Talking Points for Understanding and Explaining ECAR to Others:

Overview: Every Campus A Refuge (ECAR)

1) ECAR is a higher-education initiative founded in September 2015 at Guilford College in Greensboro, NC. It was then incorporated into a separate nonprofit in 2017.
2) ECAR's mission is to partner every college and university with their local refugee resettlement agency or other im/migrant supporting organization as a co-sponsor or sponsor, whereby the university hosts refugees[1] in campus (or campus-adjacent) housing and supports them in their resettlement and integration. ECAR's vision is to transform the landscape of refugee resettlement and higher education by creating thousands of sustainable resettlement campus ecosystems.
3) Guilford College partnered with their local resettlement agency CWS Greensboro and began hosting refugees on Guilford's campus in January 2016.
4) The ECAR chapter at Guilford College has thus far hosted nearly 100 refugees from several countries – single cases and families (as large as 11 and 9 members).
5) Families are hosted for an average of 5 months in a campus house dedicated to ECAR that is within walking distance of bus stops, grocery stores, and banks.
6) The initiative has been adopted by several HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) that include public/state universities, private colleges and universities, and community colleges.
7) Collectively, ECAR campuses have hosted hundreds of refugees and supported them in their resettlement.
8) Colleges and universities are especially well-suited for this hosting and co-sponsorship/sponsorship model because campuses are like cities with everything necessary to welcome a refugee family and support their successful integration: housing, facilities, utilities, human resources and expertise in many areas, as well as a built-in cohesive community of welcome.
9) As there are over 4,000 institutions of higher education in the U.S. (many of them located in cities that welcome refugees annually) even a 10% one-time engagement (i.e. 400 institutions hosting only one family each) could mean the supportive resettlement of thousands of refugees (average 5 members per family).
10) Several ECAR chapters continue hosting families over the years (e.g. Guilford, Lafayette, Washington State University, Old Dominion University, etc.). This means the potential for a consistent and dependable infrastructure for refugee resettlement support that is also highly scalable.
11) ECAR has the capacity to scale through a Best Practices Manual and existing training courses and workshops.
12) ECAR has a successful track record that is backed by impact studies which show the initiative's benefits to hosted refugees and participating students.

[1] And in some cases asylum seekers.

ECAR's goals:

1) To leverage *existing* college and university material and human resources to provide meaningful resettlement, community support, and holistic integration for refugees and to transform the landscape of refugee resettlement by adding thousands of sustainable ecosystems of welcome, resettlement, and integration support. We believe that HEI's are resource-rich and should be supported in thinking about, and utilizing their resources, in innovative ways to support refugee resettlement.
2) To provide unique, powerful, equitable, and ethical opportunities for civic and community engagement and service learning for higher education institutions and transform U.S. students' place-based and experiential learning practices with an eye towards global, international, practical applications.

How ECAR works – its current activities:

1) HEIs partner with a local refugee resettlement agency or other refugee/immigrant supporting org.
2) This partnership allows the refugee resettlement agency partner to have oversight of the hosting of, and interaction with, the refugee family so that the refugee family is protected.
3) Both parties sign a Memorandum of Understanding to delineate the roles and responsibilities of each partner.
4) HEIs sponsor a refugee family arriving through the refugee resettlement partner agency and assigned to them by the agency.
5) HEIs provide the hosted family with free housing and utilities as well as free access to campus facilities and amenities for several months until the family integrates into the local community and is financially stable.
6) In coordination with the refugee resettlement agency partner, specifically the case worker assigned to the family, HEIs provide case management support as well as cultural, social, and community integration support through trained/vetted volunteers from the campus and local community.
7) HEIs also provide integration support unique to their material and human resources – the possibility to audit classes, ESL instruction, opportunities for creativity (art, music, etc.), childcare, interpretation, tutoring, career services, etc. Hosted refugees thrive rather than simply survive.
8) HEIs engage in ethical practices to maintain dignity, agency, and privacy of hosted families while providing an educational opportunity to the campus, community, and students involved in the effort.
9) HEIs support the family in identifying desired off-campus housing at the end of the hosting period and support them in making the transition.

ECAR meets the following needs of refugees, refugee resettlement program, and higher education:

1) Quick and highly scalable expansion of refugee resettlement sites and programs.
2) Greater integration and community support for resettling refugees.
3) Second-language acquisition support. Post-secondary institutions with language programs are ideal sites to pair refugees with second language learners who can receive course credit, participate in internships and practicum experiences, etc. to foster cross-language skills.
4) Financial support for refugees (free rent, utilities, and facilities).
5) Safe and affordable housing for refugees which is increasingly challenging to find. This is a key concern of refugee resettlement agencies.
6) A commitment to public service and national security from higher education.

7) Opportunities in higher education for innovative civic engagement, ethical service learning, "study abroad at home"/global education at the local level (including curricular, co-curricular, internship, and research opportunities). At several ECAR chapters, the initiative is connected to a minor, certificate, or service-learning program where students get credit for hosting and supporting refugees on campus.
8) Attracting prospective students and engaging alumni/donors.

ECAR benefits refugees, the refugee resettlement program, local communities, and higher education in the following ways:

1) Greater and more meaningful integration as well as financial success for refugees. ECAR impact study found that refugees hosted by the program experienced greater sense of belonging and financial stability. ECAR hosted families can afford to live in safe housing in their desired/chosen areas in the city when they transition off-campus.
2) Deeper and more meaningful education for students. ECAR impact study shows that student volunteers experienced greater knowledge of forced migration, refugee experiences, and refugee resettlement in the U.S. as well as national policies and practices.
3) Deeper understanding from the local community as the institution engages them in this collective effort through educational events.
4) Economic development, revitalization, and enrichment in diversity for rural and small town institutions if campuses in rural areas/small towns adopt the initiative.

ECAR has the following costs associated with its effort:

1) A campus-funded property and its utilities (electric, water, gas, and Wi-Fi) – cost varies based on the location of the institution.
2) Part-time staffing to coordinate volunteer efforts, partnership with the refugee resettlement agency, and student engagement. This could be done by leveraging stipended Graduate Assistantships, AmeriCorps members, Fellowships, Internships, etc. Some ECAR chapters are coordinated by student clubs and organizations at no cost.
3) Resources for the families are typically raised through in-kind donations and goods.

What ECAR can do – connections, resources, expertise:

1) Help identify potential ECAR campuses.
2) Help connect campuses with local refugee resettlement agencies and build those partnerships.
3) Develop and implement the program – hosting and curricular/co-curricular – through Best Practices, Trainings/Workshops, etc.

How does ECAR fit into the existing work higher education institutions do with refugees?

ECAR aims to establish "resettlement campuses." This typology of what campuses already do allows you to see where resettlement campuses fit in and how they differ from other models of higher education engagement with refugee resettlement.

Resettlement and Higher Education: A Typology What do campuses currently do?	
Type	**Description**
Type 1: Services/Service Learning	Campus personnel send volunteers to resettlement sites to do off-campus work with refugees and/or invite refugees on campus to access limited services.
Type 2: Student and Scholar Support	Campus personnel provide support services for enrolled students who were resettled as refugees; campus personnel facilitate educational access for refugees who have not (yet) been resettled and/or support for visiting scholars at risk.
Type 3: Campuses to Camps	Campus personnel send faculty, staff, and students to refugee camps and/or temporary accommodation sites to provide services and/or conduct research where refugees are located while awaiting permanent resettlement.
Type 4: Resettlement Campuses	Campuses provided housing, facilities, and personnel to enrolled and non-enrolled newcomers, and serve as sponsor or co-sponsor sites for initial to medium-term resettlement providing integration support (e.g. ECAR).
Matheis, Christian, Sapra, Sonalini, & Abdo, Diya. (2022). "Resettlement and Higher Education: A Typology. Every Campus A Refuge. Revised 12/19/2022	

To learn more:

1) Please visit www.everycampusarefuge.org
2) Find all the resources you need for building an ECAR chapter here
3) Press e.g *PRI*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Washington Post*, *The Foreign Service Journal*
4) TEDTalk about ECAR here
5) Best Practices Manual and Implementation Checklist At-A-Glance
6) ECAR Campus Member Benefits
7) Impact studies on refugees and students here
8) J.M. Kaplan Innovation Prize Award video here
9) ECAR's oral history project documenting refugee experiences hosted by ECAR chapters here

For more information, please contact Dr. Diya Abdo at diya@everycampusarefuge.org. Dr. Abdo is a second-generation Palestinian refugee, born and raised in Jordan. She has been working in higher education for over 25 years as a professor. As the founder and Director of Every Campus A Refuge, she has supported the implementation of ECAR on campuses across the U.S. In recognition of her innovative work, she has received the JM Kaplan Fund Innovation Prize (2021), an Emerson Collective Fellowship (2024), Word Education Services Values Award (2024), and elected an Ashoka Fellow (2025). Her book, *American Refuge: True Stories of the Refugee Experience* about Every Campus A Refuge was selected as a North Carolina Reads Book 2024.