


RESOURCE KIT

Hosting Afghan Students and Scholars

Prepared by the American Council on Education (ACE), the Institute of International Education (IIE), the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), and the Association of American Universities (AAU)






U.S. colleges and universities are stepping up in various ways to assist displaced Afghans. One way to help is to host Afghan students and scholars (including teachers, researchers, scientists, artists, technical experts, and many others) who have left the country or will do so in the coming months and years.

While U.S. higher education has a long tradition of supporting refugees, and many institutions have indicated a willingness to help in the current situation, it is important to understand what is entailed in hosting (financially, logistically, legally), what higher education institutions can (and cannot) do, and whom to partner with to provide additional support.

This resource kit includes a checklist of steps to ensure that necessary structures and support networks are in place to welcome students and scholars, along with key questions to help institutions assess their options and readiness to host. It provides information to help campus leaders make decisions about capacity, as well as concrete action items for senior international officers and others charged with implementation. For institutions unable to host, suggestions for other ways to support displaced students and scholars are also provided.

This document will be updated as the situation changes and additional resources become available.



HOSTING CHECKLIST

1. **Articulate why this is right for your institution.** Recognizing the budgetary impacts of hosting displaced students/scholars, it is important to explain why this is an institutional priority, particularly in a financially constrained environment. Consider that varying political viewpoints may also impact opinions about the extent to which hosting should be a priority. Think through and explain how hosting displaced students/scholars aligns with institutional mission and service commitments, and develop consistent messaging for internal and external constituents. The most successful placements—for both the student/scholar and the hosting institution—are driven by a humanitarian impulse, commitment to academic freedom, and a recognition of the tremendous value that these students/scholars will bring to the campus community.
2. **Assess capacity and determine details of whom you can host.** Using your institution's tuition, housing, and salary structures, calculate in detail the cost of hosting an individual student and/or scholar and what aid is or may be available. Determine what academic departments have capacity (for students) or need (for scholars) and whether there are particular populations of displaced individuals (e.g., first-generation students) whose presence would particularly align with institutional strengths and mission. Assess housing capacity—on campus and nearby—while recognizing that scholars and students are likely to be part of large families. Check in with international programs leaders (particularly international students and scholars staff), who will be the first line of support, to understand their workload and capacity to manage visas and other issues.
3. **Determine a feasible start date.** Given that the fall 2021 term is already well underway at many institutions, consider whether it is possible for students to matriculate into ongoing classes, or if it is better for them to start at the beginning of the next term—recognizing that many will not have their previous academic records available and will likely require skills assessment. Assess capacity to provide initial or remedial support, such as English language instruction, orientation to the U.S. classroom, and teaching resources for scholars—either as part of a midterm start or in preparation for the subsequent term. Recognize that students and scholars may encounter unforeseen logistical and procedural delays in their resettlement; institutions might consider their earliest possible start date, but undertake contingency planning in case of delays.
4. **Connect with community organizations and businesses.** Recognizing that higher education institutions are not generally equipped to attend to immediate resettlement needs of students and scholars (e.g., obtaining clothing and basic supplies) or to support students'/scholars' extended families for the long term, partnership with local organizations charged with community integration is critical. While the organizations involved vary locally, the national networks noted in the sidebar are a useful starting point. Local businesses may also be interested in funding student scholarships and stipends for scholars in

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Community-based efforts to resettle displaced individuals originate from a variety of organizations, from individual faith communities and neighborhood associations to state-level refugee resettlement offices. The network in any given location varies, but national networks and organizations can be a useful starting point for higher education institutions to access and join a broader support network. **Examples include:**

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' "Key State Contacts"
- Catholic Charities USA Immigration Advocacy and Refugee Services
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
- Jesuit Refugee Service
- Global Ties U.S.'s local network organizations
- Refugee Council USA

The recently launched welcome.us website provides information about state and local resettlement efforts and opportunities for individuals to donate time and financial resources.

fields relevant to their work; they can partner with institutions to provide internships and post-degree career placements for students as they progress through their academic programs. Campus advancement professionals and career services offices are well positioned to facilitate these connections.

5. **Activate a campus support network.** Consider convening an action task force to develop a holistic support plan for arriving students/scholars. Representation should include faculty and staff from the international programs office, admissions, registrar, teaching and learning support center, health services (physical and mental), housing and residential life, communications, general counsel, and advancement. Faculty with connections to Afghanistan and its culture, relevant language skills, and expertise on refugee issues are also an important resource and potential source of support for students and scholars. ACE's recent publication *Toward Greater Inclusion and Success: A New Compact for International Students* provides a model for holistic support. IIE's Scholar Rescue Fund also provides detailed information and good practices for immediate and long-term support for scholars.
6. **Ready to commit? Register your institution's interest and availability.** IIE will issue a survey to catalog commitments by colleges and universities willing to host students and scholars. The survey will be available on iie.org and issued to our organizations' members. The information will be used to demonstrate the tremendous collective support of the higher education community and streamline the process for connecting students and scholars with opportunities.

OUR INSTITUTION CANNOT HOST DISPLACED STUDENTS OR SCHOLARS. WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO?

Recognizing the limits of institutional capacity is critical; overcommitting would be a disservice to students and scholars navigating exceptional challenges. Colleges and universities that are unable to host for any reason might consider offering students, faculty, and staff the opportunity to volunteer with local refugee support organizations; on some campuses, student organizations are initiating such efforts. Organizing campus campaigns to gather supplies and offering access to campus facilities such as libraries and gyms are relatively low-cost ways to make an immediate difference.

For institutions with a law school, legal clinics may be well positioned to offer their services. Similarly, those with a hospital or other medical facilities on campus might consider providing health-care services and resources to displaced individuals arriving in their communities. In addition, institutions and individuals are encouraged to work with the organizations noted below that are raising private dollars to support these students and scholars.

ACE, IIE, APLU, AAU, and other higher education associations will also be advocating with Congress to improve and increase visa availability for displaced Afghans. This includes asking for increased funding for personnel to process Afghan visas and waiving of nonimmigrant intent requirements for those applying for F-1 or J-1 visas.

KEY QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS

Whom can we host?

- Degree-seeking undergraduate and graduate students who were enrolled in an Afghan university, but have not yet completed their degree.
- Young adults who have recently completed an undergraduate degree in Afghanistan, seeking to enroll in a U.S. graduate degree program.
- Degree- or non-degree-seeking adults who were in the workforce, but will need retraining or re-skilling in order to enter the U.S. workforce.
- Recent graduates of doctoral programs ready to pursue a post-doc position.
- Teachers, researchers, scientists, artists, technical experts, and other scholars who were employed by Afghan universities might assume faculty positions or post-doc positions in the U.S., or if they do not hold a terminal degree, they might consider enrolling in a doctoral program to further their studies and professional growth.
- Recent or soon-to-be high school graduates and college-age children of families relocating to the U.S.
- Afghan students who are located in third countries and looking to travel to the U.S. on a student visa, or to enroll in an online degree or training program offered by a U.S. institution without physically relocating to the U.S.

What is the time frame?

- Displaced students and scholars have begun arriving in the U.S., and they will continue to arrive throughout the coming months and possibly years.
- When possible, students who have begun a degree program in Afghanistan should be considered transfer students. They should be evaluated based on standard admissions requirements, and if these are met, they should be accepted into a corresponding full degree program at the host institution. The expectation is that they will remain enrolled for the full duration of their program. The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) has published a guide on this issue called *Inclusive Admissions Policies for Displaced and Vulnerable Students*.
- For students who do not meet admission requirements for a full degree program, institutions may make an initial shorter-term commitment through conditional admission and by offering enrollment in prerequisite courses or English language training. Institutions with existing “bridge” programs might enroll Afghan students in these programs with the expectation that they will then apply to a degree program at their own or another institution.
- For students who have arrived in the U.S., enrollment may be immediate if adequate support is available, or it may be necessary for students to matriculate at the beginning of the next term.
- For students located in a third country, enrollment in online courses, if available, may be a way to begin academic work in anticipation of arriving on campus later, though the challenges of midterm enrollment in a course may still persist.

- For scholars, an institution might consider any of the short- and long-term employment models it already has in place. Existing visiting scholar programs are a good starting point; however, recognizing that a single semester placement would give little time for a scholar to adjust after an abrupt change, one- or two-year visiting scholar placements are preferable. Post-doc positions, term-bound or open-ended, may also be a good option for early-career scholars. If an institution has an immediate opening for a permanent position that fits an incoming scholar's skill set, it might encourage that individual to apply; scholars who initially hold short-term positions might also be encouraged to apply if permanent positions arise later in their temporary appointment.
- Visa and immigration issues related to these paths to enrollment and employment are discussed below. Of particular note for the timing of start dates is that individuals who are in the U.S. under "humanitarian parole" are not immediately eligible for employment. They must first apply for and receive an Employment Authorization Document, which generally takes about three to six months.

VISAS AND IMMIGRATION: UNDERSTANDING YOUR INSTITUTION'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Some Afghan students and scholars will have applied for and been granted **Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs)** to come to the U.S., either before they left Afghanistan or from third countries to which they were evacuated. SIVs are immigrant visas; those granted one will receive a green card once admitted to the U.S. and can apply for U.S. citizenship after five years. Individuals with SIV status are eligible for employment (scholars and students) and federal financial aid (students) once admitted to the U.S. They can remain on their SIV throughout their time at the institution (or in the case of scholars, be employed as U.S. citizens if/when citizenship is obtained); no institutional visa sponsorship is required.

Other individuals will enter the U.S. under "**humanitarian parole**," which allows individuals to stay in the U.S., but is not a visa status. The individual must apply for humanitarian parole through U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Usually an individual would need to apply for humanitarian parole at a U.S. embassy abroad. However, in an emergency situation such as the current one, they can apply directly to USCIS, either from their home in Afghanistan or at the U.S. border upon arrival. A grant of parole is generally issued for a two-year period, after which an individual must apply for another grant of parole, asylum, or another type of visa in order to remain in the U.S.

As part of the process of applying for humanitarian parole, the individual must complete an **affidavit of support**, attesting to their ability to support themselves financially in the U.S. Sources of support that individuals may cite include their own financial resources, family, an employer, etc. If an institution is making an offer of employment to an individual, he or she could include an offer letter and salary amount among their documentation for the affidavit of support. In this case, however, **the institution is not a designated visa or financial sponsor of the individual.**

Students may enroll immediately at an institution once they have been granted parole. **Eligibility for employment (for students or scholars), however, is not automatic with parole.** Most people granted parole are eligible to apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), which is issued by USCIS and is required in order to work in the U.S. Individuals may apply for the EAD with USCIS right away upon receiving a grant of parole. Usually individuals will receive the EAD three to six months after applying.

It is important to note that **institutions cannot hire a scholar until the individual has received their EAD.** Students are also eligible to apply for an EAD; once it has been granted, they can work on or off campus, with no restriction on hours.

Institutions interested in hiring an Afghan scholar, either currently located in Afghanistan, a third country, or the U.S., also have the option of **petitioning for an immigrant or nonimmigrant visa, following standard procedures for employing foreign nationals**. In this situation, the institution would be the petitioner, and would be responsible for ensuring compliance with the terms of the petition.

ACE and other organizations are advocating for nonimmigrant intent to be removed as a requirement of nonimmigrant student visas (F-1, J-1, M). Newly displaced students and scholars will have a difficult time showing an intention to return to Afghanistan given current conditions. Only Congress can change the fundamental requirements for applying for a visa. However, institutions should be aware that **currently enrolled or employed Afghans who hold these nonimmigrant visas may now be applying for SIVs or asylum status**.

In all cases, it is crucial for an institution to ascertain and understand the individual visa and immigration status of the students or scholars it will host in order to assess employment eligibility and restrictions and determine what financial aid students qualify for. **Engaging legal counsel with immigration expertise to understand the university's role in the visa process is recommended**.

It is equally essential that institutions should **remain in close contact with students and scholars to ensure they remain in compliance with applicable visa regulations** throughout their time at the institution and anticipate and address any issues that might require a change in status. For individuals who have been granted parole, it is important to start thinking about next steps and pathways (another period of parole, asylum, a different type of visa) very early in the parole period, as applications and processing often take significant time.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS?

- Standard tuition and fees for students. The expectation should be that most Afghan students do not have the means to pay any ancillary or optional fees.
- Room and board, possibly including for family members. Community agencies may be best positioned to assist larger families.
- Additional instructional and living expenses. Students and scholars will need basic school supplies, a computer, textbooks, course packets, and depending on the discipline, lab equipment, art supplies, or other specialized materials required for their work. Many will need basic living supplies (seasonally appropriate clothing, housewares, etc.); institutions might consider providing these if readily available, organizing campus supply drives, or partnering with community organizations to make sure such needs are met.
- Medical insurance, including prescription plans. For scholars, these may be part of standard benefits packages. Extending coverage to students' and scholars' family members is ideal if possible.
- Specialized academic/professional support (e.g., tutoring, English language assessment, and instruction for students; orientation and teaching support for scholars).
- Legal fees associated with institutions understanding their obligations in regard to visas and immigration.
- Salary and benefits packages for scholars that are standard for the type of position they have been offered.

WHAT FINANCIAL SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE?

- As noted above, students' eligibility for federal financial aid is contingent on their immigration status. If a student has legal permanent status or is a conditional resident alien, they are eligible for Title IV federal student aid. Institutions may also leverage existing scholarship funds or other institutional-based grant aid. Whether financial aid packages can include graduate assistantships or other work components depends on immigration status.
- Institutional advancement offices may reach out to corporate contacts and other donors to secure dedicated support for Afghan students and scholars. For the longer term, connections to local industry might be leveraged to create job placement pathways for students upon graduation.
- IIE administers the following funds to which individual students and scholars (from Afghanistan and other countries) may apply for aid:
 - » Scholar Rescue Fund: IIE-SRF is the only global program that arranges and funds fellowships for threatened and displaced scholars at partnering higher education institutions worldwide.
 - » Artist Protection Fund: IIE-APF makes life-saving fellowship grants to threatened artists and places them at host institutions and art centers in safe countries where they can continue their work and plan for their future.
 - » Emergency Student Fund: IIE-ESF provides grants to international college students in the U.S. when natural disasters, war, or other crises threaten their education.
- ACE, IIE, APLU, AAU, and other organizations will be working closely with the administration and Congress to identify other federal and private sources of support for Afghan students and scholars.

WHAT OTHER ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS DO WE NEED TO BE AWARE OF?

- When displaced Afghans arrive in the U.S., they are screened for COVID-19; those who test positive are required to quarantine prior to resettlement in communities.
- Students and scholars may arrive without their academic records and may be subsequently unable to access them. The University of California, Davis has developed the Article 26 Backpack Humanitarian Tool for academic mobility and to store critical academic documentation that may otherwise be lost. The WES Gateway Program, which is currently being piloted in the U.S., assesses the credentials of students from Afghanistan and other countries with limited academic documentation. In the immediate term, institutions might consider accepting unofficial transcripts.
- Often, students and scholars are arriving as part of large family groups (according to the Population Reference Bureau, the average household size in Afghanistan is estimated to be six to eight people), which may impact location and housing requirements, schedule flexibility for those who have caregiving responsibilities, and income needs.
- Keeping in mind capacity, institutions might consider a cohort approach to hosting students and scholars in order to build a community that can provide peer support. If this is not feasible on a single campus, colleges and universities located in relative proximity might coordinate in order to build an inter-institution network.
- Rapid displacement means that the first few months in the U.S. will likely require a tremendous adjustment for students and scholars in all aspects of their lives. Institutions should be sensitive to this in advising students on course loads and academic matters and in designating teaching and resource responsibilities for scholars.

STAY TUNED FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND INFORMATION.

The process of resettling Afghan students and scholars will take months or even years. ACE, APLU, AAU, and IIE are committed to providing ongoing support to institutions through advocacy, convenings, and other resources. We welcome questions, recommendations, good practices, and other contributions, and we will continue to share these with the higher education community.

Contact information: global@acenet.edu or international@aplu.org

