

Refugee experiences with higher education and careers in Wisconsin

The Center for College-Workforce Transitions (CCWT) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is excited to announce *Refugee Experiences with Higher Education and Careers in Wisconsin*, a qualitative research study to investigate the pathways and barriers that refugees face accessing and succeeding in college and transitioning to the post-college workforce.

Refugees who make a new home in Wisconsin carry with them hopes and dreams as diverse as their backgrounds. But many find upon arrival that their education and career goals do not necessarily align with the government's refugee resettlement program. There also may be an assumption among both researchers and refugee resettlement providers that the socioeconomic barriers refugees face are so high, and the need for emergency food, health and housing along with basic employment services is so great, that college and professional post-graduation employment is an overly optimistic, even utopian goal. It is true that the overwhelming majority of refugees coming to the U.S. typically require, and sometimes struggle to access, basic services. But it is also the case that many refugees come to the U.S. with some college background, and others come with a goal of going to college and manage to achieve that ambition despite the obstacles they face.

Refugees Experiences with Higher Education and Careers in Wisconsin will be the first study of its kind to document the policy and sociocultural contexts of the refugee resettlement-college-workforce transition process, and to document through qualitative and ethnographic research how refugees manage and experience this process in the United States. Researchers will conduct extensive interviews and observations with resettlement service providers, with educators who support the college and career goals of refugees, and with refugees who are pursuing college or transitioning to the post-college workforce.

This study answer the following research questions:

- (1) How do refugees experience higher education and the post-college workforce transition?
- (2) What are the sociocultural, institutional, and policy contexts that influence refugee access and success in higher education and in the post-college workforce transition?
- (3) What policies and educational supports can enhance refugee access and success in higher education and the post-college workforce transition?



If you are interested in learning more about this study, contact Matthew Wolfgram at The Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions, Educational Sciences, 1025 W. Johnson St. Madison, WI 53706
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