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Colleges and Universities Across America Marshal Support for Afghan Refugees

New 'Welcome Campus Network' will amplify wide-ranging efforts of higher education institutions

Washington, D.C. — Today, a growing coalition of more than two dozen colleges and universities across the United States joined Welcome.US in announcing the [Welcome Campus Network](#), which will amplify the work of higher education institutions to welcome and support newly arrived Afghan refugees.

Colleges and universities in more than 30 states are actively working to provide scholarships, housing units, community sponsorship, and pathways to education for thousands of Afghan refugees and their families, as well as other support and welcoming activities. In just four months, nearly 200 institutions of higher education have pledged to help — a testament to the whole-of-community effort taking place across the country.

To highlight these efforts, Welcome.US, the National Association of System Heads and leaders from several colleges and universities joined a roundtable today hosted by White House Coordinator for Operation Allies Welcome Jack Markell and U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona.

“Institutions of higher education have a huge role to play in supporting the success of Afghan newcomers--and facilitating their tremendous contributions. Universities have long been engaged in lifting the voices of Afghan leaders and supporting greater access to education and opportunity for Afghans, first in Afghanistan, and now here in the U.S. as our allies rebuild their lives” **said Welcome.US CEO Nazanin Ash**. “It is incredible to see so many colleges and universities coming together and making an impact on the lives of these newcomers, and Welcome.US is eager to lift up their efforts.”

White House Coordinator for Operation Allies Welcome Jack Markell added, “We’ve approached this historic resettlement effort by focusing on what it will take to equip our Afghan

allies for success as they rebuild their lives in America. Education is a crucial piece of this equation. The institutions stepping up to welcome Afghan students on campus reflect the very best of America and are making an important investment in the future of our Afghan allies and in our country.”

The partnership with Welcome.US includes the National Association of System Heads, the Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, the Texas International Education Consortium, and Every Campus A Refuge. Welcome.US is also partnering with leaders such as Dr. Heather Wilson, President of The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and former Secretary of the United States Air Force, who brought together chancellors and presidents of 27 universities and colleges to create the Welcome Campus Network.

Ensuring access to higher education opportunities is critical to helping Afghan refugees resettle and find long-term success. Universities like UTEP who have a rich history of supporting migrant and immigrant students are placing Afghan scholars as visiting researchers and professors, while students and other members of the campus community are stepping up with initiatives like school supply drives. The Nevada System of Higher Education is offering housing and sponsorship to Afghan students, and Washington State University is working to remove barriers to house, sponsor, and place students and scholars across its seven campuses.

“Education is the best pathway to opportunity in America for Afghan refugees, their children, and their grandchildren,” said Dr. Heather Wilson, President of The University of Texas at El Paso. “UTEP and universities across America want to make clear that we will welcome you.”

“Public university systems across the nation are meeting this moment to support Afghan refugee resettlement because — at our core — we own a public mission to work together to lift people up,” said **Dr. Nancy Zimpher, senior fellow at NASH and chancellor emeritus of The State University of New York**. “What we are hearing is a deep commitment for what each system can bring to the table to build welcoming and inclusive opportunities to live, work, and learn on college and university campuses. And we know the success of these efforts relies on a strong partnership with the federal government and the Welcome Campus Network.”

On December 8-9, the National Association of Systems Heads (NASH) is hosting a major convening with the chancellors of 44 state university systems to discuss the concrete commitments and substantive work they are doing to assist Afghan refugees. The Big ReThink Super-Convening will feature a session on NASH’s “Afghan Action Plan,” created in partnership with Welcome.US and the White House to address gaps and opportunities to support the successful integration of Afghan refugees in communities. This session will also highlight the welcome initiatives of state university systems and the existing and unfolding housing, sponsorship, and other related efforts across hundreds of campuses nationwide.

The Welcome Campus Network includes:

- Alamo Community College
- Arizona State University
- Central Washington University
- Colorado State University
- Every Campus A Refuge
- Houston Community College
- Indiana University–Purdue University, Indianapolis
- National Association of System Heads
- Northern Virginia Community College
- Oklahoma State University
- Pima Community College
- Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration
- Sacramento State University
- Salt Lake Community College
- San Jose State University
- San Francisco State University
- Texas Woman's University
- Texas International Education Consortium
- The University of Texas at El Paso
- University of Colorado Denver
- University of California, Riverside
- University of Massachusetts Boston
- University of Houston
- University of Illinois Chicago
- University of Maryland, Baltimore County
- University of Maryland, College Park
- University of Oregon
- University of Tulsa
- University of Texas at Arlington
- University of Texas San Antonio
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Welcome.US

Colleges and universities interested in joining the Welcome Campus Network should email partners@welcome.us.

About Welcome.US

Welcome.US is a new national initiative built to unite, inspire, and empower the American people to welcome and support those seeking refuge here, starting with our new Afghan neighbors. In partnership with local and national resettlement agencies, Afghan American organizations and

leaders, refugees, community sponsorship groups, nonprofits, businesses, faith-based institutions, veterans, universities, three former Presidents and three former First Ladies, Welcome.US is the single point of entry for Americans who want to get involved and support those who are starting new lives in the United States.

To learn more about Welcome.US, please visit welcome.us.

For press inquiries, please contact press@welcome.us.

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