

WELCOMING TOOLKIT



ENCOURAGING BELONGING ON OUR CAMPUSES AND IN OUR COMMUNITIES

*Romans 15:7: Therefore welcome one another as Christ
has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*

This toolkit is a summary of the work of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCCU) in supporting the Belonging Begins with US campaign, sharing best practices for programs that encourage our campuses to join others in their cities, towns, and neighborhoods in building stronger, more inclusive campuses and communities that welcome new Americans and foster a greater sense of belonging for us all.

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An aerial photograph of a large crowd of people, seen from above, forming the shape of the United States. The crowd is composed of many individuals of various ages and ethnicities, creating a colorful mosaic. The background is split diagonally from the top-left to the bottom-right, with a dark blue-grey area on the left and a white area on the right. The crowd is denser in the central part of the map and more sparse towards the edges.

1

MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

*Creating a Sense of Belonging for
New Americans*

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*Refugees are the you and me of
another place.*

LOREN BALISKY

WE ALL LONG to belong. It is a basic human need. Research tells us that nothing promotes human flourishing more than having a sense that you belong to a group or a place. As humans we are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love, to be loved, and to belong (Brown, 2017) rather than just fit in. Differentiating between belonging and fitting in is important as it relates to who you can be in a group. Andy Crouch (Linneman, 2019) developed the following chart to explain that belonging is the result of being both known and loved:

Being Known	REJECTION: (Known, not loved)	BELONGING: (Known and loved)
	IGNORED & REJECTED: Not known, not loved)	FITTING IN: (Not known, but loved)
Being Loved		

For CCCU institutions, it is imperative to help our students feel they belong. Creating welcoming spaces on our campuses where students feel they truly belong can be an important part of living out our faith together. Though difficult such work is rewarding as we actively imagine new ways of building community. Creating a sense of belonging is a great start that ultimately leads us to shalom, where we celebrate the flourishing of each other and our world. The goal of shalom demands an active engagement with God, with each other, and with our world by creating spaces where we all can belong and flourish. In so far as this goal is fulfilled such engagement offers the promise that the best it yet to come.

This vision of flourishing communities encourages our institutions to step beyond our own campuses and into our surrounding communities as a way to

respond to God’s commandment to love our neighbors. In this process of helping students wrestle with the question, “*who is my neighbor?*” we can begin to equip them with the skills and virtues to engage with their communities throughout their lives. Learning the give and take of living in community and being a good neighbor goes a long way toward helping create more inclusive communities where we all can thrive.

Through the Belonging Begins with US campaign the CCCU hopes to encourage member institutions to consider how we can create more inclusive communities not only for our students but also for new Americans who are changing the face of America in interesting ways. Consider this: Researchers project that within 25 years there will no longer be a clear racial majority in the United States. In 2017 alone, the foreign-born population in the United States reached its highest numbers in a century, with nearly one in seven Americans now born outside this country. With this reality comes the realization that our institutions and the students they graduate must be prepared to become a part of building more inclusive communities that value diversity and invite everyone’s energy and assets to fulfill our vision for a pluralistic and welcoming democracy.

This toolkit is designed to help our campuses design programs that engage students in their local communities, connecting them with new Americans and other diverse populations in their cities, towns, and neighborhoods. The toolkit offers a theoretical foundation for these programs and provides best practices to build programs promoting more inclusive communities both on and off campus.

Why should we care?

Being a Good Neighbor: The Lessons of the Parable of the Good Samaritan

When confronted with the question “who is my neighbor?” Jesus doesn’t respond with a list of neighbors and non-neighbors but with a story — the story of the Good Samaritan. The question posed to Jesus is similar to the questions we might ask today about hospitality: *Who is my neighbor?* Whom must I treat in a neighborly way? Who falls inside or outside the boundaries of neighborly obligation? Of course, we recognize on some level that everyone — Black, white, rich, poor, educated, or uneducated — is our neighbor. Yet Jesus ends his story with a different and more profound question: *Who was a neighbor to the man who was hurt?*

Consider how a student at a CCCU institution described how her experiences studying abroad contributed to her understanding of this parable: *Last week in one of our classes, we talked about the Parable of the Good Samaritan. I think that most of the time when I think about that parable, I identify myself with the Samaritan. I want to be a good neighbor to the people around me and to help and serve them unconditionally. However, in class we focused on Jesus’ question: Who was a neighbor to the man who was hurt? As a result, I began to think about what it means to identify myself with the man who fell into the hands of robbers and received the mercy of a stranger. That is really not far off from my reality right now. No, I’m not almost dead on the side of a road, but I am quite dependent on people I didn’t know two weeks ago and who are at home in a culture that is different from my own. I am dependent on them to eat food. I am at their mercy to learn about this culture. Without them, I would have no place to sleep! Rather than being the one with the power to help, I am in a position of receiving from mi familia. I am learning that requires a lot of humility. It is often (for me) a lot easier and more comfortable to give than to receive, but God is stretching me and teaching me how to receive well.*

Welcoming New Americans: Economic Value and Civic Success

Beyond the moral imperative of welcoming the stranger into our midst, it also makes good economic sense. Consider:

From 2013 to 2018, James and Deborah Fallows traveled across America in a single-engine prop airplane. Visiting dozens of towns, meeting all kinds of people, and looking for what is fueling a renaissance all across America. What emerged was a surprising portrait of the civic and economic reinvention taking place in America, town by town, out of the national eye. The Fallows note that being a welcoming and inclusive community that welcomes new Americans brings in new people, fuels new businesses, and provides a dynamic workforce, all of which contribute to the revitalization of these communities. (*Our Towns: A 100,000-Mile Journey into the Heart of America*, 2018).

Similarly, Heather McGhee addresses questions about the economic impact of racism in her new book *The Sum of Us: What racism costs everyone and how can we prosper together*. She debunks the notion that we live in a zero-sum economy, where for one group to rise, another must fall. Instead, she paints a picture, using data from throughout American history, to show how racism has hurt us all economically and emotionally. Ultimately, McGhee calls us to unite to fulfill the promise of America for all.

If it is such a good idea, why is it still so hard?

In a recent study, Nichole Argo and Kate Jassin found that partisanship is only part of the answer to why attitudes toward immigration have become rigid and moralized, making it difficult to find common ground on any immigration issue. The survey, completed in 2020, revealed that many immigration-related issues have become sacred values, which are values we process as moral obligations rather than choices. A summary of this study follows:

Survey

Respondents were asked to choose between a more open or restrictive stance on 14 key immigration issues such as asylum, sanctuary cities, DACA, the border wall, the Muslim ban, family separation, and more. Next, they reflected on how much the stance mattered to them. Finally, they indicated how much money it would take for them to let go of their position. The respondents who selected “no amount of money” were seen as holding the issue as a sacred value.

Findings

Each one of the 14 immigration-related issues was considered sacred by at least 34% of the survey sample (overall range was 34% to 56%). Respondents sacralized more open, welcoming stances as well as more restrictive ones, coming from both the right and left sides of the political spectrum.

Why does this matter

We must communicate differently around sacred values, as sacralization makes it very hard to deliberate

— much less compromise — with people who hold other views. So how do we find a way out?

- We must try to understand the values underlying sacralization: two possible variables from other research are threat (the perception that another group is going to take away something that matters to you) and social identity (whether or not respondents thought the immigration issues were considered central to their political groups).
- First, by understanding and acknowledging our sacred values and the sacred values of others, we can begin to listen and prioritize the conversation as much as any outcome. Second, since the study revealed a tremendous influence of group norms on immigration-related sacralizing behavior, it suggests that the modeling of new norms (e.g., norms of listening and deliberation) might create constructive change.

In closing, Argo and Feliz note, there is no silver bullet solution to our immigration divides, but this study provides a clearer understanding of why it has become so difficult to find common ground and how we can begin to dial down the intensity of our deliberations.

Argo, N. and Feliz, W.

Psychological study explains our strong feeling around immigration.

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We need a renewed imagination and renewed cultural practices that can counter a geography of exclusion with an ethos of inclusion...we need to be set free by a radical narrative of hospitality and homecoming.

Bouma-Prediger & Walsh, Beyond Homelessness: Christian Faith in a Culture of Discernment

Photo by Kathy DeGraaf.



Australia Studies Program in Bali at a school.



2

SOCIAL CONTACT THEORY

A Way Forward

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Allport's four optimal conditions under which social contact might lead to improvements in intergroup relations:

- *equal status between groups in the situation,*
- *common goals,*
- *intergroup cooperation, and*
- *the support of authorities, law, or custom.*

THE NEED TO come together and work toward addressing common problems has maybe never been greater, yet Americans seem to increasingly focus on what divides us. This must change! Our nation's democracy depends on building relationships across difference and making a place at the table for everyone! We must build the social cohesion necessary for fostering connections in order to move towards a shared future that embraces a spirit of what is possible when working together.

Fortunately, our country has a long history of social innovation, where individuals and groups have found creative ways to address social issues. One such innovation — social contact theory — proves particularly relevant to bridge-building related to immigration. As early as the 1930s, social psychology began exploring what was needed to build social cohesion between individuals and groups. What emerged from this work was the contact hypothesis, which maintains that when members of different groups interact in meaningful ways, trust and compassion can develop and prejudice lessens. Researchers noted that such interactions didn't occur by accident, but rather were the result of intentional efforts that ensured a certain set of conditions were being met. In 1954, Gordon Allport built off this earlier research to develop what he called the **social contact theory**. In his book *The Nature of Prejudice*, Allport noted the following four optimal conditions under which contact might lead to improvements in intergroup relations: equal status between groups in the situation; common goals; intergroup cooperation; and the support of authorities, law, or custom.

Since Allport's seminal work, many studies have demonstrated the power of bringing different groups together. Linda Tropp, a co-author of one meta-analysis of social contact theory, notes, "What our research is suggesting is every little bit helps, and the more we're able to approach those optimal conditions [identified by Allport] the better. However,

rather than worry about having everything on that checklist, let's do what we can to move in the direction of more contact, even just finding ways to put members of different groups on the same 'team,' in support of the same goal, might make a difference" (Singal, 2017).

Throughout our history social contact theory has been used by organizations as a viable approach to address problems. From the settlement house movement at the turn of the 20th century to community centers and youth camps today, programs that bring diverse groups together can have a huge impact.

Welcoming America, a non-profit organization launched in 2007, has worked to create more welcoming communities by bringing people together, noting, "research demonstrates that people who hold some of the most negative views on the issue of immigration have had fewer direct, personal experiences with immigrants than those who hold more positive views. While language and cultural barriers inevitably make the development of these relationships less likely to occur organically, we know that having meaningful contact with people across difference may be the most important element in building acceptance and inclusion of others and strengthening social cohesion. In these polarized times, contact building efforts may be the most essential and foundational method of bridging our nation's divides and strengthening our social fabric. While contact building work has been underway for years, there has been a recent surge of interest in these strategies, with efforts becoming more creative and nuanced, and more important than ever" (Downs-Karkos, 2019).

3

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITIES

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Addams never embarked on a solo search for self-fulfillment; rather, she sought to underwrite a ‘social covenant that connects one man to another, she caresses the word fellowship as if it were an icon of true democracy’.

(LEIBOWITZ ON DESCRIBING JANE ADDAMS AND THE HULL HOUSE SETTLEMENT HOUSE IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY).

Trinity's movable mural.
Photo by Mike VanderWeele.

OVER 125 YEARS AGO, social reformers labored to address issues arising from rapid industrialization and social change in American cities. In response to growing urban immigrant populations, the settlement house movement transitioned from Great Britain to the U.S. as a way to create spaces where people could come together to bridge the gulf between socioeconomic classes and ethnicities and pull together to make a better life for all. Perhaps the best-known Settlement was found in the near West Side of Chicago, where Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr established the Hull House in 1889.

From its humble beginnings in 1889, the Hull House settlement grew into a major player in the reform movement in the late 1800s and became a place where “the Social Gospel” was lived out. In describing the initial motivations for Settlement Houses, Addams describes the following:

- To add social function to democracy, extending democratic principles beyond politics and into society. Creating a place where democracy could be learned and lived within a neighborhood.
- To provide opportunities for people to connect and experience real fellowship with a diverse group of people.
- To express the spirit of Christ, sharing the Social Gospel and promoting a Christian renaissance that stresses the interdependence of human beings and the power of love. (Scheuer, 1985).

In the initial years, programs grew as residents (not staff) joined the Hull House community, living in the neighborhood and listening to neighbors describe their challenges and working together to create programs to address these challenges. Most of the people

living in the area in the late 1800s were recently arrived immigrants from Europe and later (in the 1900s) from Latin America. As a result, a lot of the programs worked to support and assimilate immigrants into the American experience. Throughout these programs, Addams was adamant that those who came and went at the Hull House should be viewed as citizens, or citizens in the making, not as clients or receivers of services. Programs should offer everyone a shelter from the storm of the city and a new way of being in the world, and the Hull House itself should be a place of civic education,

a spirited enterprise that served as a vehicle for the creation of community and the sustaining of identities (Elshtain, 2002).

Given the Hull House’s influence in the social reform movement, its vision to reach out to new immigrants, and its faith-based underpinning, it provides a fascinating case study to explore how to use social contact theory to connect stu-

dents to new immigrants and to other diverse groups for the purpose of building more inclusive communities where everyone can flourish. In this section of the toolkit, we will focus on the lessons that colleges and universities (especially faith-based institutions) can learn from two distinct groupings of programs: (1) the historical example of Hull House programs, and (2) six programs run by CCCU member institutions involved with the Belonging Begins with US campaign, where engaged students work with groups in their cities and towns to create more inclusive communities, especially related to immigration. These lessons will focus on the following areas:

- Embrace our calling to love our neighbor
- Practice co-creation
- Create space and foster dialogue
- Think creatively across disciplines
- Share stories



Jane Addams talks to young visitors at Hull House in 1935.
National Archives.



EMBRACE OUR CALLING TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR

Just as individual students have a calling or vocation that faith-based colleges and universities help them consider, we also celebrate the calling of our institutions to use education to make a difference in the lives of our students, our communities, and our world. Loving our neighbor is a part of this calling, helping students to learn to love what and who God loves. As David Brooks notes in his book *The Road to Character*, “for Augustine, knowledge is not enough for tranquility and goodness, because it doesn’t contain the motivation to be good. Only love compels action. We don’t become better because we acquire new information. We become better when we acquire better loves. We don’t become what we know. Education is a process of love formation. When you go to school, it should offer you new things to love.”

While we recognize our general calling to live our faith in this world, we also acknowledge that this calling can manifest itself in lots of different ways. Our institutions often reflect this diversity in the priorities they embrace, the programs they offer, and the places where they invest. As a result, there is a wide spectrum of possible programs and strategies that your college or university might employ to use social contact theory to build relationships between students and new Americans. In the following sections we encourage you to create your own programs: programs that focus on creating contact and connection, programs encouraging participants to co-create outcomes in creative ways and in the process learn about one another and find ways to bridge differences. The possibilities are endless!

Tips for Building Relationships

Consider the following as you explore the possibilities that make sense at your institution.

- **Help students learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable.**
 - How can we embrace our institutional callings to help students learn to love the things God loves?
- **Find ways to cultivate partnerships and joint ventures.**
 - What other organizations exist in our community, government agencies, non-profit organizations, churches, and/or businesses that the institution could partner with in reaching out to new Americans, immigrants, or refugees?
 - What churches in your community would resonate with social contact theory and be willing to partner with students and explore how to move forward together? What opportunities might exist for students and new Americans to explore interfaith learning together?
- **Encourage faculty, staff, and students to be visionary. Don’t shy away from dreaming big and tackling difficult problems. Start small but be bold. As we have seen from the Hull House, promoting meaningful contact across difference is an important tool in building social cohesion. Their legacy should inspire us to be willing to take on difficult problems and to dream about how we can address them, collectively, in ways that improve the quality of life for all.**
- **Do you have specific faculty and staff on campus who are passionate about encouraging students to reach out to immigrants and refugees? How can you network these individuals and empower them to think creatively about social contact theory and helping students connect with diverse populations in their community?**



PRACTICE CO-CREATION

As we look to be creative and bold in building social cohesion in our country, we must not forget the importance of co-creating the future with everyone. The Hull House settlement worked diligently to involve neighbors of all walks of life in co-creating the future, creating and implementing shared objectives, in order to *be with* people— not to *do for* them. Similarly, within social contact theory today, the idea of co-creation ensures a sense of power-sharing and the development of shared goals.

Yet, as many of the institutions involved in the Belonging Begins with US campaign can attest, co-creation is not easy to accomplish, especially with new Americans who often lack confidence as a result of being in a new environment and with students who often lack time or a long-term perspective, especially in the midst of a pandemic. Given these challenges, insights from pilot programs remind us:

- Co-creation requires more time and effort than going it alone.
- Participants must be comfortable before they are willing to be vulnerable and share their own stories.
- Trust building needs to be an intentional component of any process to help individuals and networks come together around shared projects.
- Hospitality is an essential component of trust building that includes both giving hospitality and also learning to accept it graciously.

- The concept of co-creation has the potential to continue to revolutionize how we do service-learning. Much progress has already been made here as colleges and universities have responded to such books as *When Helping Hurts* and *Toxic Charity*. Yet more needs to be done. Those involved with several of the projects described in the toolkit encourage new projects and programs to consider the following ideas early in the program design process:

- Incorporate an asset-based approach to program development. Such an approach encourages programs to build on the strengths each stakeholder brings to a program or event.
- Recruit multiple perspectives from the institution and community. Assemble a partnership- planning and implementation team that involves multiple constituents from the campus and the community.
- Develop shared goals. When goals are shared it helps establish investment in the project.
- Assure all voices are encouraged and heard. Students and other program participants (e.g., new Americans) can often be forgotten as programs are identified and designed. Institutions need to take special care to encourage space for everyone to speak into the program design process.

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In our world full of strangers...we witness a painful search for a hospitable place where life can be lived without fear and where community can be found...Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place...Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the lifestyle of the host, [but rather] the gift of a chance for the guest to find their own...[and in the process] create the free and fearless space where brotherhood and sisterhood can be formed and fully experienced.

*Henri Nouwen,
The Wounded Healer*

CO-CREATION | Specific Examples from Christian Higher Education

Find good partners and listen well. **Samford University** in Birmingham, Alabama, has taken a unique approach to building a partnership with a nearby high school that serves a large number of new American students from around the world. They started by developing a community leadership team, called a service cadre, comprised of Samford students, English learner students from the high school, and faculty and staff from both institutions. This team began by examining the strengths and challenges (both academic and social) of all students involved. From this foundation, the team initiated a variety of programs that staff, faculty, and students could pursue. Initial programming included professional development for teachers, an opportunity to learn and celebrate together through a virtual art workshop in the Mexican muralist tradition, the creation of an English learner student advisory committee, and weekly peer partner meetings between Samford and high school English learner students. The peer partner meetings are part of a larger service cadre program operated by the Mann Center at Samford University. For this specific cadre Samford student volunteers will meet virtually with English learners from Yemen and a variety of Latin American countries whom teachers have identified and invited to participate. This weekly cadre serves to welcome and provide resources to new students usually unfamiliar with the region, language, and customs of Birmingham, while also equipping Samford students with knowledge of the native language and customs of their new neighbors. While the emerging programs are exciting, the process of their creation is noteworthy as a variety of groups were a part of both decision-making and program implementation stages.

Create a path to deepening involvement. As a part of the CCCU cohort tasked with developing pilot programs to bring students and New Americans together (based on social contact theory), **Seattle Pacific University**, located in Seattle, Washington, initiated a multi-phase project with their varied partners. The initiative focused on creating a pathway for deepening involvement of students over their first year of college and into the rest of their academic careers. The project began with exposure and education, engaging students in learning about the journey of refugees through speakers, webinars, and exhibits. Students were then connected to a local nonprofit working with refugees and given opportunities to become involved in welcoming refugees and advocating for their needs in the local community. Following these efforts to prepare students, opportunities for connecting directly to refugee families were encouraged through a Cultural Companions program. At the end of this first year, a small cadre of leaders will be chosen for leadership next year, replicating similar programs that connect students to the local community around the university.

Expand traditional service-learning opportunities to incorporate social contact theory. **Crown College**, outside of Minneapolis, Minnesota, wanted to expand its traditional tutoring program with recently arrived Somali refugees to include many of the principles of social contact theory. The college began by activating a variety of students, faculty, and staff and reaching out to community partners to assist in expanding orientation for those involved in the program, reframing the tutoring experience from a service opportunity to a cross-cultural experience where students and community members could learn together. The next step was broadening the program, moving from tutoring young children to interacting with families in their homes to sharing meals and special events where families and students could build relationships and learn one another's stories.



CREATE SPACE AND FOSTER DIALOGUE

While the co-created programs are essential to fostering social cohesions, it is also important to note the role of creating space, both physically and figuratively, where people can gather and share. Oldenburg (2000) calls informal, community gathering places third places. In contrast to first places (home) and second places (work/school), third places allow people to put aside their concerns and simply enjoy the company and conversation of others. While colleges and universities are both workplaces (for faculty and staff) and living spaces (for students), they can also be important community spaces (a third place) that can draw people in and encourage them to interact. As a way to connect to their communities, colleges and universities need to focus more on creating these types of third places. Addams recognized the importance of creating space when she wrote, “The mere foothold of a house, easily accessible, ample in space, hospitable and tolerant in spirit, situated in the midst of the large foreign colonies which so easily isolate themselves in American cities, would be in itself a serviceable thing for Chicago” (Jane Addams, 1893).

Libraries, coffeeshops, classrooms, housing common areas, dining halls, and other places on our campuses provide space for diverse groups to hang out together, but we also need to help students develop the skills to build relationships and have conversations across difference. Where on our campuses can students go to engage a variety of viewpoints? Where are we teaching students to dialogue around difference? How can our institutions help students feel comfortable, even in the uncomfortable process of stepping out and engaging difference?

Fostering Dialogue Across Difference: Complicating the Conversation

Recent history demonstrates that America is currently experiencing widespread polarization over topics such as immigration, climate change, politics, and building a multicultural democracy. Observers of these differences have noted that America is experiencing what they call intractable conflict. In these types of conflicts, people’s encounters with other groups (political, religious, ethnic, racial, or otherwise) become more and

more charged, making us feel threatened. In these types of situations, people feel an involuntary need to defend their side and attack the other, rather than responding with curiosity and trying to gather and understand new information and perspectives.

“Intractable conflicts feed upon themselves. The more we try to stop the conflict, the worse it gets. Once we get drawn in, the conflict takes control. Complexity collapses, and the us-versus-them narrative sucks the oxygen from the room. Over time, people grow increasingly certain of the obvious rightness of their views and increasingly baffled by what seem like unreasonable, malicious, extreme, or crazy beliefs and actions of others. The cost of intractable conflict is also predictable, everyone loses” (Ripley, 2019). Are there ways that we can disrupt intractable conflict and create space to seek common ground? Can we complicate the narrative in ways that allow a fuller, more accurate story of our collective lives? In a 2019 study of responding to intractable conflicts, Ripley explored these types of questions. What she found compelled her to identify a number of strategies that help individuals communicate across difference:

1. Embrace Complexity.

We can remind people that life is not as coherent or as simple as we’d like. As a conflict progresses, we often get more focused on our own perspective rather than trying to understand other narratives related to the same issue. However, if in fact we can demonstrate the complexity of issues (amplifying contradiction), we can show that there are no easy answers and that we must be willing to view a problem from a variety of perspectives.

2. Ask Questions That Get to People’s Motivations.

We must learn to ask better questions of each other, to dig deeper, to find ways to better understand what drives people to think in different ways. Rather than focusing on people’s positions, we can try to understand people’s stories and how these stories have contributed to their perspective. Such an approach reveals deeper motivations beyond the immediate conflict and can help people find things to agree on

— things that often matter the most. Asking deeper questions can also help reveal that our differences are about something other than what everyone thought.

3. Listen More, and Better.

Listening better is one important way to build trust. People need to be heard before they can listen. When people feel heard and seen as they wish to be heard and seen, they relax their guard and are more willing to listen to you and to begin to consider information that does not fit their usual narratives. How can we offer a listening ear?

4. Expose People to Other Groups.

Decades of research related to social contact theory indicate that a powerful way to decrease prejudice and stop individuals from demonizing each other is to introduce them to one another. Once people have met and connected, they have a harder time caricaturing one another. Genuine human connections across difference permanently complicate our narrative. If done

well — by paying attention to the conditions of promoting positive social contact — such interactions can be the starting point of building trust, listening, widening our lenses, and complicating our narratives.

5. Counter Confirmation Bias.

Confirmation bias is our habit of believing news that confirms our pre-existing narratives and dismissing everything else. Carefully challenging our own and others' confirmation biases demands that we connect with people who think differently from us, learn to build trust through shared experiences, learn to listen better, and work to build hope together.

Amanda Ripley (2019, Jan 11). *Complicating the Narrative*

How might we better equip students to engage others across all type of difference? How might we view the strategies put forth by Ripley through the lens of our faith?

The importance of hospitality

Hospitality is the skill of making someone feel genuinely at home, welcoming strangers with warmth and joy. To be hospitable is to create a physical and spiritual space that is safe and comfortable. Both Jewish and Christian traditions emphasize hospitality as a fundamental practice, taking the call to be kind, gracious, and compassionate to strangers seriously because in dealing with strangers, they are dealing with Christ himself (Matthew 25:31-46).

Desmond Tutu explains it this way, "In Africa they say that a person is a person through other persons. We can only be human in fellowship. The law of our being is that we have been created for togetherness, for communion.' Hospitality is not about abundance or totality, but just sharing, real sharing. We become one with the stranger as we allow the other to stand before us as a unique person. We rejoice in our mutual interdependence. Self-imposed barriers tumble down, as well as our tendency to deny them recognition . . . The stranger is an unsought grace, an unexpected source of life."

What does radical hospitality look like? Thinking of hospitality, we often think about how we can extend hospitality to others, but another aspect of hospitality is learning to accept it graciously. Consider the story of a young graduate of a CCCU institution serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Philippines as he learned the reciprocal nature of hospitality. *I was attending a barrio fiesta with my host family and spending time with their friends. As guests moving from house to house we would always be asked to partake in the various delicacies that had been prepared for the occasion. I ate sparingly; always aware that each family had so little and that what I didn't eat would be passed on to others. As we moved from house to house, my host mother, a small feisty woman, pulled me aside and asked me the question, "how does it make you feel to give a gift to someone?" Surprised by the question, I answered, "It makes me feel good." She then looked me in the eye and said, "Then stop denying that feeling to others who want to share with you!" In that moment, my host mother had taught me another valuable lesson, the importance of receiving hospitality gracefully, by letting the giver be a blessing to me.*

CREATE SPACE AND FOSTER DIALOGUE |

Specific Examples from Christian Higher Education

Create a living and learning community in a nearby neighborhood. Internal, intentional community living provides a backdrop for living and learning amidst a diverse neighborhood. For example, **Calvin University**, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, has partnered with several inner-city churches to have small groups of students, plus a mentor, live in church-owned homes and engage the surrounding neighborhood through a ministry of presence, simply living in proximity with others and being intentional about connecting. For more information see: <https://calvin.edu/directory/places/koinonia-house>.

Create a living and learning laboratory on campus. Guilford College, established in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1837 by Quakers, was founded on the importance of living one's conviction out in the world. One of the ways this founding value can be seen on campus today is through Every Campus A Refugee (ECAR), a program established in 2015. As a part of the program the college has hosted 58 refugees in its college apartments and houses. The ECAR has grown to include over 60 universities that host refugees on their campuses, coordinating initial resettlement service through students and community volunteers. The program also provides both students and refugees opportunities to build relationships, living and learning together. For more information, read the story of the program found at: <https://www.aacu.org/aacu-news/newsletter/2018/december/campus-model>

Create a living library. Consider developing a living library collection where students can “check out” a human being for a chat (20 to 30 minutes long). Your college or university could partner with other nonprofits in your community to identify individuals (alumni, students, faculty, and community members) to share a wide range of personal stories related to such topics as immigration, homelessness, living with a disability, career stories, racism in America, etc. The possibilities are endless, providing individuals the opportunity to listen to different perspectives as they share their stories together. For more information see: www.web-junction.org/documents/webjunction/InfoSpeak_They_Call_it_the_Living_Library_Parts_1_and_2.html/

Create a classroom space for dialogue. **Cornerstone University** in Grand Rapids, Michigan, created a new interdisciplinary approach bringing together two divisions (Humanities and Social Science) and a community partner to develop a shared experience for students and young adult refugees who live together in a group home in the community. The class format offers a structure for learning together that includes both formal and informal components, offering refugees and class participants the opportunity to share stories and to learn from each other. By embedding the participants together within both academic and social settings, a richness and depth was added to the social contact experience, thereby modeling the distinct contribution that both the university and the community partner can bring to engagement and inclusion initiatives.

Create a space and a process to learn how to have courageous conversations. One broad example of teaching students to have courageous conversation can be seen in the work of Simon Greer, who recently taught a class through the Bridging the Gap program. The class brought together students from Oberlin College and **Spring Arbor University**, two institutions with significant ideological differences, and helped students find common ground with their peers by focusing on the skills of listening, providing feedback, and storytelling. A short video of the program can be viewed at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLP-ls3n5_g

THINK CREATIVELY ACROSS DISCIPLINES

Colleges and universities have long been teaching students to solve social problems through classes in such majors as public policy, social work, and health. However, today's challenges demand new pedagogical approaches that are more adaptive, holistic, and interdisciplinary. Students must learn skills to embrace complex challenges, connect with diverse individuals and groups, and learn how to engage in their communities to seek the common good. This demands the courage to ask hard questions and the perseverance to live into solutions together.

How do students learn many of these skills and virtues? While there are no easy answers, there are strategies that colleges and universities should explore as they work to model the skills and virtues they hope to foster in students. Rethinking our approach to social change also demands a commitment to innovation and creativity as well as the ability to make connections across disciplines. As we weave

information into new narratives, we recognize the power of stories and understanding the whole as the sum of all its parts. Social contact theory reminds us that we all benefit from interacting with people who might see the world differently than us. Even on campuses the humanities and natural sciences can help us see the world differently; we would all benefit from more interdisciplinary projects. While the projects described below are more focused on the arts, it is important to consider how institutions can attract students from a variety of majors or how colleges and universities can foster more interdisciplinary cooperation around helping students connect around difference using social contact theory. As institutions look for ways to cross disciplines, consider many of the examples described below to assist your college or university in doing a better job of telling stories that matter, stories that connect, and stories that contribute to the greater good.



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On page after page of the gospels, Jesus doesn't dominate the other, avoid the other, colonize the other, intimidate the other, demonize the other, or marginalize the other. Instead, he incarnates into the other, joins the other in solidarity, protects the other, listens to the other, serves the other, and even lays down his life for the other . . . The one we follow into mission and ministry—Jesus the Christ—was an avowed boundary crosser, a reformer of the religious and secular culture of his time. We are in good company when we lead the way on radical inclusion of those different from ourselves.

Brian McLaren

THINK CREATIVELY ACROSS DISCIPLINES |

Specific Examples from Christian Higher Education

Using the Creative Arts: Film. The Center for Intercultural Studies at **Malone University** in Canton, Ohio, recently coordinated with local organizations to link students with groups where they could meet newly arrived immigrants, get to know one another, and identify a common project with established goals based on expressed need and mutually beneficial interest. Participating students came from a variety of majors, including social work, Spanish, film, general education, and a cross-cultural service-learning course. Two film students are working to create a short documentary, telling a story of one immigrant involved in the experience.

Create a cookbook. Connecting people around food can be powerful, encouraging us to think about how our institutions could partner with community organizations to encourage students to engage with refugees and new Americans to fellowship around meals, even creating a fusion cookbook together. For example, the book *Tasteful Diversity: The stories our foods tell*, a book created by students at **Trinity Christian College** shares about food and stories from around the world. Similarly, the Idaho Office of Refugees has created cross-culinary kits and classes -- <https://www.idahorefugees.org/culinarykits.html> that could serve as a model for connecting around food.

Using the Creative Arts: Theater. Drama programs often perform plays that promote social change and bring people together. These performances are more than mere entertainment: They educate, celebrate, and offer opportunities for students to partner with members of their community to address issues like immigration. **Northwestern College** in Orange City, Iowa, hosted a showing of “Vang,” which translates into “garden” or “farm” in Hmong. The play follows the journeys of Hmong, Mexican, Sudanese, and Dutch immigrants to America. The script documented Iowa immigrant farmers and strung their words together to form a verbatim play that captures the immigrants’ struggles, survival skills, and intense desires to return to the land. Creative projects such as community theater can give students and new Americans the opportunity to learn from each other and to share stories of belonging with the larger community. Talk back sessions following performances allow for further conversations, broadening the conversation to include the audience in a forum that can foster both civility and accountability.

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Hospitality is offered in many ways – sometimes by a simple gesture of acknowledgement, a warm smile, a cup of coffee, listening patiently without interrupting, offering information, a word of encouragement, or simply by being present with the other person in silence. Hospitality requires time, patience, and kindly persistence. It cannot be rushed. It sees the bigger picture rather than seeking the quick fix.

Ken Kraybill

Hospitality – Creating Space for the Stranger

Photo by Don DeGraaf.



Using the Creative Arts: A moveable community mural. Faculty and students at **Trinity Christian College** in Palos Heights, Illinois, have developed the idea of a moveable mural to help bring the story of the Roseland neighborhood to life. The mural is made up of over forty individual boxes, each containing a portrait painting of a community member as well as a narrative (on a side panel) sharing a bit of this person's life story. Students and neighborhood residents (including a small immigrant community) have worked together on a variety of tasks, ranging from making boxes, identifying people to be part of the mural, listening to and transcribing stories, and promoting the project within the community. The finished mural reflects the diversity of the Roseland community, telling the story of a cross section of residents (including newly arrived as well as established immigrants). The mobility of the mural allows it to be displayed in various locations in the community, from churches and nonprofits to businesses and governmental offices.

Create a Sharing Garden. A sharing garden is a new type of community garden that focuses on people doing the work together, sharing the harvest, developing real relationships, and having fun. At Augsburg College in Minneapolis, the Center for Democracy and Citizenship brought students and newly arrived Hmong immigrants together to embrace gardening as a method for building community across languages and cultures.



Photo by Mike VanderWeele.

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Being involved with the Roseland Portrait Project has allowed me to learn about the beauty, diversity, and community of Roseland. By connecting with people in the community and hearing their stories I have been able to learn about the power of trusting each other and building relationships. Roseland is built through relationships that strive by loving one another and having each other's backs. The Roseland community is inspiring and definitely one that should be celebrated.

*Mady Zula,
Participant of Trinity Christian College's
Moveable Mural Project*

SHARE STORIES

This project launched in the midst of a pandemic. As we have seen, 2020 was a difficult year for so many people and institutions, including Christian colleges and universities. Yet, amidst all change, loss, and financial stress of a global pandemic there have also been gifts. The pandemic often pushed individuals, institutions, and communities to re-think the narratives of what really matters and how we get there. Throughout the process of responding to a pandemic and to a polarizing election we have been reminded of how important it is to create a sense of belonging for ourselves, our students, and our communities. While we have lost so much over the last year, we are fortunate that the story does not stop here: We also celebrate the resilience of the human spirit and all the ways we have created for us to connect, to take care of each other, and to thrive together. Yet, there is still work to do as we facilitate strategies and programs to create more inclusive communities that foster a sense of belonging for us all.

One of the best methods of inviting others to join us in this “belonging” journey is to encourage social contact with those who we may see as different. This toolkit has shared many different programs and strategies to foster contact between students and New Americans. We hope these types of initiatives will nudge students toward deeper learning and engagement within our communities, but we also hope our story does not stop here. We must look to broaden our impact in ever-widening ripples to include alumni, student families, faculty, staff, our congregations, and other members of our communities.

Storytelling is one effective strategy that can document the lessons we have learned, begin to challenge longstanding beliefs about “the other,” and ultimately push us to explore ways we can do better as individuals, institutions, and communities. Consider all the different ways that stories can impact our thoughts and behaviors:

- Stories can encourage engagement, inviting us to part of the ongoing story of our campuses and communities.
- Stories can provide context, helping us to know where we have been and where we are going.
- Stories can connect ideas, integrating what we know with new thoughts and possibilities.
- Stories help us learn, aiding us in processing and remembering information.
- Stories can convey the culture, history, and values that unite people and communities. When it comes to our communities, our institutions, and our families, we understand intuitively that the stories we hold in common are an important part of the ties that bind.

- Stories give us a sense of belonging — of being wanted and needed and heard. Stories connect us.



Given the importance of stories to teach, inspire, and forge connections among people and with ideas, we must develop communication strategies to share stories related to belonging on our campuses and in our communities. What follows are insights and best practices for collecting and sharing stories with multiple stakeholders:

- Collecting stories requires trust, which takes time. Invest in creating the trust necessary so that stories can be shared. Make sure to honor the confidentiality of participants, and always ask permission to share stories with broader audiences, providing an easy way for participants to opt out if they are feeling vulnerable in any way. Written permission should be acquired before sharing stories, pictures, quotes, reflections, and video. Honoring this process is another way to build trust.
- Build in mechanisms to foster reflection in either written or oral form. Reflection as a part of any shared experience serves as both a way to reinforce learning and as a method of story collection.
- Consistently ask if a program or individual's whole story is being told. Ask what is being missed or not being included? Why is this the case? How can multiple perspectives related to a program or event be shared?
- Connect more personal stories to larger stories going on in your community or region. Andrea Ripley, in her article "Complicating the Narrative," notes that great storytelling always zooms in on individual people or incidents as it brings complicated problems to life in ways people will remember. But if we don't zoom out again, connecting these stories to larger issues, then we run the risk of feeding into human bias. As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reminds us in her TED Talk "A Single Story," "the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete. . . . It's impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all the stories of that place and that person."
- Collect both quantitative and qualitative data. While quantitative data like evaluations and surveys offer important indicators on the success of programs, pictures, quotes, written reflections, interviews, videos, and stories supplement this data and bring it to life in ways that can multiply its impact.
- Leverage all your communication networks. Once you collect stories and have permission to share them, use lots of different mediums to explain the programs and how a sense of belonging is being developed in our communities and campuses. Work to reach multiple audiences through both internal and external publications, websites, and various social media channels (e.g., Instagram and Facebook).
- Maximize your impact by sharing your stories with the CCCU and the Belonging Begins with US. Together we can make America a more welcoming place for all.

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Belonging has deep roots in the Biblical story and Christian theology. Belonging takes several forms in Scripture, but it is not a complicated theme. We belong to God, not to ourselves and because we belong to God, we belong to one another.

Jeremy Linneman



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RESOURCES

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Public and governmental organizations are not vending machines, with programmer dispensing services, but rather a platform—like Facebook, Twitter, and the iPhone—where citizens can build their own apps and interact with one another and come up with their own solutions.

PACKER, G. (2013, MAY 27). CHANGE THE WORLD. THE NEW YORKER).

IN ADDITION TO the material shared in this section of the toolkit, the CCCU encourages you to explore a number of resources that have been developed by the national campaign Belonging Begins with US. These resources include:

- Campaign Toolkit: This toolkit provides resources to extend the reach of the campaign. It includes public service announcements (PSAs), printable materials, social media assets, and helpful tips to engage your partners and your community. <http://belongingbeginswithus.adcouncilkit.org>
- Campaign Stories: As part of the national campaign, stories of belonging were collected. These powerful stories reflect when we have felt at home. You are encouraged to explore these stories of understanding, community, and belonging from people all across America. <https://belongingbeginswithus.org>
- Theme Song: The national campaign includes a theme song entitled “Walk a Mile in My Shoes,” sung by the band Lake Street Drive <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-mtAS4ResY4>.
- Similarly, the public service announcement (PSA) can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RZWL_ABbKw

CCCU Institutions (2020/2021 Cohort) in the Inclusion Innovation Collaborative

Cornerstone University – Grand Rapids, Michigan: <https://www.cornerstone.edu>

- Program: Interdisciplinary Refugee Youth Inclusion Initiative
- For more information, contact: Nola Carew, LMSW, PhD, Social Science Division Chair, nola.carew@cornerstone.edu or Leticia Espinosa, PhD, Assistant Professor of Spanish leticia.espinosa@cornerstone.edu

Crown College – St. Bonifacius, Minnesota: <https://www.crown.edu>

- Program: Tutoring Plus: Promoting cross-cultural exchange
- For more information, contact: Oliver Ferguson, Director of Intercultural Learning & Experiences, fergusono@crown.edu

Malone University – Canton, Ohio: <https://www.malone.edu>

- Program: Bridging Difference through Contact
- For more information, contact: Elizabeth Patterson Roe, PhD, LISW-S, Professor of Social Work, Director of the Center for Intercultural Studies

Samford University – Birmingham, Alabama: <https://www.samford.edu>

- Program: Service Cadre Program
- For more information, contact Allison Nanni, MSW, Associate Director, Mann Center for Ethics and Leadership, ananni@samford.edu

Seattle Pacific University – Seattle, Washington: <https://spu.edu>

- Program: Welcoming the Neighbor
- For more information, contact Caenisha Warren, Executive Director of the John Perkins Center for Reconciliation, Leadership Training and Community Development, warrec@spu.edu

Trinity Christian College – Palos Heights, Illinois (SW suburbs of Chicago): <https://www.trnty.edu>

- Program: Moveable Mural Project
- For more information, contact: Michael Vander Weele, PhD, Professor Emeritus of English, mike.vanderweele@trnty.edu

Theoretical Foundations:

Articles/Books:

- Addams, J. (1893). The subjective necessity of social settlements. In Elshtain, J. (2002). *The Jane Addams Reader*. New York: Basic Books. (pp. 14-28). Quote found on page 14.
- Allport, G. (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice*. New York: Basic Books.
- Argo, N. and Feliz, W. (2021, March 3). *Psychological study explains our strong feeling around immigration*. Article accessed March 4, 2021 at <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/psychological-study-explains-our-strong-feelings-around-immigration-11614799017>
- Argo, N. and Jassin, K. (2021, February 18). *Understanding how deeply we hold our immigration stances may matter as much as what our stance are*. Special Report from the American Immigration Council. Report accessed March 4, 2021 at: <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/what-immigration-issues-do-americans-hold-sacred>
- Brooks, D. (2016). *The Road to Character*. New York: Random House. Quote found on page 211.
- Downs-Karkos, S. (2019 May). *Innovations in Building Meaningful Contact Across Difference*. Welcoming America. Resource accessed March 18, 2021 at <https://www.welcomingamerica.org/content/innovations-building-meaningful-contact-across-difference>
- Elshtain, J.B. (2002). *Jane Addams and the dream of American democracy*. New York: Basic Books.
- Everett, J. (2013). *Intergroup Contact Theory: Past, Present, and Future*. *The Inquisitive Mind*. Article accessed February 4, 2021, at <https://www.in-mind.org/article/intergroup-contact-theory-past-present-and-future>
- Fallows, J. & D. Fallows. (2018). *Our towns: A 100,000 mile journey into the heart of America*. New York: Knoph Doubleday Publishing.
- Feltz, W. (2021, March 4). *To bridge our division, we must overcome the zero-sum mindset*. The Center for Effective Philanthropy. Article accessed March 4, 2021 at: <https://cep.org/to-bridge-our-division-we-must-overcome-the-zero-sum-mind-set/>
- Glanville, M. & Glanville, L. (2021). *Refuge reimaged: Biblical kinship in global politics*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.
- Leibowitz, H. (1989). *Fabricating lives: Explorations in American autobiography*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Linneman, J. (2019, June 28). *What our search for belonging reveals*. The Gospel Coalition. Article accessed on December 31, 2020 at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/search-belonging/>
- McGhee, H. (2021). *The Sum of Us: What racism costs everyone and how can we prosper together*. One World.
- Powell, John. (2020). *Bridging or breaking? The stories we tell will create the future we inhabit*. Othering and Belonging Institute. Article accessed on September 1, 2020 at <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/bridging-or-breaking-the-stories-we-tell-will-create-the-future-we-inhabit/>
- Ripley, A. (2019, January 11). *Complicating the narratives*. *Solutions Journalism Network*. Article accessed January 11, 2021 at <https://thewholestory.solutionsjournalism.org/complicating-the-narratives-b91ea06ddf63>
- Scheuer, J. (1985). *Legacy of Light: University Settlements First Century*. Excerpt found March 18, 2021 at <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/settlement-houses/origins-of-the-settlement-house-movement/>

- Singal, J. (2017, February 10). The contact hypothesis offers hope for the world. *The Cut*. Article accessed February 4, 2021 at <https://www.thecut.com/2017/02/the-contact-hypothesis-offers-hope-for-the-world.html> (This article is a concise explanation of the social contact theory and what needs to be in place for the theory to be effective.)

Videos/Podcasts:

- Feliz, Wendy. (2016). The Way Forward: Immigration. Podcast accessed on September 1, 2020 at <https://nationalcouncil-ofchurches.us/the-way-forward-immigration/>
- Powell, John. (2020). Video on Bridging and Breaking. Othering and Belonging Institute. Video accessed on September 1, 2020 at <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/bridging-towards-society-built-belonging-animated-video-curriculum>

Program Resources:

Articles/Books:

- Vander Weele, M. (2019). *Tasteful diversity: Stories our foods tell*. Publishing for Community. Trinity Christian College students take you on a trip around the world with their collection of food essays: 25 stories, 25 recipes. Read one of the stories, try out a recipe—maybe it will trigger the story you have to tell.

Organizations:

- Center for Inclusion and Belonging, a project of the American Immigration Council: <https://inclusion.americanimmigrationcouncil.org>
- Colossian Forum: Helping congregations overcome divisive issues and model Christ: <https://colossianforum.org/about-us/job-opportunities/>

- Interfaith Youth Core: <https://ifyc.org>
- Resetting the Table: Courageous Communications Across Divides: <https://www.resettingthetable.org>
- Unite: Join the movement to unite as one: <https://unite.us>
- Welcoming America: <https://www.welcomingamerica.org>
- YMCA (Y-USA's Diversity, Inclusion & Global): <https://www.ymca.net/diversity-inclusion>

Toolkits:

- Idaho Office of Refugees. (n.d.). *Culinary Kits*. Toolkit accessed February 4, 2020 at www.idahorefugees.org/culinarykits
- Welcoming America (2019, February). *How to guide: Building cohesive communities in an era of migration and change*. Toolkit accessed February 4, 2021 at <https://www.welcomingamerica.org/content/building-cohesive-communities-era-migration-and-change>
- Welcoming America. (2019, May). *How to guide: Innovations in building meaningful contact across differences*. Toolkit accessed February 4, 2021 at: https://www.welcomingamerica.org/sites/default/files/Contact%20Building%20Paper_FINAL.pdf

Videos/Podcasts/Programs:

- Resetting the Table. (2020). Video: *Purple: America we need to talk*. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRTNT2-6AL-ni2K9KhWsWlrg>
- *The Immigrant Stories Project*: www.immigrantcolorado.blogspot.com.

Questions?

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www.cccu.org

