatened scholars with positions in the U.S. and other countries. SAR also offers students advocacy opportunities on campuses. At SLC, students conducted research on a case of an imprisoned scholar, and developed a campaign to advocate for the scholar's release. They were also involved in an advocacy training day in Washington D.C., where they lobbied elected officials, authored articles, and created a short documentary film.

SLC's final initiative at SLC is the Refugee and Immigrant Families Summer Program. Although Westchester County was never a site of refugee resettlement, a grassroots movement pushed to bring it there. Based upon community needs assessments conducted in partnership with resettlement organizations (HIAS and Catholic Charities), as well as with child development centers on campus, SLC created a family based program focusing on the importance of play in establishing normalcy for children. After the travel ban, they opened up the program to asylees and undocumented families in the community. Now in its second year, this program also serves to build community. It brings families together who may not have connected otherwise, forges relationships between families and the college community, and strengthens the community at large.

During the discussion portion of the panel, Courtney Madsen asked panelists how they would prioritize the needs of refugees and vulnerable migrants over the needs of students who wish to engage. Dr. Reilly noted that there are challenges in doing so. After the picture of Alan Kurdi went viral, SLC, along with members of another alliance called the Consortium on Forced Migration, Displacement, and Education, wanted to capture the passion and momentum in the academic

community. However, the primary focus among many administrators was on opportunities for “already privileged” students. To bring the focus back to the needs of vulnerable migrants and refugees, the Consortium, whose members also include Vassar, Bard, and Bennington, conducted community needs assessments through partnerships with local immigration organizations. ECAR takes a similar approach, aiming to centralize the needs of CWS. ECAR’s community needs assessments revealed that housing is sparse. Subsequently, they convinced Guildford to open its campus housing and resources to local refugee families. Opening up these resources echoes one of ECAR’s basic tenets: campuses, faculty, and college students should put their “bodies on the line” and not become a burden on resettlement organizations. Dr. Abdo added that, although students can receive credit through the ECAR minor at Guildford, their learning is a “byproduct” of their service. In this way, the needs of local refugee families remain primary.

Another way to bring the focus back to the needs of beneficiaries is through the provision of stipends to refugee clients assisting faculty and college students with research or coursework. Agnes Nzomene cautioned, “A day a client help us is also a day they miss work.” Dr. Abdo concurred, emphasizing another ECAR tenet that “refugees’ time, agency, and experiences are valuable,” and should be compensated as such. Professor Gupta noted that developing long-term community partnerships and ongoing communication with partners is key to addressing the needs of clients in a sustainable way. Even after the client has been granted asylum and the partner organization is able to take the client back, Rutgers Law School continues to communicate with the organization in case the client needs to adjust their status later on.

You can access panel two presentations on:

[Link to panel two presentations](#)

## Panel 3:

# ADVOCACY - STUDENT TO PRESIDENT ENGAGEMENT



Panelists: Esder Chong, Miriam Feldblum, Anjali Patel and Prachi Rao.

The third panel of the day was moderated by Prachi Rao, Field Organizer for Amnesty International USA's Organizing and Activism Unit, and focused on Action Area 4. This Action Area explores the higher education community's role in effecting systemic change and influencing policy, be it through university policies targeted at refugee and migrant students, state policies, federal policies, or even international policies. This panel in particular homed in on the advocacy work of college students and university administrators. The panel had three discussants, including Miriam Feldblum, Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, Esder Chong, President of Rutgers University (RU) DREAMers, and Anjali Patal, Advocacy Director of No Lost Generation's George Washington University (GWU) chapter.

In her opening remarks, Ms. Rao discussed Amnesty's work in engaging hundreds of Amnesty

Student Chapters in high school and universities across the U.S to take actions to support refugees. Depending upon capacity, these actions range from writing letters to Congress to hosting refugees or refugee families. She highlighted the urgency to foster advocacy skills in the next generation, especially during a time where world leaders are pushing discriminatory anti-refugee agendas. Now more than ever, the higher education community must give young people a platform and the platform to stand up against hate, fear, and prejudice.

The first panelist, Miriam Feldblum presented on the work of the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, a new organization that mobilizes college and university presidents who seek to better support undocumented or international students from crisis countries, to increase public awareness about the important contribution of immigrants, and

to advocate for positive immigration practices at the federal and state level. The approach of the Presidents' Alliance focuses on what she termed the "Three Threes":

- three populations: 1) undocumented students; 2) international students; and 3) immigrants
- three pockets of work: 1) information sharing; 2) advocacy; and 3) narratives and data
- three levels of policy and action: 1) federal law and actions; 2) state laws and actions; and 3) institutional policies and practices

Dr. Feldblum noted the tremendous interest that exists within the higher education community to enable undocumented students, international students, and immigrants to obtain degrees, certification, and licensure. A brainstorming session on state-level data of immigrants and international students was initiated to make a case for inclusiveness. Ideas from this session included creating a template for narratives, a social media campaign, and a set of best practices for campus engagement. Furthermore, the Presidents' Alliance has created an institutional toolkit that will enable systematic local connections with multiple partners, including immigrant advocacy organizations, higher education organizations, student networks, cross-sector coalitions, and think tanks.

The second panelist, Anjali Patel, discussed her work with No Lost Generation (NLG) Student Initiative, an ambitious commitment to action by university students in partnership with humanitarians, donors, and policy makers to support children and youth affected by the crises in Syria and Iraq. Ms. Patel noted that, after the photo of Alan Kurdi went viral, NLG was formed in partnership with U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University to engage students in the global refugee crisis.

NLG now has over 50 chapters nationally and globally and has forged relationships with UNHCR and HOT (Humanitarian OpenStreetMap), an international team dedicated to humanitarian action and community development through open street mapping. Ms. Patel added that her organization seeks to continue expanding their efforts to other refugee populations, from other parts of the world, as well. However, NLG is challenged by the numerous advocacy groups advocating for different international and domestic issues on campus. Due to competing campus activity, sometimes their advocacy efforts and events get "lost in the pile."

The final panelist, Esder Chong, is the President of RU DREAMers, a student organization at Rutgers University-Newark advocating for higher education access for undocumented students, students with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status, and students with Temporary Protected Status (TPS). RU DREAMers, which was founded after President Trump announced plans to end the DACA program, has a two-pronged approach: 1) grassroots activism and 2) policy advocacy. Their activism and advocacy work have affected change at both university and state levels. For example, they worked with Rutgers administration to plan for the hiring a representative specializing in issues affecting DREAMers. According to Ms. Chong, RU DREAMers successfully gained momentum because they shared personal stories with campus administrators. Their partnership with Rutgers leaders then led to joint action at the state level. Their joint campaign for state-funded financial aid was critical in making New Jersey the ninth state in the U.S. to enable DREAMers to obtain both in-state tuition and state-funded financial aid.

The discussion session of the panel focused on four main issues requiring more expansive advocacy initiatives and strategic partnerships:

best practices that could support the vision of the UARRM; coalition building; human rights and trauma; and U.S. state level policies. Participants noted the need to improve admission and financial systems at the state level, and called on higher education institutions to classify undocumented applicants as domestic students. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of increasing licensure and certification access for immigrant and refugee populations. As touched upon in the first panel, it was noted that high levels of trauma and stress within these populations can lead to poorer academic performance and higher dropout

rates. Panel participants felt that psychological support for refugee and at-risk migrant students is urgently needed, and could significantly increase their wellbeing and chances for success. With regard to the state context, the Presidents Alliance has begun to mobilize university leadership in red states. However, state legislature could create obstacles for their work. For example, members of the Presidents' Alliance based in North Carolina are eager to support access to higher education for the fast-growing immigrant population in their state, but are limited with regard to what they can say and do because of state laws.

You can access panel three presentations

[Link to panel three presentations](#)

## Panel 4:

# DEVELOPING RESEARCH AGENDAS TO SHAPE POLICY, PUBLIC PERCEPTION, AND HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION



Panelists: Elizabeth Gibson, Bernhard Streitwieser, Katherine Burke, Anindita Dasgupta and Georgetta Pourchet.

The fourth panel of the day was moderated by Dr. Anindita Dasgupta, a post-doctoral research fellow at the Columbia School of Social Work and co-investigator for the ASPIRE Project. This panel focused on Action Area 4, which seeks to leverage research to assess and improve higher education programs, to demonstrate the social and economic contributions of immigrants and refugees, to educate the public about these contributions, to create more inclusive policies, and to improve humanitarian and social services. Panelists included Katherine Burke, Deputy Director of the Stanford Center for Innovation in Global Health, Elizabeth Gibson, Steering Committee member of the International Migrants Bill of Rights (IMBR) Initiative, Dr. Georgetta Pourchet, Coordinator for International Refugee Research Project at

Virginia Tech, and Dr. Bernhard Streitwieser, Assistant Professor of International Education and International Affairs at GWU.

The first panelist, Katherine Burke, spoke about Stanford University's newly launched research program, the Stanford Refugee Research Project. While the program started from just a small grant, it is a big opportunity to conduct very important research. She believes this is a unique moment for the university, and will help Stanford carry forward its mission to work in a way that is multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral, to focus on building capacity with local partners, and to remain conceptually and legally sound and effective. It was also stressed that the effort is top-down, not bottom-up, which requires flexibility in organization and in funding.

The second panelist, Elizabeth Gibson, explained that the IMBR Initiative is a restatement of international human rights law as it relates to migrants, based on the idea that human rights are migrant rights and migrant rights are human rights. Ms. Gibson argued that we need to distill international law to a key set of migrant rights so that states and the migrants themselves are better able to access the information and to understand it. The IMBR is not intended to be adopted as a treaty, but rather as a resource for better understanding the rights of migrants. Furthermore, she stressed the need for norms and rights to be brought up more frequently in conversations in order to normalize the terms and discussion.

The IMBR has also established a set of indicators that help to measure individual nation-state human rights compliance. In a pilot project assessing a sample of countries (Germany, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, and Turkey), IMBR's research team developed quantitative indicators of each country's socio-political climates and rights. By sampling individual nation-states on different rights, these indicators allow researchers to assess levels of compliance in implementing international human rights obligations. The IMBR found the following results for each country:

- Germany: Moderately compliant with various obligations, but lacking somewhat in civil, political protections, health, education, right to life and assembly
- Mexico: Very good, but lacking in the areas of education, asylum, and labor
- Russia: Least complete set of domestic protections, but some positives in terms of liberty
- South Africa: The most complete, but short in areas of right to assembly, health, and education
- Turkey: Ranked low, but very good on labor rights

The third panelist, Georgetta Pourchet of Virginia Tech, underscored some of the major questions deeply rooted in the work of

the International Refugee Research Project: What is the level of refugee integration in local communities, and how do refugees impact local communities? How do we change the narrative from “refugees as a burden” to “refugees as a resource”? In a forthcoming policy brief, a set of findings was identified: refugees flee violence, have journeys that are marked by violence, and are often received in unfriendly/violent host country climates. Upon arrival in a new place, mental health and language/culture complications hinder refugee integration. Factors that are conducive to integration are: adequate jobs and wages, adequate housing, educational attainment, engagement with local communities and bridging cultures via music, art, and dialogue. Some of the findings and recommendations outlined by Dr. Pourchet are as follows:

- educating the general public everywhere about the condition of being a refugee;
- encouraging critical reflexivity among refugees to embolden them to reimagine the current discourse on “protection” and their own role in visualizing what “protection” means;
- rejecting policies and rhetoric that target specific groups for opprobrium and “othering.”

The final panelist, Dr. Bernhard Streitwieser, discussed his research on refugee higher education in Germany. He identified three types of “mobilities” in international education experiences. The first mobility is the traditional study abroad/exchange student, who accounts for a very small, elite group. The second mobility is listed as educational mobility and economic migrants. The last group is the largest, and consists of forced migrants. Having established these “mobilities,” Dr. Streitwieser explained that, in Germany, the notion that there was a “refugee crisis” was overblown. Undoubtedly, it was a challenge and many people were overwhelmed, however, the systems kicked into gear quickly and did very well in the placement of refugee groups into housing, schooling, business training, language training,

and integration programs/processes. He also brought up the fact (according to the UNHCR) that only 1% of refugees actually make it to higher education and that, while Germany's rate was around 3%, it's still a very low mark.

Continuing along this thread, Dr. Streitwieser explained that, based on his research findings, people coming from refugee backgrounds see universities as a chance at a better life; that refugees are highly motivated and resilient; and that there is a great desire by all to prevent a "lost generation" in Germany. But anxiety, PTSD, and uncertainty about family members left behind can debilitate refugees. They also face challenges in learning a foreign language and learning how to properly navigate admissions procedures. Nevertheless, refugees are resilient and have the will to make a new living in a place that does not always immediately welcome them.

The discussion portion of the panel focused on identifying what information is needed for future research, what this research will look like, and where/how it can be disseminated. There was a large emphasis placed on the social aspect of refugees and how societies in general tend to have a guttural reaction to refugees that can cause significant complications for newcomers. Furthermore, the UARRM needs to foster a strong integration across several disciplines, policymakers, and researchers. The idea of having, "the right person at the right time with the right information" was a cornerstone of the panel, as was trying to figure out how to break out of the echo chambers of academia. Ms. Gibson underscored the importance of "showing up" and participating in spaces and working meetings with other sectors, as IMBR did during the Global Compact negotiations.

You can access panel four presentations

[Link to panel four presentations](#)



## Panel 5:

# CHANGING HEARTS AND SHAPING MINDS IN THE DIGITAL AGE



Panelists: Maria Höhn, John Bartle, Lydia Bassaly and Timothy Raphael.

The final panel of the day was moderated by Lydia Bassaly, Head of Recruitment and Translation/Interpretation Services at NaTakallam (“We speak”), and focused on Action Area 6. This Action Area acknowledges the power of media and communications for the purposes of reshaping narratives about refugees and at-risk migrants. The higher education community is leveraging advancements in technology, communications, and social media to improve both the education and situation of refugees and at-risk migrants, through media-based education, advocacy, storytelling, and research. Panelists included Dr. John Bartle, Co-Director of The Refugee Project at Hamilton College, Dr. Maria Höhn, Founder of Refugee Solidarity and Faculty Director of the Consortium on Forced Migration, Displacement and Education, and Dr. Timothy Raphael, Director of the Newest Americans Project at Rutgers University-Newark.

Dr. Bartle’s important work on refugees at Hamilton College includes “The Refugee Project”, a collaborative effort between Hamilton College faculty and students to document the lives of refugees in New York’s Utica community. This initiative involves library and media research on the arrival of refugees in the Utica area. The first leg of this project has involved working with students to build a bibliography of news sources documenting the arrival and growth of diverse refugee communities in Utica since the 1980s. Refugee resettlement through the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees (MCRCR), one of the main refugee resource centers in the area, is also brought to life through interviews with refugees, which are then transcribed for use in short films to document their situation. Products produced from these initiatives contribute to a short documentary which are loaded on to a public website. As co-director of the project, Dr. Bartle has

involved students on background research, video production, editing and writing for the initiative.

The second panelist, Dr. Höhn, also highlighted the student-driven nature of digital projects at Vassar Refugee Solidarity and the Consortium on Forced Migration, Displacement and Higher Education. Specifically, students voiced an interest in having additional courses on refugee education in the curriculum. Vassar Refugee Solidarity enables students to have direct involvement with refugees through projects like “Conversations Unbound” and the “Transnational Classroom,” where refugees virtually participate in coursework or language exchange. The Consortium has benefited both refugees and students through the pooling of certain resources and partnership with other domestic and internationally-based universities. This has enabled the sharing of knowledge and experience to advance opportunity for both refugees and other students.

Dr. Raphael's work has also broadened the awareness of Rutgers students on the challenges of migration through his work with Rutgers students on digital storytelling. Specifically, the Newest Americans initiative is positioned as a collaborative laboratory project, based at Rutgers University-Newark, but with national and global implications. The Newest Americans covers a range of stories among which the films “Hijabi World” and “American Sueno” are particularly well known. In class, students learn how to use digital technology to tell stories, and visualize and empower ideas. Dr. Raphael relayed that the focus on digital technology capitalizes on the opportunity to create media, and to create partnerships with media companies to implement change. Furthermore, it also demonstrates the possibilities that exist for media makers and academics to come together to pool research and resources. Media therefore provides a mechanism to get knowledge out to create advocacy and change the narrative.

The ensuing discussion addressed possible limitations of using digital technology tools as a

*Summary Report* ● 18

mechanism to reach people about refugees and migration issues. Echoing the previous panels, one area of conversation highlighted the theme of “preaching to the choir.” In spite of the power of digital technology to reach people about the challenges associated with forced mobility, a significant limitation to its benefit may be that this communication medium may only reach those who are interested in the issue. This then means that although initiatives through digital media, community involvement or by other means are productive and necessary, this type of work may only engage a public that has volunteered to care about the issue. The bigger challenge remains the need to address and engage the public who does not show that level of interest.

Panelists identified different ways to address this challenge and engage this broader segment of the population through different channels. Ideas included using the power of artwork to reach the public by engaging artists or through exhibits highlighting the refugee situation held at local museums. This type of approach may be instrumental in bringing the message to the people rather than waiting for people to generate interest independently and coincidentally. In light of this conversation, panelists also concurred that although continuous engagement of the general public on the issue of refugees and at-risk migrants is essential to increase mobilization, the number of communities with no exposure to refugee and migrant populations may be overestimated today. With this in mind, the group concluded that although resistance to these displaced persons in need does exist, digital technology plays a key role in getting the message out to communities that may be polarized around “otherness.” Telling stories about the lives of refugees and migrants through art, exhibits, or digital technology can help to effect significant change. Importantly, the interest and input of today's university students play a key role in shaping future progress in this area.

**You can access panel five presentations on:**

[Link to panel five presentations](#)

## Closing Remarks:

# WHERE TO NOW?

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In her closing remarks, Dr. Colleen Thouez, Director of the Welcoming and Integration Division at Open Society Foundations (OSF), reflected on the early days of the UARRM, positioning its future trajectory in the context of its genesis. Concerned about the lack of momentum among high-ranking government officials to improve migration policies, Dr. Thouez began to forge relationships on the local level, namely, with mayors and city governments who tend to work much more closely and more transparently with the people around them, including migrants. She also began looking to university leaders to collaboratively explore how the academic community can support refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations. She recalled being astounded at the existing and exciting work that was being undertaken by universities and colleges, but felt disappointed by the lack of communication and information being shared. As a result, the UARRM was founded on the idea that higher education institutions need not “reinvent the wheel” - but improve communication, foster the exchange of ideas, and move the current momentum forward as a community.

Returning to the present, Dr. Thouez pointed out ways in which each of the above presentations and panels reinforced these central tenets; the exchange of information, sharing of best practices, looking to initiatives and networks in other countries as models, and building of cross-sectoral partnerships to be replicated and

scaled across the United States and other parts of the world. These conversations, she added, revealed the importance of university-led or co-led, multi-sectoral partnerships. She urged the UARRM community to explore these partnerships more deeply and to analyze best practices. Why are these partnerships effective? How might we build upon the above examples, like ECAR’s co-sponsorship model?

Looking to the future, Dr. Thouez emphasized that building the University Alliance is an opportunity for systemic change. Its work can lead to improvements in higher education in the United States, for instance, by making it more accessible and more coordinated on university campuses. The Alliance can also break down some of the barriers between different universities in the United States. Breaking down these barriers will not only be impactful for refugee and migrant students, but will serve to benefit all students and society at large.

In closing, Dr. Thouez thanked co-sponsors at Rutgers-Newark and Rutgers Global, and the founding members of the UARRM Steering Committee: Kyle Farmbry, Sarah Willcox, Tim Raphael, Bernhard Streitwieser, Galya Ben-Arieh, Tamirace Fakhoury, Keith David Watenpaugh, Darla Deardorff, Jason Lane, Astride Nazaire, and Loren B. Landau.



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