

“New Model to Address Refugee Crisis”

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The Mellon Foundation recently awarded \$135,000 to the Consortium on Forced Migration, Displacement and Education—a group comprised of Bennington, Vassar, Sarah Lawrence, and Bard colleges—to explore innovative ways to engage with urgent issues of displacement and forced migration.

The Consortium is working to advance social justice, the dignity of all people, and the education of engaged, global leaders.

Through the grant, during the 2017-18 academic year, each college in the consortium will develop a year-long course on the refugee crisis, reflecting the particular pedagogy and strengths of each institution. At Bennington, this course will be interdisciplinary in nature, looking at the crisis through a number of perspectives. Faculty in diverse subjects such as Literature, Anthropology, Languages, Science, Dance and Environmental Studies are participating in curriculum development. These courses may be co-taught, include new ideas and pedagogies, involve a collaborative course, and bring invited guests to campus to work on this topic. The Consortium is planning a curriculum development meeting at the end of April where faculty from all four campuses will come together to share ideas, syllabi, and sources. Courses will then be exchanged across campuses, giving students access to curriculums developed at each institution.

It is inspiring and deeply gratifying to be working with such talented colleagues at Vassar, Sarah Lawrence, and Bard on such an important topic. We are all dedicated to finding the best practices in educational opportunities for vast numbers of people who have been forced out of their homes around the globe. We also are working on what our own College students need to know to be able to engage

with such a complex and demanding challenge in our world today." CAPA director Susan Sgorbati, who is spearheading the project for Bennington

In its proposal, the Consortium stated: "The current refugee crisis demands new models that go beyond humanitarian relief to address global inequality in an educational context. The Consortium is committed to developing new, horizontal and more egalitarian models of global and transnational educational solidarity to address the refugee crisis and to educate our students to be engaged citizens in an increasingly complex and interconnected world."