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# Reimagining the College as a Safe Haven: The Marlboro Community Asylum Seekers Project

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Running head: THE MARLBORO COMMUNITY ASYLUM SEEKERS PROJECT

REIMAGINING THE COLLEGE AS A SAFE HAVEN:  
THE MARLBORO COMMUNITY ASYLUM SEEKERS PROJECT

Emma Huse

A capstone paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in  
International Education at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA

May 6, 2019

Adviser: Linda Drake Gobbo

## MARLBORO COMMUNITY ASYLUM SEEKERS PROJECT

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Date: March 26, 2019

MARLBORO COMMUNITY ASYLUM SEEKERS PROJECT

**Table of Contents**

Introduction..... 2  
    Context and Positionality..... 5  
Literature Review..... 7  
    Review of Similar Programs..... 7  
    On Engaging With and Supporting Displaced People..... 10  
    Theoretical foundations ..... 12  
Needs Assessment..... 14  
    Lessons from similar programs ..... 14  
    Marlboro College faculty..... 15  
    Community Asylum Seekers Project (CASP) ..... 18  
    Asylum seekers..... 21  
Goals and Objectives ..... 24  
    Program Goals and Objectives ..... 24  
    Marlboro College Student Goals and Objectives ..... 25  
    Asylum Seeker Goals and Objectives..... 26  
Program Description and Timeline..... 26  
Curriculum ..... 27  
    Course Curriculum: ..... 27  
    Orientation for Asylum Seekers ..... 29  
    Ongoing Learning Opportunities for Asylum Seekers ..... 30  
Staffing..... 31  
Participant Selection ..... 33  
    Marlboro Students ..... 33  
    Asylum Seekers ..... 33  
Marketing..... 34  
Logistics..... 35  
    Housing..... 35  
    Transportation..... 35  
    Meals ..... 36  
    Clothing and Supplies..... 36  
Health and Safety ..... 36  
    Health ..... 36  
    Safety..... 37

# MARLBORO COMMUNITY ASYLUM SEEKERS PROJECT

Crisis Management .....	38
Budget Notes.....	39
Evaluation Plan .....	40
Course Evaluation.....	40
Individual Evaluation – Asylum Seekers .....	41
Program Evaluation .....	41
Limitations .....	42
Conclusions and Implications .....	42
References.....	44
Appendix A: Student Survey Questions and Results.....	49
Appendix B: Suggested Curriculum Overview by Week.....	52
Appendix C: Staffing Chart .....	55
Appendix D: Guidelines and Information to be Provided to Asylum Seekers Upon Arrival.....	56
Appendix E: Budget.....	59

## ABSTRACT

This paper introduces a program design for Marlboro College in Marlboro, Vermont that combines a credit-bearing course on asylum, displacement, and community-engaged learning with a collaborative initiative to host asylum seekers who might otherwise be held indefinitely in immigration detention at the college. Inspiration for the Marlboro Community Asylum Seekers Project arose from a campus-community partnership working to bring asylum seekers to Marlboro in 2019 and the acknowledgement by many stakeholders of the learning potential for all parties, including students at the college. The program curriculum is grounded in experiential and critical service learning theory and reflects a preliminary needs assessment conducted among college faculty and staff and community members. By laying out a comprehensive program design for the Marlboro Community Asylum Seekers Project, this paper seeks to capture how Marlboro College and its neighbors are partnering in this initiative; demonstrate how hosting asylum seekers on campus might be incorporated into the college's curriculum in the future; and add to the small but growing body of literature exploring ways in which communities and higher education institutions are innovating in response to increasing displacement and migration.

## Introduction

On any given day, immigration-related headlines top newspapers and websites worldwide as wars, violence, oppressive regimes, and the changing climate drive unprecedented numbers of people to leave their homes and cross borders. In the United States, much recent news has focused on those coming to the country to seek asylum, and the often inhumane treatment of these individuals once they enter the U.S. immigration system. Asylum seekers are individuals who have arrived in a second country and cannot return to their home countries due to a “credible fear” of persecution “on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion” (Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952). Though the ability to enter another country and claim asylum is widely agreed by nations to be a human right, the U.S. has, over the years, criminalized the asylum process by holding asylum seekers in detention and subjecting more and more of them to criminal prosecutions (Brennan, 2018). This has occurred at the same time as the rate of people seeking asylum in the U.S. has grown exponentially; U.S. Customs and Border Protection data shows that the number of people claiming credible fear of returning home increased by 67% between 2017 to 2018 (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2018).

The American Immigration Council estimates that as of early 2018, there were 318,000 “affirmative” asylum applications pending with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and over 600,000 pending deportation cases, some of which typically become “defensive” asylum cases when asylum seekers present their case in court before an immigration judge (AIC, 2018). These figures represent people who are currently in a state of limbo, as the typical waiting time for an outcome on an asylum case in immigration court was over 1,000 days as of early 2018.

While asylum seekers wait for their cases to be heard in court or decided, they typically lack access to benefits, employment, and other services, and safe housing can be difficult to obtain. Furthermore, as mentioned above, many asylum seekers are held in detention centers rather than released on parole while they await a decision. This reality is especially true for people who do not have family or friends in the U.S. or the address of a place they can wait out the asylum process. Occasionally and arbitrarily, individuals are released from detention only if they are able to pay a substantial bond, or they are forced to submit to heightened monitoring using GPS ankle monitors or other means (Human Rights First, 2018). Unlike refugees, who are granted lawful permanent residence upon arrival in the U.S. and provided with resettlement assistance (including housing) for a temporary period, asylum seekers do not receive any federal assistance and must depend on family, friends, or in some instances the support of nonprofits, individuals, and community and religious organizations.

Facing increasing migration of refugees and asylum seekers worldwide, combined with the current upswing in nationalism and hateful rhetoric toward immigrants, people in the U.S. and elsewhere have started innovative community-based programs to host refugees and asylum seekers. Some countries, such as Canada, allow for private sponsorship of refugee families, and families, individuals, or groups can choose to provide financial and social support in place of government agencies. Though such programs are rare, recent years have seen increased advocacy for similar private sponsorship options around the world (Kumin, 2015). The United States does not currently have any official mechanism for private or community-based sponsorship of refugees or asylum seekers. However, in the absence of any federal programs or assistance for asylum seekers who have been released from detention, some individuals and organizations

around the country have taken the matter into their own hands, opening up their homes to people in need of places to stay (Carcamo, 2018; Ruiz, 2018).

Colleges and universities in the U.S. are beginning to recognize that they are uniquely equipped to host displaced people, because they contain all types of basic services (housing, food, medical professionals, etc.) in a small campus area. Financially, the cost of providing housing and food is minimal for these institutions that are already feeding and housing hundreds or thousands of students. Even institutions that are not in urban areas are typically connected with towns and a wider variety of services via public or private transportation. What's more, colleges typically house communities with widely varied skills – linguistic and otherwise – that can aid asylum seekers in feeling welcome and gaining skills they themselves may need to live and work in a new country.

Marlboro College was approached in 2018 by several Marlboro town residents who recognized the potential of the college, as well as the local community, to welcome asylum seekers. In partnership with a local organization called the Community Asylum Seekers Project (CASP), which is one of a growing number of nonprofits dedicated to placing asylum seekers who might otherwise remain in detention centers in host homes, these residents presented a proposal to college leadership to collaboratively host several asylum seekers on campus and in the community. Marlboro College's president was immediately supportive, and a collaboration was born to welcome two asylum seekers to the community in 2019.

This capstone paper will introduce a semester-long program design based on the current initiative and partnership in Marlboro, on similar initiatives occurring on other U.S. campuses, and on the literature describing best practices in education for and about migrants and displaced people. The program integrates learning opportunities and logistics for the asylum seeking guests

with a course for Marlboro students that combines theory and current events related to asylum in the U.S. with the development and implementation of a service learning project to directly or indirectly support area asylum seekers. This paper seeks to capture how the Marlboro college and town communities are partnering in this initiative and the steps that have been taken thus far; demonstrate how hosting asylum seekers on campus might be incorporated into the college's curriculum in the future; and add to the small but growing body of literature exploring ways in which communities and higher education institutions are innovating in response to increasing displacement and migration.

### **Context and Positionality**

Marlboro College is an “intentionally small” liberal arts college with undergraduate and graduate programs located in Marlboro, Vermont (Marlboro College, n.d.). With a current undergraduate enrollment of less than 200 students, the college values independent and self-designed learning in close collaboration between students, faculty, and staff. The college offers a self-contained community and many resources in what is otherwise a rural town of fewer than 1,000 people that might not, at first glance, seem a logical place for the resettlement of displaced people. Marlboro College also has a surplus of available housing, a status that is likely to continue. Furthermore, the college's institutional values align with the creation of this program for several reasons. Marlboro promotes itself as a progressive, non-traditional, and non-conforming school that “welcome[s] intellectual candor, embrace[s] new perspectives, and respect[s] and encourage[s] individual expression” (Marlboro College, n.d.). Experimentation in all facets of the organization is valued, and the leadership is typically open to new ideas. At a presentation of the CASP proposal to the board of trustees, the trustees were extremely encouraging.

Marlboro has recently been designated as a Changemaker Campus by Ashoka U, a division of the social entrepreneurship network Ashoka. Changemaker Campus is a program that unites colleges and universities working to increase the presence of social innovation in higher education around the world (Ashoka U, n.d.). While hosting asylum seekers cannot solve the myriad world issues leading to forced migration, this program, and its use of college resources to help individuals in need of support, fits with the ethos of the Changemaker Campus initiative and serves as an example of an innovative social project for Marlboro students.

The college has also recently reimagined its learning outcomes to better describe the Marlboro educational model to both current and prospective students. The school has adopted a three-prong Marlboro Promise:

Marlboro College is a place where you will gain the key skills you need for your future life and career through studying what you're passionate about now. The core transferable skills are: the ability to write with clarity and precision; the ability to live, work, and communicate with a wide range of individuals as an engaged community member; and the ability to lead an ambitious project from idea to execution (personal communication, 25 January 2019).

The second part of the Promise, “the ability to live, work, and communicate with a wide range of individuals,” has been identified by academic leadership as an area for improvement in terms of assessment and evaluation indicators, though it is deeply rooted in Marlboro’s history as a close-knit community committed to shared governance. This program offers an opportunity for students to develop key skills in intercultural communication and a way to evaluate students’ progress toward this learning outcome.

The inspiration for the program described herein can be attributed to the vision of the team of Marlboro residents who proposed this project, as well as my current professional work at Marlboro and personal interests. In my position as Experiential Learning and Global Engagement Coordinator at Marlboro College, I have been collaborating with fellow college staff and faculty, as well as town residents and members of CASP, to plan for the arrival of asylum seekers on campus. As a staff member in the Center for Experiential Learning and Global Engagement, I am also part of a team that aims to increase experiential learning across the curriculum and inspire more students to engage in learning within the local community as well as in opportunities abroad. On a personal level, I am interested in exploring how the vast resources in U.S. higher education might be used more radically to reduce inequality and teach for social justice.

### **Literature Review**

Due to the unique nature of this program, sources and materials from diverse disciplines have been consulted in order to build a conceptual base for the program design. The following sections will identify examples from within higher education that parallel this program design; frameworks for engaging ethically and compassionately with displaced people; and theoretical concepts that will inform the program's curriculum.

### **Review of Similar Programs**

Though hosting displaced people such as refugees and asylum seekers at higher education institutions is still uncommon in the United States, a small movement has surfaced with Every Campus A Refuge, a campaign started at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina in 2015. The overall purpose of the campaign is a call for all higher education institutions around the world to partner with local refugee resettlement agencies, house refugees on their campuses,

and otherwise assist in the resettlement process (Every Campus A Refuge, n.d.-a). Guilford College has itself hosted more than 32 refugees since early 2016. The program has been successful and has expanded, particularly in terms of its integration into the school's curriculum in the form of a new minor course of study called the Every Campus A Refuge Principled Problem Solving Experience Minor (Every Campus A Refuge, n.d.-b). This minor course of study involves coursework on the causes and experiences of forced displacement and migration; engagement with community organizations comprised of and supporting refugees; and direct service and/or design of a project that benefits the campaign and refugees within the community more broadly.

Several other colleges and universities have taken up the call from Every Campus A Refuge and begun their own programs to host or assist refugees. For instance, Rollins College began their "Refugees in Residence" program in 2016 with the aim to host a new family each semester (Humphreys, 2016). Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania likewise began hosting a refugee family in late 2017 (Smith, 2017). Like Guilford College, both of these institutions have partnered with local refugee resettlement organizations and engaged with their local communities to solicit financial and in-kind donations to support the refugee guests. Other institutions that have already created similar programs include Wake Forest University and Agnes Scott College, and numerous other institutions have reportedly reached out to Every Campus A Refuge with interest (Every Campus A Refuge, n.d.-a).

Though programs that involve hosting refugees, asylum seekers, or displaced people on college or university campuses are few and far between, there are more examples of courses and service learning experiences aimed at U.S. college and university students that focus on refugee and asylum seeking populations. One such example is described by Tinkler, McGann, and

Tinkler (2017), who developed a service learning course focused on the refugee experience at the University of Vermont, a university that, while much larger and less rural than Marlboro, shares regional and cultural similarities. The University of Vermont course focused on the refugee system in the U.S. and included a service learning component in which students tutored refugee participants in a preparatory course for the U.S. citizenship exam. The authors report that this course was effective in increasing students' intercultural competence and understanding and broadening students' worldviews, in addition to improving students' knowledge of the refugee system.

Hawkins and Kaplan (2016) describe their study on outcomes of another service learning program involving students working directly or indirectly with refugees in the local community surrounding the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. The service learning program was part of a colloquium for first-year honors students on immigration and national identity, which involved lectures and classroom activities led by faculty from across multiple disciplines. Service activities included planning and executing events for the local refugee community, organizing activities and sporting events for refugee children, English tutoring, organizing a clothing drive, and conducting fundraising activities. Qualitative and quantitative indicators from evaluations of this program indicated that it was successful in increasing empathy and appreciation of differences in perspectives – particularly for those students who worked directly with refugees. This study did not address impacts of the experience on the refugee community, so it is difficult to know if any benefits of this program were reciprocal.

While different in goals and methods, the above programs all share the similarity of working with refugee populations in tandem with resettlement organizations. No U.S.-based programs in higher education were found that are aimed at the asylum seeking population,

though a number of European universities have developed opportunities and scholarships for asylum seekers (Hall, 2018).

### **On Supporting Displaced People**

There are many types of organizations and individuals that work with displaced people – social workers, teachers, resettlement organizations and workers, government officials – and literature documenting ways of engaging with this population varies accordingly. Considering the perspective of individuals involved in educating this population, Christie (2005) puts forth three dimensions that make up an ethics of engagement with displaced people in educational institutions: “commitment to intellectual rigour;” a level of civility involving “actively build[ing] the conditions for a democratic public space”; and the acknowledgement of “the significance of our care of the other, prior to any concerns for reciprocity or mutual obligation.” (p. 243). Sidhu (2017) draws on Christie’s ethics of engagement and further argues for an ethics of professional work with refugees and asylum seekers that avoids problematizing the displaced person’s condition, but rather that remains focused on the historical and socio-political forces that shape the experience of refugees and asylum seekers. Exploring these ethics of engagement is essential within the U.S. context, where displaced people are at the core of a national mythology comprised of “stories Americans tell about themselves as a people, a settler nation, and a haven for the oppressed” (Garcia, 2017, p.1). This mythology underlies much of even the positive national rhetoric surrounding immigration in general and the condition of asylum seekers more specifically: those crossing the border are an oppressed “Other” whose way of life in their countries of origin was fundamentally different from American culture. Part of the work of professionals and volunteers working with displaced people must be dismantling certain perceptions and biases based on the rhetoric and mythology surrounding them.

The literature provides examples of many organizations and professionals that have adopted a strengths based approach to counteract the pervasive focus on displaced people's deficits, shortcomings, or perceived trauma and poor mental wellbeing. Used throughout social work, counseling psychology, and other disciplines, strengths based models help identify an individual's strengths and use these strengths as resources to build resilience (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012). In practice, this framework addresses goals rather than problems, and seeks to empower by viewing the individual as the expert of their own life, rather than asserting power over the displaced person as one who has language, knowledge, and cultural capital that refugees or asylum seekers may lack (International Rescue Committee, 2018; Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012).

Other related frameworks have also been developed within refugee resettlement, namely the community integration model practiced by some non-faith-based resettlement agencies in the United States (Burrows & Ramic, 2017). Like the strengths based framework, the community integration model acknowledges that refugees possess the ability to adjust to and navigate their surroundings in a new country, and focuses on providing information to help them in doing so. This model also places the refugee individual or family at the center of a network of services, institutions, and community members and utilizes partnerships with these community elements to broaden support for the refugee and facilitate integration. In Burrows & Ramic's case study of Nationalities Service Center, a resettlement agency in Philadelphia, this network of community partners includes local universities and academic institutions, legal organizations, other previously settled refugees, health care providers, and neighborhoods themselves.

As much of the literature on engaging with displaced people is written in the context of working with refugees, it is important to consider the particular strains on the experience of

asylum seekers in the United States and how this experience interacts with the resettlement process. Haas (2017) examines the “existential limbo” brought about by the “dual positionality [of the asylum seeker] as potential citizen/potential deportee” and discusses the consequences of the prolonged period of waiting that most asylum seekers must go through before their cases are decided. Such consequences, per Haas, include feelings of social defeat, of disruption of emplacement, and of trauma – all brought on by the condition of being an asylum seeker itself, rather than by prior events. This research suggests that care should be taken when working with this population to find opportunities for forward motion within the limbo of the asylum process, such as the goal setting (and reaching) process practiced in the strengths based models described above.

### **Theoretical foundations**

The curriculum for the semester-long course for Marlboro College students will be grounded in critical service learning theory and experiential learning theory to foster learning and reflection at multiple levels. Many colleges and universities have developed service learning courses and programs in both international and domestic contexts, particularly since service and community-based learning has come to be understood as a high-impact educational practice (Kuh, 2008). Service learning is defined by Bringle and Hatcher (1995) as:

A course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility (p. 112).

Many studies have sought to quantitatively and qualitatively measure the outcomes of service learning and to test the purported benefits of such activities. Some attributes and outcomes that have been identified as resulting from involvement in service learning include: increased participation in activism and advocacy (Bernacki & Bernt, 2007); leadership, academic performance, and critical thinking skills (Astin, Vogelgesand, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000); critical consciousness development (Rondini, 2015); and empathy (Wilson, 2011).

Recently, service learning and volunteerism more generally have been critiqued for failing to address power relationships and for focusing on charity rather than justice. Critical service learning theory refers to the body of work, primarily established by Dr. Tania D. Mitchell (2008) investigating how service learning can be used politically and as a tool for social justice rather than to reinforce (intentionally or otherwise) existing power dynamics and hierarchies. Mitchell summarizes three elements of critical service learning pedagogy that are often described by theorists: a social change orientation; a goal of working to redistribute power; and the development of authentic relationships. Developing a service learning course or program based on these principles inherently takes time, as the relationships between people and organizations must be built in order for a true understanding of needs to be possible. Mitchell has gone on to research ways in which critical service learning can be an avenue for identity development (2010), a means of civic identity development (2015), and a way to teach about the construction of race, particularly Whiteness (2012).

Service learning is, by nature, experiential learning, drawing learning from a specific activity and reflection upon that activity. Kolb (1984), building on the theories of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget, conceptualizes experiential learning as a cyclical process of “grasping knowledge and transforming it,” in which learners move from a concrete activity or experience to reflective

observation, to abstract conceptualization, to active experimentation, and then repeat the cycle (p. 41). The course curriculum will guide students through all stages of this cycle over the course of the semester as the course moves from discussions of theory and current events into the development and implementation of a service project to finally evaluating the service project and reflecting on next steps. Particular attention will be paid to encouraging critical examination, connection to theory, and consciousness-raising for students' future work, in order to avoid what Stewart (2011) refers to as a "mindlessness" that is widely prevalent in the reflection practices in service learning. For instance, Stewart points to the practice of journaling, which can often turn into a log or narrative account devoid of more critical reflection. Similar to Mitchell's dimensions of critical service learning theory listed above, Owen (2016) highlights the need for critical reflection in service learning that looks at sources of power within service relationships and organizations and that discusses systemic oppressions. Furthermore, this critical reflection should, per Owen, be accompanied by a commitment to practical action for social change.

### **Needs Assessment**

The needs assessment for this program draws from information gathered about the similar programs discussed above in the literature review, as well as from a stakeholder analysis informed by personal interviews, materials provided by other institutions, and survey results, as well as my own personal experience as an employee of Marlboro College. The following sections will describe the thoughts and information gathered using these methods.

### **Lessons from similar programs**

The examples described above, particularly the Every Campus A Refuge program at Guilford College, demonstrate innovative possibilities for integrating the hosting of displaced people on campuses with curricular and service learning offerings. However, it is important to

note that no similar initiatives have been identified thus far in higher education that specifically seek to provide assistance to asylum seekers. Working with this population brings up particular challenges, given the lack of overarching support and resources within the government and most communities for asylum seekers, as well as the uncertainty that is inherent in the asylum application process. While a college might find it feasible to host a refugee individual or family during the set 90-day period that refugees are provided housing through federal resettlement benefits, agreeing to host an asylum seeker for the indefinite period of time before they are granted work authorization and the potential ability to secure their own housing may be impossible for some institutions. Given the uncertainty and lack of a bounded time period to work with, it may be necessary for a program to develop its own limits, goals, or evaluation indicators if entering into an open-ended initiative is not feasible.

### **Marlboro College faculty**

Two faculty were consulted for the needs assessment, both of whom have experience teaching about international studies or migration. The Director of World Studies, who is involved in setting up this program, summarized the potential benefits of the program as follows:

I see it as an opportunity for a lot of things: on a larger scale, as being able to participate in helping, even to the smallest extent, alleviate the [...] general sense of unwelcoming that our country has been portraying to the rest of the world. But on a smaller scale, to be able to collaborate with members of the town, to be able to see links with our academic offerings and see the value that this would have for our students' experience here in addition to helping individuals and do what we can to make it welcoming (personal communication, 1 March 2019).

When asked about specific opportunities for Marlboro students' learning, the Director of World Studies named multiple possibilities, ranging from campus-wide programming, such as a speaker series or film screenings, to a course exploring immigration or asylum using both historical perspectives and personal narratives. She noted that much of what happens at Marlboro, both in and outside the classroom, depends on the individual interests of students, and learning opportunities would therefore likely reflect how students choose to interact with the asylum seekers and the overarching subject matter of displacement and asylum. For instance, if a student was very interested in the program, they might choose to build work with or about asylum seekers or with CASP into their Plan of Concentration (the final capstone project that all students complete).

Another faculty member has offered a course at Marlboro College and at a previous institution covering global migration, displacement, and citizenship, and this professor provided insight about topics and readings that had been successful in engaging students. She indicated that students were interested in the themes of voice and representation, and enjoyed searching for and analyzing representations of the displaced in various media. On the other hand, political theory underlying citizenship and the rights of the displaced was more difficult for students to grasp.

### **Marlboro College students**

To gauge student interest in the program, and to begin to investigate areas for learning and instruction, a brief survey was administered via email to all currently-enrolled undergraduate students. The survey (see Appendix A) received 28 responses, which represents approximately one fifth of Marlboro's current on-campus undergraduate student body. Before discussing the results of the survey, it is important to note that the respondents were likely self-selecting in

terms of their interest in this project, as the topic of the survey was made clear in the email subject line and it was administered in the week following a presentation about the project at the school-wide Town Meeting, at a time when discussion of the project on campus was at a high point. Therefore, I do not presume to have captured the full diversity of student opinions on this project; however, I do feel confident that I may have captured data from the population of students who would be most likely to participate in the program.

Students overwhelmingly indicated that they were supportive of and interested in the program, though the survey's qualitative responses yielded both positive and negative comments about perceptions of Marlboro's openness to people of marginalized identities. One student noted that Marlboro has historically been a place "for those seeking refuge from their own battles," and this program is a good way to continue in that tradition. Other students noted challenges inherent in this community: that the Marlboro campus poses challenges to individuals with disabilities or impaired mobility, and that the community can be "volatile" in its ability to welcome people of color, due to "a lot of unacknowledged, internalized racism in this community." Nonetheless, the students who shared concerns also all stated that they were supportive of the program and hopeful for its success.

A majority of respondents (21 out of 28) said that they would be interested in learning more about the experience of asylum seekers in the U.S. and the process of seeking asylum. Responses varied in terms of formats for learning that interested students. The most popular option for learning opportunities, with 21 votes, was film screenings, speakers, and other one-time events. The popularity of this option perhaps speaks to the typical Marlboro student's very full load of courses and tutorials each semester and busy schedule with jobs and other activities. The options that received the next highest number of votes were a series of workshops and

trainings, and volunteer opportunities with organizations that serve displaced people in the region. Eleven students indicated that they would be interested in taking a course for credit that examines the experience of asylum seekers, which is a large number for typical course enrollment at the college. One additional suggestion was made that informational materials should be distributed to community members during the program. These choices by students suggest that a credit-bearing course is an attractive option, but that it might be the most successful if it could incorporate events and workshops that are also open to the wider community and not only those enrolled.

Regarding the current level of knowledge among students of the process of seeking asylum in the U.S. and/or the experience of asylum seekers, the survey data suggest that there is a need for learning opportunities. Many students (18 out of 28 respondents) said they had a very basic awareness of asylum or immigration-related issues mainly from news sources or similar channels, or that they had little or no knowledge at all. Only six students indicated that they know or have worked with displaced people personally, or that they have a significant amount of knowledge of this population.

### **Community Asylum Seekers Project (CASP)**

CASP was founded in 2016 with a mission “to provide basic needs and a supportive community for those in the process of seeking asylum in the U.S.” (CASP, n.d.). To date, the organization has arranged for 11 individuals to be hosted in the southern Vermont region, with nine guests (including three children) currently in the area. The founder and director of CASP shared thoughts about what the organization looks for in host arrangements, what CASP would like to prioritize in the future, and the challenges to obtaining honest feedback from participants given the inherent power imbalance in the organization’s work.

CASP looks for host homes and host situations that have a strong network of volunteers willing to help. Ideally, the home will have reasonably private space for the guest and uncomplicated access to transportation and community resources, though the director acknowledged that a variety of host situations, including some without easy access to community resources, have been successful nonetheless. They also look at personality characteristics of the potential hosts, as well as motivations, to make sure they are compatible with the creation of a welcoming and safe environment for the guests. All hosts and volunteers are also required to undergo a background check. The Marlboro collaboration was especially appealing to CASP because of the community resources in terms of volunteers, indicating that maintaining this robust network throughout the program and into the future will be important.

Though CASP has developed a volunteer handbook, the organization has not yet been able to develop any sort of volunteer training opportunities, and sees this as a priority for the future and a potential area where Marlboro College might be able to collaborate or provide resources. CASP is also currently prioritizing the development and implementation of policies to guide its work, as the organization has mainly been figuring logistics and practices out as it goes along during its first years.

One area in which CASP seeks to implement policy is in program evaluation, and the director is conscious of challenges that arise in evaluation given the power dynamics between the hosts and the guests. A suggested policy for CASP's evaluation is interviewing the asylum seekers within two months after arrival and every six months thereafter. However, a question has come up of whether feedback would be gathered more effectively if there was an impartial interpreter (unrelated to CASP) involved, or if a volunteer that the guest is comfortable with does the interpretation, exhibiting the power-related challenges at play. In his own interactions with

guests, the director has noted that sometimes “the most honest feedback is nonverbal” (personal communication, 12 March 2019), meaning that feedback can often be discerned through behaviors, such as expressions of reluctance vs. enthusiasm about participating in an activity.

### **Marlboro town residents**

A steering committee was formed by members of the Marlboro town community, along with college faculty and staff, to guide the implementation of this program. Members of this steering committee were invited to participate in a focus group to discuss their reasons for joining the program; skills and knowledge they feel are important for this work or would like to build; how the many stakeholders can support each other; and what a successful program would look like to them.

Each participant mentioned the current political and social environment in the United States as a large reason why they chose to get involved with CASP. One member of the steering committee remarked, “It’s an effort to do something positive in a situation where I feel quite powerless in many ways.” Another, who has already spent time with other asylum seekers hosted by CASP, said “From a really selfish point of view, I’ve learned so much from meeting these folks,” and a third steering committee member was eager to support a project creating a welcoming atmosphere and diversifying Vermont (personal communications, 1 March 2019). Several members of the community also noted that the college-town partnership excited them, and that they were interested in ways to expand and deepen this collaboration.

When asked about skills they hoped they might develop further by participating in this program, all of the steering committee members mainly discussed soft skills: the opportunity to develop compassion and empathy; the ability to listen and to pay attention; the skill of leaving behind assumptions; the idea of “accompanying” people through a challenging experience. Some

mentioned this program as an opportunity to improve their language skills, or as inspiration to practice a new language, and two members of the steering committee are already participating in Spanish classes at the college through an arrangement that allows local residents over the age of 60 to audit courses. One area in which the town residents agreed they would benefit from further training is in trauma-informed approaches, particularly culturally appropriate trauma-informed approaches, and potential collaboration between the town community and college to develop a workshop or training in this area was discussed.

In terms of developing a successful program collaboratively, the town residents were appreciative of the steering committee and the relationships that have already been built around this project. The individuals who will host the asylum seekers in their homes during the summer indicated that they felt well supported by the network surrounding them, but they could see that the project might feel stressful if there was not this system of support in place. This feeling affirms the need to maintain a robust network of people, both at the college and in the community, who want to help or serve as resources. One member of the steering committee summed up their feelings on what a successful program would look like to them: “I think if our guests come and feel welcome and supportive and able to navigate the process of seeking asylum and establish a life here... the earliest thing is that people feel at home and that they have [the feeling of] family” (personal communication, 1 March 2019). Other members of the steering committee were in full agreement with this statement.

### **Asylum seekers**

This program seeks to rigorously attend to the needs of the asylum seeking guests in terms of their safety, comfort, and interest in learning opportunities. The needs and interests of the individual guests who participate in this program will be assessed upon their arrival and

throughout their stay in Marlboro. However, in order to anticipate potential needs, challenges, and resources within the community that may be utilized, I conducted interviews with people who have worked with asylum seekers and other displaced people in the region or in similar settings.

CASP's case manager currently works with all of the asylum seekers sponsored by CASP in southern Vermont. This group of guests is spread out among several towns and varied living arrangements, and the individuals come from Mexico, Honduras, and Cuba. The case manager's role involves regularly checking in with the guests and their hosts, as well as connecting them with resources in the area, such as volunteer skill-building work and language classes. When asked about the experience of these guests living in Vermont so far, she was quick to note the challenge posed by the winter weather, confirming that several of guests were not fond of leaving the house in the cold. Language also came up almost immediately; all of the asylum seekers currently hosted in the area speak Spanish and arrived with little to no English proficiency. Those living in Brattleboro, the neighboring town to Marlboro, are currently taking English classes at the Brattleboro Adult Learning Center, which are offered for free several days each week, but finding the time and motivation to practice has been difficult for some of the guests, particularly those occupied by taking care of their young children.

The case manager also identified the lack of a strong community surrounding the asylum seekers as a challenge, with limited opportunities for interactions beyond those with CASP workers and volunteers and the host families. A large part of her work has been trying to find opportunities for the guests to get out of the house and into the community doing activities they find meaningful. For some, this has been recreational opportunities like playing basketball at a local center, for others, the language classes serve as a regular point of community interaction.

However, the case manager acknowledged that opportunities to bring the area asylum seekers together with the wider community have not yet been found, particularly because folks are spread out among multiple Vermont communities, but would be desirable.

While developing community here in Vermont is a concern, the asylum seekers CASP is working with are deeply connected to their communities in their countries of origin. The case manager noted that “they have family members that they want to help, so they are here, seeking asylum, but at the same time they have responsibility to family members at home.” In particular, they are eager to send financial support to their family members, often allocating a portion of their (already modest) monthly stipend provided by CASP to family remittances. This reality must be addressed when considering the program budget and the personal goals of the guests.

I was also able to speak with an individual working at another U.S. higher education institution that has hosted refugees on its campus also stressed the importance of community on the emotional wellbeing of that institution’s guests. This participant noted that they have been surprised by how homesick the refugees are when they arrive on campus, and by how much their guests then miss the campus environment when they transition to independent housing; they also suggested finding a way to set expectations for the visitors and communicate from the start how things will change at the end of the program when they move on from the campus environment.

Multiple participants discussed the effects of past trauma on refugees and asylum seekers. The individual working at another university discussed the emotional intensity of the experience of hosting refugees on their campus, given their personal histories of trauma. A member of the steering committee shared her perception that trauma was affecting several area asylum seekers’ interest in trying new experiences, like riding the bus, and her need to reframe the way she was thinking about the asylum seekers’ need to “be independent” and have these experiences.

CASP's case manager also expressed a desire to develop training on trauma for CASP volunteers, so that they can respond more effectively and compassionately to the guests' needs.

A final theme that came up in conversations with individuals who have worked closely with displaced people is resilience. When asked about what had surprised them about hosting refugees on a college campus, the participant working at a higher education institution shared that they were surprised about how resourceful their visitors were, and that to a certain extent, once the program is set up, there is not a whole lot to *do*. Recognizing this resilience and the agency of the visitors in making their own way in a new community was key, they found, and an important consideration to share with other community members and students. This theme connects back to the literature on strength based approaches discussed above.

## **Goals and Objectives**

### **Program Goals and Objectives**

1. Provide a safe and welcoming temporary living arrangement and community for asylum seekers in need of such an arrangement.
  - a. Dedicate independent on-campus living space for ongoing use by program.
  - b. Continually check in with asylum seekers regarding their needs, level of comfort, interests and respond accordingly.
  - c. Offer opportunities for asylum seekers to engage in college community activities.
  - d. Communicate need for confidentiality to college community and monitor information being spread about the program.
2. Develop a sustainable collaboration between Marlboro College and the surrounding community.
  - a. Maintain faculty and staff involvement on steering committee.

- b. Create and promote opportunities for town residents to participate in learning opportunities related to program on campus.
  - c. Collaborate with CASP on events, volunteer trainings, fundraisers, etc.
3. Establish a curricular opportunity that reflects institutional values and current academic priorities and that, over time, has the potential to improve the experience of asylum seekers on campus.
  - a. Contribute to campus internationalization and integration of social innovation and changemaking frameworks.
  - b. Provide opportunity to teach and evaluate students' learning in communicating with a wide range of individuals (second part of the Marlboro Promise), including collaborative group work in the academic setting.
  - c. Train students in knowledge and skills needed to be engaged citizens in their communities and respectful hosts at Marlboro.

### **Marlboro College Student Goals and Objectives**

1. Students will gain a basic understanding of the experience of asylum seekers in the U.S. and current socio-political discourse surrounding asylum.
  - a. Students will learn about the legal process of claiming asylum and the rights of asylum seekers.
  - b. Students will investigate existing frameworks for the orientation of newcomers (refugees, asylum seekers, displaced people) to the U.S.
  - c. Students will consider representations of displaced people in American media and mythologies surrounding displacement.

2. Students will critically engage in the development and execution of a service project with a community organization.
  - a. Students will reflect upon power dynamics in service relationships.
  - b. Students will complete the needs assessment>design>evaluation cycle.
3. Students will learn about and practice communicating with a wide range of individuals.
  - a. Students will reflect upon experiences with intercultural communication.
  - b. Students will receive an introduction to theories describing intercultural communication.
  - c. Students will practice working with a community organization to assess needs.

### **Asylum Seeker Goals and Objectives**

1. Asylum seekers will feel that they have a safe space from which to navigate the process of claiming asylum.
2. Asylum seekers will develop skills and participate in learning and recreational opportunities that are meaningful to them.

### **Program Description and Timeline**

This program is a semester-long credit-bearing course for Marlboro College students coinciding with a collaborative initiative to host two asylum seekers at the college. The campus environment will provide a community, learning and recreational opportunities, and resources for the asylum seekers that would otherwise be unavailable in a small rural community like Marlboro. The credit-bearing course will be a theory-to-practice exploration of asylum and displacement in America through classroom-based discussion and a service learning project in collaboration with CASP, providing volunteer support to the organization and to asylum seekers at Marlboro and in the broader region.

This program will begin in the Fall 2019 semester and be repeated thereafter. The program includes an orientation period, described below, that will not be repeated if the same guests remain on campus in subsequent semesters. The course for students will ideally be run during alternating semesters, as it is not common practice for any Marlboro College courses to be taught twice in the same year. Each asylum seeker will be invited to stay in housing provided through the program until the point at which they are able to move to independent housing and receive work authorization. At that point, the college, CASP, and the town residents will evaluate whether they collectively want to invite new guests. The program is designed to last one semester because of the academic course component, and because each semester's end provides a natural evaluation point. Furthermore, the breaks between semesters will require logistical changes; during the winter break, the asylum seekers will need to prepare their own meals in their campus apartment as the dining facilities will not be open, and during the summer break, they will move off campus to the residences of the community hosts. Though the timing of the program described here does not include these break periods, college staff and faculty (and potentially students) will continue to support the asylum seekers and other collaborators when they are living with the community hosts.

## **Curriculum**

### **Course Curriculum: Asylum, Displacement, and Community Engagement**

This three-credit seminar-style course will be a theory-to-practice exploration of asylum and displacement in America through classroom-based discussion and a service learning project in collaboration with CASP. It will be co-taught by a faculty member who has experience teaching about these themes and the Experiential Learning & Global Engagement Coordinator. Students will develop the skills, knowledge and compassion to work effectively in the

community while also reflecting critically on service and what it means to help. Weekly class sessions will consist of a dynamic mix of discussion, experiential activities, and guest speakers and trainers. Discussions will occur in multiple formats (full group, small groups, pairs) to encourage participation. Certain sessions, including at least one evening event beyond the normal class time, will be open to town residents who are involved in the project, as well as the broader college community. The following paragraphs will outline course themes and key activities, while a full outline of the course sessions, including guiding themes and activities, can be found as Appendix B.

The course will begin by looking into what it means to seek asylum legally and in today's context of global migration patterns. An immigration attorney or law student will give a presentation on the legal process asylum seekers face in the U.S. and how seeking asylum has been criminalized over time. Students will explore recent news and media on asylum seekers as a way to understand current events as well as a way to reflect upon how these populations are represented, widely, by U.S. media. After these introductory sessions, one class will serve as a primer on intercultural communication and will combine an introduction to theory with an experiential activity that will invite students to reflect on their own intercultural experiences and in-group/out-group dynamics they have faced.

The next section of the course will delve into volunteerism and service learning, asking students to critically investigate the relationship between the "volunteer" and the person in need of "help" in the context of displacement, and establishing ways of maintaining agency and voice in this relationship. This part of the course will look at how members of the Marlboro College community, coming from a place of privilege, can "accompany" people through a challenging process without making assumptions, and will introduce students to strengths-based models. A

class session will be devoted to trauma-informed approaches in a workshop led by CASP's case manager.

In the third section of the course, students will transition into the development and execution of a service project. Students will work in groups of three on projects, so depending on the number of students enrolled there will likely be two to three projects. The service learning project will not necessarily involve working directly with asylum seekers living at Marlboro or in the wider region, but it will aim to serve this population by developing a project based on needs communicated by CASP in direct discussion with the students. Possible areas that could be addressed by students in their service project are fundraising, communications and outreach, or planning a community event or activity for all area asylum seekers, hosts, and friends of the organization, but the actual projects will be fully designed and executed by the students. Two course sessions will be devoted exclusively to the implementation of the service projects; students will have the option of using those sessions for group work or as check-in times with course instructors, as other work outside of class hours may be necessary depending on the project.

In lieu of a final examination, students will regroup in a final session to reflect upon the service experience and think about changes they would make in similar work in the future. A final written project (completed in groups) will be a formal evaluation of the project that seeks and analyzes input and feedback from CASP and/or other stakeholders.

### **Orientation for Asylum Seekers**

Upon arrival in Marlboro, the guests will be greeted by the community hosts and will spend the first four days in the hosts' homes. During this time period, the hosts will show the guests around Marlboro and Brattleboro, make sure they have the necessary clothing and

supplies, and make an initial visit to the college campus and the on-campus housing, during which time they will be introduced to the college staff and faculty members of the steering committee. After these four days, if the asylum seekers indicate that they would like to move into the campus housing, they will do so. On their first day on campus, they will be given a tour accompanied by members of the steering committee and guided by a Spanish-speaking student. The tour will include a meal so that they may become acquainted with the campus dining facility.

For the first week on campus, a schedule will be drawn up of daily activities which will serve to further orient the guests to campus and the surrounding area and also to regularly check in regarding their needs. They will be able to choose from activities such as a visit to the library to learn how to check out books and other materials; a visit to the computer lab; daily meals with members of the steering committee and select students; a guided trip into Brattleboro via the Moover (the area public transportation that serves the college and town); and attending a performance or art exhibit on campus or in Brattleboro.

### **Ongoing Learning Opportunities for Asylum Seekers**

A goal of this program is for the guests to participate in learning and skill-building opportunities at Marlboro College and in the community that are interesting or meaningful to them, so opportunities and ideas will be identified, but an actual schedule of classes activities will be created with the input of the asylum seekers after they are oriented to the campus. Given the interest of most of the asylum seekers in the area in learning English, it is anticipated that Marlboro's guests will wish to join the classes available through the Brattleboro Adult Education Center. Private tutoring by students who have participated in Marlboro's TESOL course may also be arranged. The guests will be invited to attend courses taught in Spanish, including both

language and literature courses, as well as a weekly Spanish conversation table session. The language barrier will likely prevent the asylum seekers from participating in most course offerings at the college, but effort will be made to include them where possible (for instance in art, music, and dance classes in which verbal communication is often less emphasized).

Opportunities for skill-building will also be made available on campus, in addition to opportunities within the larger community identified by CASP. Possibilities include library, maintenance, or kitchen work; participating in projects on the campus farm; Spanish tutoring; and ceramics, music, and other arts. However, it is crucial that these opportunities be framed and fully understood as skill-building and not as a transactional means of compensating for the asylum seekers' stay on campus, in order to protect all parties from participating in unauthorized employment.

### **Staffing**

The Marlboro Community Asylum Seekers Project will be staffed in a collaborative manner by CASP workers and by a steering committee made up of Marlboro town residents and college staff and faculty. CASP's director will provide general oversight of the program and be responsible for identifying guests and pairing them with legal counsel. CASP has a case manager who is responsible for keeping in contact with all of CASP's guests in the area, discussing their needs, and helping them access resources in the community. This case manager will meet regularly with the guests in Marlboro as well as the steering committee.

The Marlboro town residents on the steering committee will typically include the community hosts (who will house the guests during the summer months when the college is closed), as well as the individuals who proposed the collaboration and who have played a significant role in organizing the initiative. The steering committee will also include faculty and

staff members from the college. The Director of World Studies will be a standing member on the steering committee, as a faculty member directed by the President to implement this program. Other faculty members will also participate as their interest and time allows. The staff members whose positions will be most affected by the presence of asylum seekers on campus are the Director of Residential Life and the employees in the Office of International Services. The Director of Residential Life will be tasked with organizing students' housing arrangements in a way that ensures the continued availability of a private living space for the guests. The Director of Residential Life also leads the campus on-call system and thus plays a role in the crisis management plan. The Office of International Services is a full-service international office, handling both inbound and outbound student mobility programs; campus internationalization efforts; language learning programs; the reception of international visitors to campus; and other international education opportunities. The office currently has two staff members: a Director and an Experiential Learning & Global Engagement Coordinator (my own position for the 2018-2019 academic year) whose full time duties are shared with the Office of Experiential Learning and Career Development. This office makeup is expected to continue into the future. Given the demands on the Director's time, the Coordinator will be expected to take a more active role in program management.

The Experiential Learning & Global Engagement Coordinator will also be a co-instructor in the Asylum Displacement, and Community Engagement course. They will share the teaching role with a faculty member who has previously taught an interdisciplinary course on displacement. Faculty involvement will rotate in further program years depending on the teaching load and interest of individual faculty members.

## **Participant Selection**

### **Marlboro Students**

Any student at the Sophomore 1 level (third semester at Marlboro or equivalent) or above at the time of the program will be permitted to enroll in the course regardless of their degree field or prior study. Students will be required to submit a brief application to course instructors in order to enroll; this application will ask students to reflect on their motives, learning objectives, and past experiences with service learning to gauge their level of commitment and to provide the course instructors with a more specific needs assessment for the group. Attendance at the first week's Intro Class will also be required to continue with the rest of the course. A minimum of six students will be required for the course to run.

### **Asylum Seekers**

CASP will be responsible for using its network to identify asylum seekers who would benefit from the proposed arrangement and to formally invite them with a letter of sponsorship. CASP typically reaches out widely through listservs and other means to organizations that work directly in and around detention centers - such as legal and religious groups - with a description of the host situation available. In this case, the Marlboro collaboration is not ready to welcome families with children, so CASP will indicate that the group is looking for two adults. CASP will also specify that the individuals should have English or Spanish language proficiency, as the steering committee has determined that there are not appropriate resources available at the college or in the town to readily provide interpretation in other languages. Once an organization responds with a lead, there is typically an opportunity for a brief telephone call between the host and the asylum seeker, in which the host can further describe the region and the hosting arrangement, before the asylum seeker chooses whether or not they wish to accept. This whole

process can take as little as a week and as much as six weeks, and will be timed to coincide with the beginning of the semester to the degree that is possible.

### **Marketing**

The Asylum, Displacement, and Community Engagement course will be listed in Marlboro's online course catalog beginning prior to course registration the semester before the program begins. It will also be advertised verbally in an announcement at the college-wide Town Meeting near the end of the previous semester when students are thinking about course registration. All courses at the college begin with a 30-minute Intro Class at the beginning of the semester, which allows students to gauge their interest in the material before committing to the whole semester.

It will also be important to develop campus-wide buy-in for the program throughout the preceding semester, so that students, faculty, and staff are prepared to welcome the guests to the college. This is a step recommended by the Every Campus A Refuge campaign, and steps have already been taken toward this end during the Spring 2018 semester. To advocate for this buy-in, a presentation was made to the community at Town Meeting describing the program, and another will be made once CASP has identified the individuals who will be joining the community. Events will be scheduled to inform the community about the experience of asylum seekers in the U.S., such as documentary and film screenings, visits to art exhibits in the region, and inviting speakers to campus. Any on-campus events will also be advertised to the wider Marlboro town community via social media, a flyer posted in the town's community center, and an email to the Marlboro Elementary School network, in order to further strengthen the college-community collaboration on this program.

## **Logistics**

### **Housing**

Housing will be provided to the asylum seekers on campus at Marlboro College during the academic year, beginning when campus housing opens to students in late August and ending when it closes in the middle of May. The guests will be housed in one of Marlboro's "cottages," which are free-standing buildings made up of four single bedrooms, a shared living room, bathroom, and small kitchen. Effort will be made to reserve one of two cottages that are closest to the main campus on a regular basis each semester for the guests, in order to minimize the amount of walking required for meals and campus events. If future guests are a couple or a parent and child, other apartment-style housing on campus would be considered, namely one of four one-bedroom apartments in "Married Student Housing," all of which also have private kitchens and bathrooms.

During the summer months, the Marlboro College campus is leased by the Marlboro Music Festival, and housing will be unavailable to the asylum seekers. From mid-May to late August, the guests will be housed at the private homes of the community hosts, Marlboro residents who have been approved by CASP.

### **Transportation**

Initial transportation of the asylum seekers to Brattleboro, Vermont will be arranged and paid for by CASP (or by a third party organization). The community hosts will provide transportation during the first few days of the guests' stay in order to orient them to the region and obtain necessary supplies.

During their stay at Marlboro College, the guests will have access to free public and private transportation to and from Brattleboro. A regional bus called the Moover operates several

times per day, and the college contracts with a transportation service to run a van in the evenings and on weekends. Both options pick up and drop off in the center of campus, outside the dining hall. The asylum seekers will also be able to request rides from Marlboro Cares, a direct support organization that provides a variety of services to town residents, including daytime transportation.

### **Meals**

The guests will be invited to eat all meals (19 per week are served) in the campus dining hall. They will also have the option of purchasing food at area grocery stores using a modest monthly stipend provided by CASP and preparing meals in their cottage.

### **Clothing and Supplies**

The steering committee will seek donations of clothing (particularly winter apparel) and home furnishings prior to the beginning of the program. Donations will be solicited through Marlboro town social media pages and through the town's school system, as well as through the Marlboro College networks.

## **Health and Safety**

### **Health**

CASP will work with the guests to secure the documentation required to obtain medical insurance in the state of Vermont. Applicants for asylum are typically able to obtain insurance on the marketplace after a certain point in the processing of their applications (Healthcare.gov, n.d.) Once insurance is secured, CASP will also help find a Spanish-speaking physician in the area. Before insurance is secured, the guests will be taken to the Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic if a medical need arises, which provides free care to uninsured members of the community. CASP has previously worked with a mental health care provider in the Springfield, Massachusetts area

who speaks Spanish and is willing to provide low-cost counseling services to the asylum seekers helped by CASP. However, the organization is actively seeking additional mental health care providers who are more local and convenient to southern Vermont.

### **Safety**

CASP workers have stressed to members of the steering committee that since asylum seekers are in a legally precarious position, it is critical to their safety that they remain anonymous to the degree that they choose. For instance, because asylum seekers must demonstrate “credible fear,” an immigration judge might consider press identifying them to be evidence that they are not experiencing fear for their safety. The Marlboro College community will be reminded on a regular basis of this need for confidentiality through announcements at Town Meetings, email communications, and social media posts on the college-wide Facebook group. The college’s marketing team will also be asked to review any press and information released to the public about the initiative with CASP prior to publication.

A number of additional measures will also be taken to ensure the safety of Marlboro’s guests, as well as students. CASP has a policy of running a background check on its volunteers, and the community hosts (as well as any other individuals spending significant one-on-one time with the asylum seekers) will be required to undergo this procedure. The college will provide a set of guidelines to the guests upon arrival (see Appendix D) at the college to explain a set of rules put in place for the safety of the guests and Marlboro students. For instance, students will not be permitted in the guests’ housing, and the guests will likewise not be permitted to enter student housing. The guidelines will also provide information about campus policies (such as sexual harassment and assault) and norms (inclusion of all gender identities).

### **Crisis Management**

Marlboro College and CASP have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that holds CASP and its team of volunteers accountable for developing and maintaining a system of communication in the event of an emergency. While the college maintains an on-call system for its students, administered by members of the Student Life department, it was determined that the Resident Advisors and on-call Student Life Coordinators would not be the best-equipped to respond to emergency calls from the asylum seekers. Like all individuals living at the college, the asylum seekers will be informed to call 911 in the case of a life-threatening emergency, followed by a call to any member of the steering committee (who will be responsible for promptly informing the college). They will also be provided with a list of contacts in the community and at the college that they may call, with the understanding that they may be more comfortable calling people they know than emergency services. At the top of this list will be the Spanish-speaking community hosts, as well as one Spanish-speaking college employee who lives on or near the campus in Marlboro. The Experiential Learning & Global Engagement Coordinator will be an on-call resource for emergencies and available to liaise with Spanish-speaking community members about necessary courses of action (if the person in this position does not speak Spanish). In the event of an evacuation from campus, the community hosts will be contacted to pick up and house the guests. In any emergency situation, volunteers will be responsible for informing the CASP director of the situation.

Marlboro College maintains an emergency response plan (available for viewing by the college community online) with protocols for crisis situations including but not limited to sexual assault, fire, bomb threat, and hostile individuals. For crisis situations involving the physical plant at Marlboro, such as fire, the asylum seekers will be included in the actions of college

personnel carrying out the emergency management plan under the supervision of the Director of Campus Safety.

The MOU between Marlboro College and CASP also gives primary responsibility for the legal conditions on the asylum seekers' stay in the U.S. to CASP (such as transportation to and from immigration hearings; securing legal counsel; and any related liability stemming from this legal situation). Furthermore, the agreement includes a "hold harmless" clause that protects the college from other claims and attorney fees in connection with the hosting of the asylum seekers on campus.

### **Budget Notes**

Costs associated with this program will be shared among Marlboro College, CASP, and the individual volunteers in the Marlboro town community. There will be no financial burden placed upon the asylum seekers, as most seekers are unable to receive authorization for work (and thus earn an income) for at least six months beyond the filing of their application for asylum, which may not occur until up to a year from their arrival in the country. CASP will provide initial transportation to Vermont and pay the bond required for the asylum seekers' release, or it will arrange with a third party to pay these costs, as has been possible in past cases. CASP will also provide a monthly stipend per guest for their personal expenses and needs and will cover costs associated with legal counsel (though the organization primarily works with pro bono representation). The college will provide rent-free housing on campus as well as 19 meals per week in the campus dining hall. Volunteers in the town community will collect home furnishings and clothing (largely provided through in-kind donations). In addition to expenses related to the hosting of the asylum seekers, the college will cover all costs associated with running the course, including payment of instructors (included in staff and faculty salaries);

books; materials; and honoraria for any external speakers or presenters. See Appendix E for a breakdown of the expected costs for all involved parties.

### **Evaluation Plan**

Formative and summative evaluation measures are planned for this program to ensure that students are achieving the learning outcomes for the course and to make the best effort possible to meet the asylum seekers' needs and desires.

#### **Course Evaluation**

Students will be assigned a journaling exercise throughout the course that will serve to promote critical reflection as well as give course instructors a measure of student learning. Journaling will be guided by questions from the instructors but students will be invited to move beyond these questions and write about topics of their choosing, as well. A conversation at the beginning of the course about the journaling assignment will focus on the difference between critical reflection and simply recording a log of what happened.

Student feedback throughout the course will also be solicited using short, anonymous feedback slips on which students write what is going well for them and what they feel could be improved. At the end of the course, students will complete a course evaluation to be used by the college in assessing student opinions on the class content and instructors. They will also submit a final written reflection focusing specifically on the communication and collaboration aspects of the course content. In addition to seeking student feedback on a formative and summative basis, course instructors will engage in critical discussion following the course about the service learning component using the Critical Service-Learning Conversations Tool developed by Duke University's service learning programs (Stith, Emmerling, Malone, & Meyers, 2018). This tool provides example scenarios and questions to promote reflection on how well a program

implements the Mitchell's (2008) elements of critical service learning discussed above in the literature review.

### **Individual Evaluation – Asylum Seekers**

Formative evaluation of the asylum seekers' needs, desires, and feedback will occur in weekly check-ins with members of the steering committee, as well as regular check-ins with the CASP case manager. The program seeks to create an environment in which the asylum seekers feel comfortable voicing their needs and opinions; however, it must be recognized that the power dynamics in this situation may prevent full and honest feedback from being collected. Close attention will be paid to nonverbal expressions of needs or feedback. As relationships develop, having a variety of people informally probing and observing for needs will hopefully bring important feedback to light.

The CASP director and case manager will also conduct evaluative interviews with the asylum seekers within two months of arrival and again at the end of the semester. CASP will follow its own internal evaluation procedures to conduct these interviews, including retaining an outside interpreter if necessary.

### **Program Evaluation**

The steering committee will meet on a weekly basis throughout the program to evaluate successes and troubleshoot challenges collaboratively. At the end of the semester, and following the CASP conversations with the asylum seekers, the steering committee will meet with the CASP director and case manager to discuss feedback from the semester and plan for any changes in the next semester. A report will be made after the first semester to the college president and board of trustees.

### **Limitations**

While sincere efforts have been made by college faculty and staff and members of the Marlboro community to develop an opportunity that will benefit the asylum seekers who participate, this program is limited by the very circumstances that make it necessary – the experience of seeking asylum in the United States. It must be understood that the people arriving in Marlboro will not necessarily have chosen to leave their homes and families, and living in this community, or the U.S. in general, may be the opposite of how they wish to live their lives. Though the program attempts to build in flexibility regarding the individual interests and needs of the asylum seeking participants, the manner in which they actually participate might be very different from anything that is described here. It may be that they will want to leave Marlboro, in which case the program's goal must change to helping them do so safely. The program could also potentially be limited by the timing of the legal process of asylum seeking; currently this process is taking up to three years, but changes in policy could, for better or worse, change this timing and bring about changes in what is needed in terms of living arrangements. The curricular component of the Marlboro Community Asylum Seekers Project has been designed to be independent from the hosting component, so that it can function even if there are delays or other challenges in having asylum seekers present in Marlboro.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

Despite the challenges and uncertainties inherent in this program design, the Marlboro Community Asylum Seekers Project represents a unique opportunity on multiple fronts: to use college resources in support of a vulnerable population in the United States; to increase collaboration and partnership between Marlboro College and its neighbors; to teach students

about power, privilege, identity, and voice, while also providing a concrete skill-building experience.

This program will also hopefully serve as a model to other colleges and universities and demonstrate the potential for similar projects elsewhere. Indeed, a nearby higher education institution has already expressed interest in hosting asylum seekers and is watching the progress of the Marlboro collaboration. Marlboro College is not an institution with vast resources; in fact, the college faces severe under-enrollment and changing regional demographics that threaten its existence. However, Marlboro is willing to think creatively and take risks, and the partnership with CASP and local residents demonstrates that resources can be found in communities and costs shared collaboratively. The Every Campus A Refuge campaign describes hosting refugees as “radical hospitality” which “makes a clear statement about the institution’s commitment to compassion, empathy, and awareness and helps shape more positive public narratives and community discourses around refugees and immigrants” (Every Campus A Refuge, n.d.-a). Such narratives and statements are needed in a region that lacks diversity – and where higher education news has lately focused more on the failings of small colleges rather than the expansive possibilities of these institutions. The Marlboro Community Asylum Seekers Project represents a reimagining of one institution’s role within its community and country, and demonstrates the benefits that can potentially arise from doing so.

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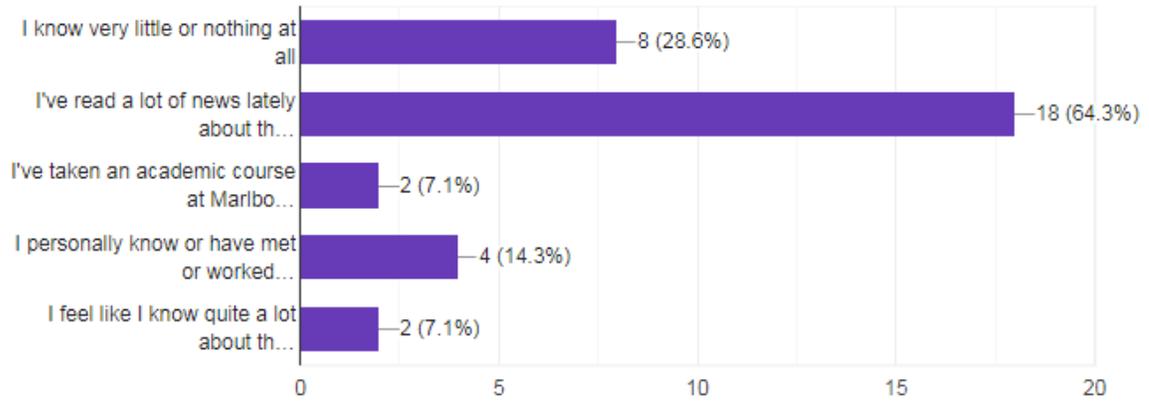
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### Appendix A: Student Survey Questions and Results

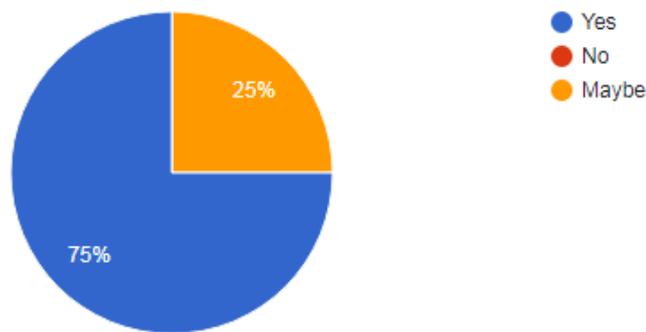
1. Which of the following best describes your knowledge of the process and/or experience of seeking asylum in the United States?

28 responses



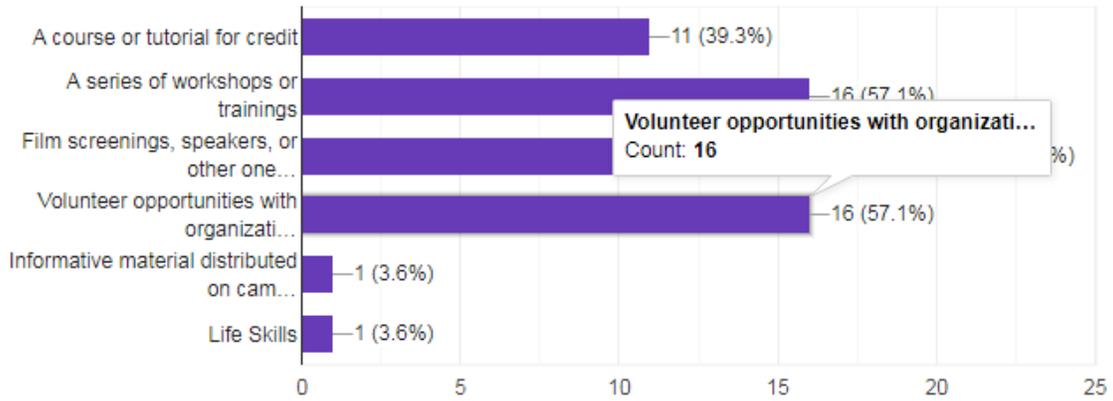
2. Would you be interested in learning more about the asylum process in the U.S. and the experience of asylum seekers and other displaced people?

28 responses



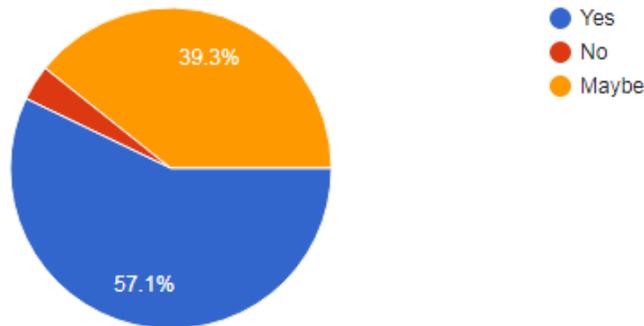
### 3. If yes, what opportunities to do so appeal to you the most? (Check all that interest you)

28 responses



### 4. Would you be interested in volunteering to assist asylum seekers being hosted on Marlboro's campus?

28 responses



## 5. Do you have questions or concerns about Marlboro hosting asylum seekers on campus? If so, please share here.

5 responses

NA

Do we have enough beds for them, or will they feel shoved into rooms with students who don't have enough space for them?

Campus is not terribly accessible for folks with mobility limitations. But otherwise, I'd love to have asylum seekers on campus!!! <3

marlboro should continue to be a place of refuge, as it was founded for those seeking refuge from their own battles.

I'm wondering if people at Marlboro will actually be accepting of asylum seekers, I have high hopes but this community can sometimes be volatile. I think there's a lot of unacknowledged, internalized racism the community needs to work through. I personally am really happy Marlboro is doing this, though.

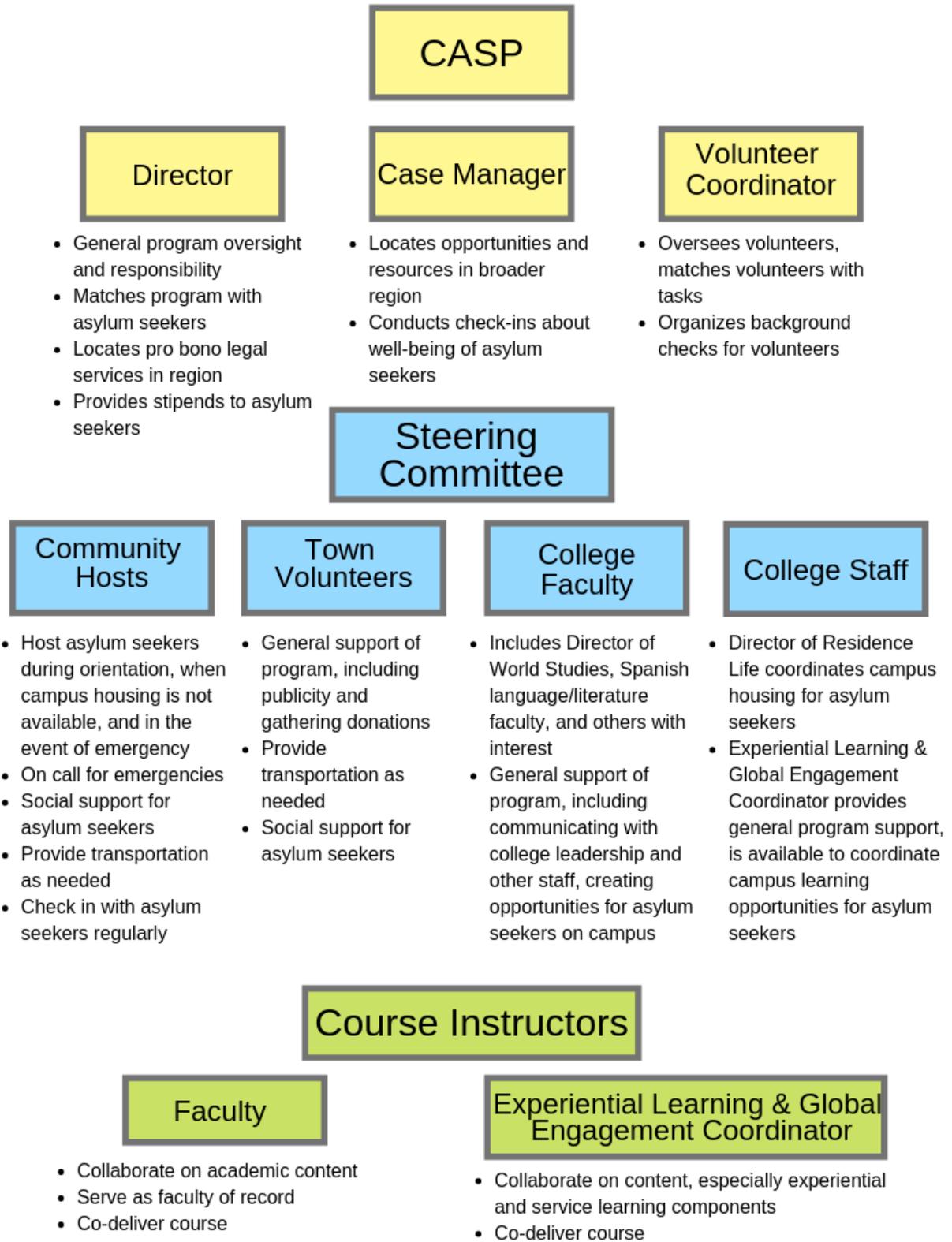
**Appendix B: Suggested Curriculum Overview by Week**

Class Session	Session description, guiding themes/questions, and activities	Readings for discussion	Assignments due
Intro Class	Introductions if needed. Overview of course themes and content. Presentation of key activities, projects, and assignments. Begin drafting class norms.	Syllabus	
Week 1	What are the socio-political forces causing people to seek asylum? What socio-political forces shape the experience of asylum seekers while they are in the U.S.? What is the most current discourse on asylum seekers/displaced people in the U.S.? Revisit and establish norms. Discussion of <i>Border Trilogy</i> . Present out on articles.	Listen to Jason de Leon/Radiolab, "Border Trilogy" parts 1-3 (available on YouTube)	Find and bring a recent news article about asylum seekers and be prepared to present
Week 2	What does it mean, legally, to seek asylum? What are the rights (and lack thereof) of the asylum seeker? Presentation by immigration attorney. Presentation by immigration attorney. Look at sample credible fear interview in small groups, gather impressions.	Excerpts from <i>Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions</i> by Valeria Luiselli; Chapters 1 and 4 of <i>The Refugee Challenge in Post-Cold War America</i> by Maria Cristina Garcia	
<i>Extra evening event</i>	Film screening of <i>Undeterred</i> open to full college and town communities		
Week 3	Examination of the U.S. mythology in the U.S. surrounding migrants, displaced people. What infrastructure is already in place to assist displaced people in their arrival in the U.S.? What rhetoric is used in this infrastructure/by organizations? Activity: searching for representations of the displaced online in small groups, developing list of themes.	"Speechless Emissaries" Liisa Malkki; Ethical Journalism Network's Moving Stories - International Review of How Media Cover Migration	Journal 1
Week 4	What is it like arriving in a new community and culture? BARNGA game and discussion. Discussion of refugee resettlement timeline.	Review "Making Your Way: A Reception and Placement Orientation Curriculum"	

Week 5	What is service learning/community engaged learning? How does power affect this experience? Experiential activity: "Rebuild Romonovia" and discussion. Look at Mitchell's critical service learning framework.	"To Hell With Good Intentions" - Ivan Illich; Intro to <i>The Student Companion to Community-Engaged Learning</i> by David M. Donahue and Star Plaxton-Moore	Critical essay on media representation
Week 6	What is the relationship between the "volunteer" and the person in need of "help"? How do we maintain the voice/agency of the asylum seeker within this relationship? Guest speaker from International Institute of New England/"Suitcase Stories" project	Selections from <i>Borders, Asylum and Global Non-Citizenship</i> by Heather L. Johnson	
Week 7	How can we "accompany" people through a challenging process without making assumptions of their needs? What are strategies for leaving assumptions behind? Activities on identity/assumptions	Watch "The Danger of a Single Story" TED talk. Selections from <i>Intercultural communication: a critical introduction</i> by Ingrid Piller	Journal 2
Week 8	How can we recognize the effects of trauma in one's past in a respectful way? Trauma-informed approaches workshop with CASP case manager	Selected chapters from <i>Trauma and Recovery</i> by Judith Herman; any materials identified by CASP case manager	
Week 9	What steps go into designing, implementing, and evaluating an effective, reciprocal, and culturally competent service project?	Selected chapters from <i>The Student Companion to Community Engaged Learning</i> by David M. Donahue and Star Plaxton-Moore	
Week 10	Meeting with CASP (founder, volunteer manager, and case manager) and discussion of needs for service project.		
Week 11	Debrief of CASP meeting and further brainstorming and planning of service project(s).		Journal 3
Week 12	Execution of service project(s). Group work time, check-ins with instructors.		

<p>Week 13</p>	<p>Execution of service project(s). Group work time, check-ins with instructors.</p>		
<p>Week 14 (exam period)</p>	<p>Evaluation of service project(s). Group discussion/reflection.</p>		<p>Final journal/individual reflection; Team paper evaluating service project</p>

**Appendix C: Staffing Chart**



**Appendix D: Guidelines and Information to be Provided to Asylum Seekers Upon Arrival**

*This letter will be translated and provided in both Spanish and English*

Dear [*names of guests*],

Welcome to Marlboro College! We are honored to have you as guests on our campus.

Please make yourself at home and comfortable. This document contains information about this house and resources for your stay at Marlboro.

**Address:**

The street address for the college as a whole is 2582 South Road, Marlboro, VT 05344. Please note that there is no mail delivery to this house. Your mailing address is [*address of community host*].

**Important phone numbers:**

For any life-threatening emergencies, please dial 911 to speak with an emergency responder or call an ambulance.

For any non life-threatening emergencies, questions, or concerns, please dial any one of the following people:

[*phone numbers of community hosts, steering committee members*]

If you have any concerns related to the house during normal business hours (8:30 AM to 4:30 PM), please contact Tanner Jones at 802-258-9232. To report a problem with the house AFTER HOURS (4:30 PM to 8:30 AM and on weekends), please call 802-490-6040. This is the number of the on-call coordinator on duty. Please note that this number should only be used for instances that require immediate attention (e.g. if the heat or water stopped working for some reason).

**Trash and Recycling:**

Trash and recycling bins are located outside the house to the left in a small shed.

The following items can be recycled and should be placed in recycling bins:

- All plastics labeled with the numbers 1-7 (rinsed),
- All glass jars and bottles (clear, green, and brown)
- All tin, aluminum, and steel containers (including aerosol cans)
- Clean aluminum foil and pie plates
- Paper (newspaper, printer paper, junk mail, magazines, telephone books and paperback books, etc.)
- Cardboard, including box board (cereal boxes, etc), frozen food boxes, milk and egg cartons

**Care of house:**

- You are expected to report any problems with the house or equipment that needs repair in a timely manner to college staff.
- No improvements may be made to the building without talking to college staff.
- Windows may not be left open during winter months.
- No smoking inside of the building.
- No candles or open flames inside of the building. Do not cover smoke detectors.
- No animals inside building without permission of college staff.
- No feeding wild animals. All food waste must be properly disposed of to avoid attracting animals.

**Dining Hall Meal Hours:**

You are invited to eat all meals in the college dining hall during its normal meal hours:

**Monday to Friday:**

Breakfast: 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM

Lunch: 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM

Dinner: 5:30 PM to 6:30 PM

**Saturday and Sunday:**

Brunch: 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM

Dinner: 5:30 PM to 6:30 PM

**Campus Conduct:**

The following rules have been put in place for your safety as well as the safety of students at Marlboro College:

- You may not enter other college housing where students reside. Other students may not visit you in your house.
- You may not enter into any romantic or sexual relationships with any students at Marlboro College.
- You may not be alone with a student in a private space.

Marlboro College strongly affirms the rights of its community members to live, study, and work in an environment free from sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. Our community prohibits such misconduct and considers violations of this policy as opposed to our shared goals and values. Such misconduct will not be tolerated.

Sexual misconduct is a sexual act that takes place without effective consent of all parties involved. Sexual misconduct may include sexual assault, or sexual exploitation or both. Sexual assault may be either rape, fondling without consent, non-consensual sexual contact, incest, or

statutory rape. Sexual exploitation or “voyeurism” occurs when a person takes sexual advantage of another person for the benefit of anyone other than that person without that person’s consent.

Sexual harassment can mean, but is not limited to:

- Touching any person without their permission
- Catcalling or making unwelcome sexual remarks about or to a person
- Requests for sexual favors
- Unwelcome remarks about another person’s gender

### **Notes about Marlboro culture:**

It is common in the United States (and at Marlboro) for people to identify as a gender or choose a gender expression other than the gender they were assigned at birth. Marlboro College is a welcoming and inclusive community for transgender, queer, genderqueer, gender non-binary, and all other gender identities (as well as all sexual orientations). Comments directed at members of the Marlboro College community regarding their sexuality, gender identity, or gender expression will not be tolerated.

### **Other Campus Resources**

There is a computer lab on the first floor of the library. You may also register for a library username and password that will allow you to borrow books from the library (including a selection of books in Spanish).

There is a fitness room on the ground floor of the Campus Center with exercise machines and weights.

Marlboro has music, dance, and art facilities that may be available for your use upon request.

You are welcome to participate in Spanish language courses (which are taught in a combination of English and Spanish). Spanish classes are taught on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9:30-10:30 AM (Elementary Spanish) and 10:30-11:30 AM (Intermediate Spanish). There is also a Spanish conversation group that meets at lunch on Wednesdays from 12:30-1:30 PM in the dining hall.

We hope you will contact any one of us if there is anything you need while you are staying at Marlboro College or if you have any questions about the information listed here.

**Appendix E: Budget**

**Marlboro Community Asylum Seekers Project Budget**

<b>Number of guests:</b>	2
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Fall 2019 Semester - August 31-December 19

(Does not include costs associated with housing with community hosts during semester breaks)

	<b>per guest:</b>	<b>total:</b>
<b>Marlboro College costs:</b>		<b>\$12,988</b>
Housing (based on student costs)	\$3,571	\$7,142
Board (19 meals per week based on student costs)	\$2,603	\$5,206
Course-related costs		\$640
<b>CASP costs:</b>		<b>\$7,770</b>
Estimated airfare to Hartford, CT*	\$385	\$770
Bond*	\$3,000	\$6,000
Personal stipend (\$125 per month for four months)	\$500	\$1,000
<b>Town volunteer/community host costs:</b>		<b>\$170</b>
Clothing		\$0 (donated in kind)
Home furnishings and supplies		\$0 (donated in kind)
Food during orientation	\$35	\$70
Share of utilities in home during orientation	\$10	\$20
Local transportation in personal vehicle		\$80

\*Note: airfare and bond will be covered in this case by a separate organization.

<b>Fixed course-related costs (college):</b>	
Books	\$40
Materials	\$100
Budget for speakers/trainers/events	\$500
<b>Total course-related costs:</b>	<b>\$640</b>