



# Unlocking Global Talent: Expanding Opportunities Through Community College Initiatives

Upwardly Global and the National Council for Workforce Education

# Notes

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- The **recording** and **slide deck** will be shared with all attendees after the webinar.
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# Agenda

- I. Introductions
- II. Upwardly Global and the National Council for Workforce Education
  - Unlocking Potential: Enhancing Community College Services for Immigrant and Refugee Students, Report and Findings
- III. Questions and Comments
- IV. Resources



# Introductions

Tell us **your name**, the **name of your program**,  
and the **name of your organization**.



World Education Services is a non-profit social enterprise that supports the educational, economic, and social inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and international students. For 50 years, WES has set the standard for international academic credential evaluation, supporting millions of people as they seek to achieve their academic and professional goals. Through decades of experience as a leader in global education, WES has developed a wide range of tools to pursue social impact at scale. From evaluating academic credentials to shaping policy, designing programs, and providing philanthropic funding, we partner with a diverse set of organizations, leaders, and networks to uplift individuals and drive systems change. Together with its partners, WES enables people to learn, work, and thrive in new places.



## Our Mission

We help people **learn, work, and thrive** in new places. We help society **recognize the value** of people's education and experience.



## Our Vision

**Everyone** is able to put their education, experience, and skills to work **anywhere** in the world.

# WES Global Talent Bridge



## Support Immigrants, Refugees, and All Displaced Individuals

**Inform and empower** individuals who have education earned abroad so they can achieve career success



## Provide Institutional Support

**Create targeted programs and services** that offer effective assistance and placement outcomes



## Advocate Systemic Change

Inspire **policy development, increased funding, and systemic reform** to remove key barriers and advance a positive agenda for immigrants, refugees, and other displaced individuals

# Presenters



**Emily Logo**

National Partnerships Director  
Upwardly Global



**Teresita B. Wisell**

Vice President,  
Workforce Development and  
Community Education  
Westchester Community College



# Unlocking Potential: Enhancing Community College Services for Immigrant and Refugee Students, Report and Findings

The logo for Upwardly Global, featuring a white stylized mountain peak or upward-pointing arrow shape above the text.

Upwardly Global

# **Unlocking Global Talent** and Expanding Opportunities Through Community College Initiatives

March 2024

# TODAY'S PRESENTERS



Emily Logo

National Director of Partnerships

Teresita Wisell

Vice President, Workforce Development  
and Community Education,  
Westchester Community College

*This research was conducted with the generous support from the Lumina Foundation*



# OUR AGENDA

- Project Objectives & Why this Research?
- Best Practices & Bright Spots
- Addressing Gaps & Barriers
- Case studies
- The Path Forward
- Hearing From You

# NEWCOMER CAREER SEEKERS

Nearly 2.4 million immigrant professionals remain unemployed or underemployed, despite their experience and credentials.

*For this research, “immigrant and refugee students” is defined as foreign-born students who intend to settle permanently in the U.S.*

## Barriers & Challenges

Immigrant and refugee career seekers face barriers throughout the entire U.S. job search journey



Job Search  
Strategy Support  
Needed



Lack Of Licenses  
& Certifications



English  
Language  
Proficiency



Gaps In  
Resume



Lack Of  
Professional  
Networks



Stuck In  
Survival  
Jobs



Employer Bias

Unconscious bias; affinity bias; American exceptionalism; unspoken cultural norms; work-authorization confusion

# WHY THIS RESEARCH?

- Right now, the biggest long-term threat to the U.S. economy is a **shortage of workers.**
- Between 2010 and 2018, 85% of U.S. workforce growth came from immigrants and their children. Now through 2035, **100% of all working age population growth will come from immigrants.**
- Community Colleges are **an Essential Gateway.**



The American Hospital Association predicts a **shortage of over 3.2 million healthcare workers by 2026.**

# OUR PROJECT OBJECTIVES

**Gain insights from community colleges** in CA and TX to understand the best practices and gaps in career services offerings for immigrant student populations

**Identify resources and strategies** that can eliminate employment barriers for students from immigrant backgrounds

**Coalesce stakeholders** from across the community college ecosystem to advance this work

## OUR METHODOLOGY

Our findings were informed by key stakeholder interviews and in-depth focus groups with community college practitioners across California and Texas, as well as national survey data from more than 80 college administrators.

Upwardly Global conducted this research between May and August 2023 with funding support from the Lumina Foundation and research partners at NCWE.

# BEST PRACTICES & BRIGHT SPOTS

## 1) Increased focus on short-term credentials:

Community colleges are now offering micro-credentials and short-term certificates in response to job market needs, providing quick pathways to employment and career growth for diverse student populations.

## 2) Data collection:

Practitioners are acutely aware of the need to collect data tracking the backgrounds of immigrant-origin students as well as program outcomes, and some are moving in that direction.

## 3) Emphasis on case managers and career navigators:

A few institutions employ knowledgeable case managers to provide critical guidance and support to students at various points, such as intake, enrollment, ESL classes, and career plan mapping.

## 4) Building trust and a sense of community:

Several community college practitioners emphasize the importance of building trust and creating a sense of community to support immigrants and refugees.



# ADDRESSING GAPS & BARRIERS

## 1) Insufficient data tracking on immigrants and refugees:

- Challenges in tracking data due to undocumented students' privacy concerns.
- Siloed data between departments, limiting efficacy and access.

## 2) Lack of differentiated career services for immigrants and refugees:

- General career services not tailored to immigrant students' unique needs.
- Services such as welcome centers, counseling, and apprenticeship programs often operate in isolation.

## 3) Difficulty building employer partnership pipelines:

- Challenges in forming skill-based partnerships with employers.
- Preference for traditional education and career pathways by some employers, disadvantaging immigrant professionals.

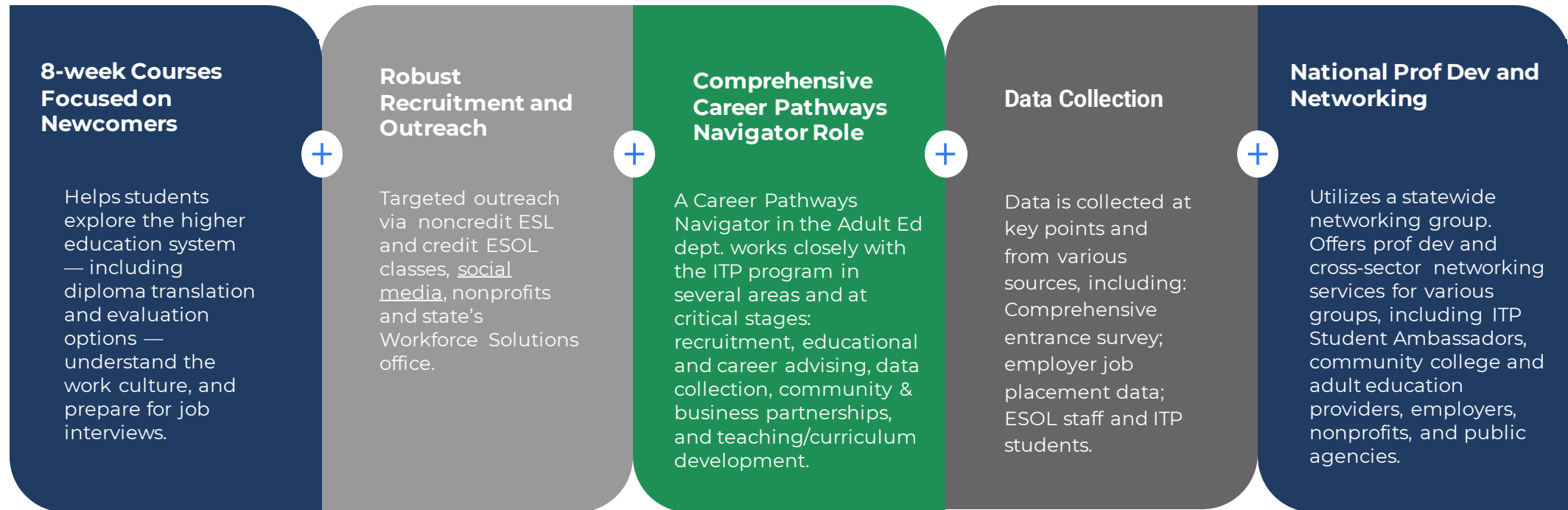
## 4) Limited resources and knowledge base to serve immigrants and refugees:

- Need for better-trained staff to support immigrant and refugee students.
- Lack of information on career pathways and educational choices for this demographic.



# CASE STUDY: AUSTIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The Internationally Trained Professionals (ITP) program helps students with international credentials apply their education and skills to academic and career opportunities in the U.S. It's housed in the Adult Ed Career Pathways Program



# CASE STUDY: MONTGOMERY CC



## PROGRAM

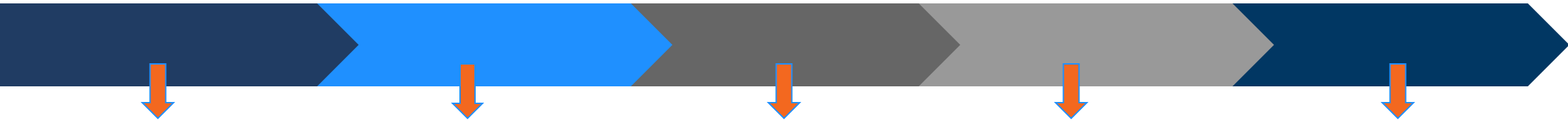
- **Partnership** between Upwardly Global and MC's **Refugee Training Center**
- Coupling **Upwardly Global tools** with **existing college programs** and services

## IMPACT

- **Adds critical capacity** for the Career Services team to support ITPs
- **75 Refugee Professionals** receiving targeted job search support and access to up/reskilling



# THE PATH FORWARD



Explore **diverse** and **sustainable** sources of funding

Invest in **career services**

Increase the **professional development** of faculty and staff

**Leverage** statewide and national **networks**

Engage **key stakeholders** in the ecosystem



**Nearly  
1/3**  
of community college students are of immigrant-origin.

# HEARING FROM YOU

Please discuss the following questions and prepare to share back with the room:

- Which of the 5 recommendations from our research findings most resonates with you and your work? Why?
  - *Explore diverse and sustainable sources of funding*
  - *Invest in career services*
  - *Increase the professional development of faculty and staff*
  - *Leverage statewide and national networks*
  - *Engage key stakeholders in the ecosystem*
- What else would you add to the recommendations list?  
Are there other best practices you want to lift up?



Thank you!  
Questions?

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# Questions and Comments

# Resources





# On-Demand Webinars



## [Supporting the Career Advancement of Immigrant and Refugee Women in the U.S.](#)

Hear about local programming that supports immigrant and refugee women through access to contextualized English language learning, job readiness programming, and pathways to employment.



## [Inclusive Economies for All: Tackling Systemic Barriers to Employment Faced by Immigrants and Refugees](#)

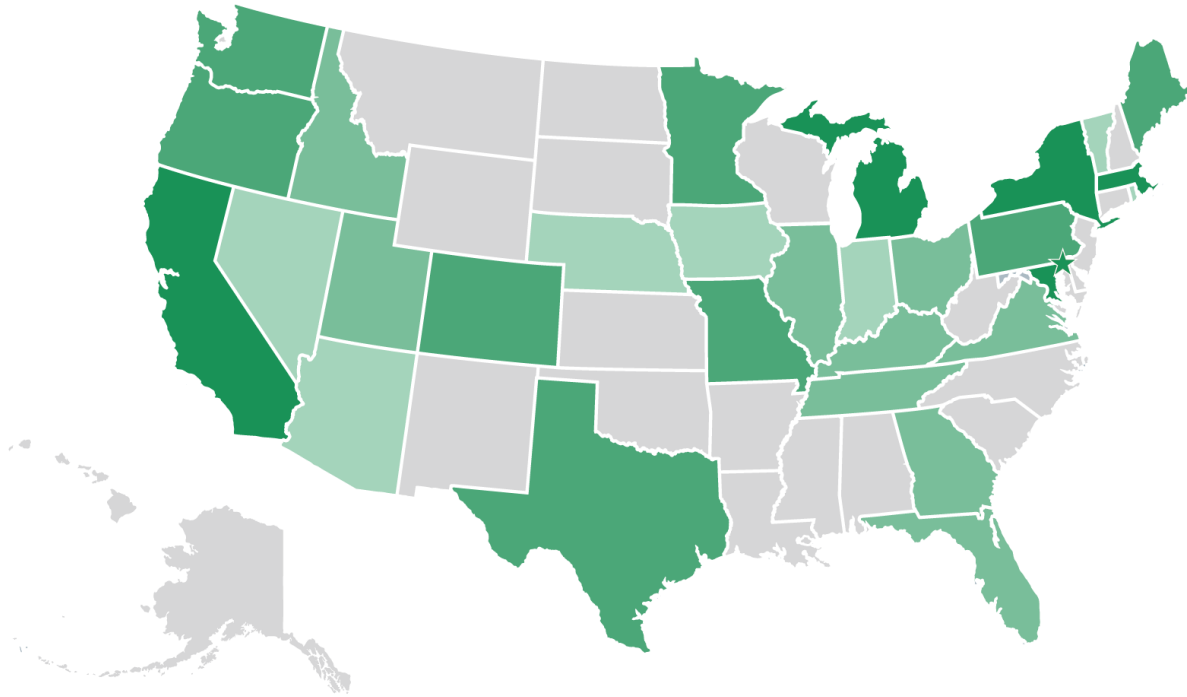
Learn about state-level innovative workforce development efforts that support the inclusion of internationally educated immigrants and refugees in local workforces.



## [Strengthening Pathways to Teaching for Immigrants and Refugees: How States Can Support Inclusive Strategies to Strengthen the Educator Workforce](#)

See how states across the U.S. are working to help internationally trained teachers re-enter the workforce and to bring diverse voices and experience to the classroom.

# Mapping Professional and Economic Inclusion



**100+ Programs** (and growing)

Interactive map showcasing programs and demographic data relevant to the professional inclusion of internationally educated immigrants and refugees in the U.S.

[wes.org/partners/global-talent-bridge/program-map/](https://wes.org/partners/global-talent-bridge/program-map/)

## Want to be added?

If you would like your program or service to be added to this map, please [apply](#).

# WES Resources



Browse articles, fact sheets, policy briefs, and tool kits from WES and our partners.

[wes.org/gtb-resources](https://wes.org/gtb-resources)

# Connect with Us



## Subscribe to our newsletters

Our newsletters provide tools, training, and other resources to improve the services of community organizations and public agencies that assist internationally educated immigrants. We feature important developments from the field of immigrant inclusion and highlight innovative programs, policies, and services.

[knowledge.wes.org/global-talent-bridge-subscribe.html](https://knowledge.wes.org/global-talent-bridge-subscribe.html)

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