



# A. S. Connection

Connecting Academic Staff to Useful Information

Spring 2022

## AFGHAN STUDENT EVACUEES STUDYING AT UWM

In September, UWM's Intensive English Program (IEP) was contacted about becoming a "university home" for Afghan students who had been evacuated from Kabul to Ft. McCoy. These women were students at the Asian University for Women (AUW) in Bangladesh, but these students were back in Afghanistan due to COVID when the country fell to the Taliban. A UCIEP (University and College Intensive English Programs) member from Delaware read an [article](#) published in the Chronicle of Higher Ed about their terrifying escape and started working with AUW to place these women in universities in the United States.

The students arrived with nothing but their cell phones and a change of clothes. Universities were asked to sponsor one year of IEP (for those needing it) and four years of university tuition for up to five women. However, because the need to place them quickly was dire, this changed the request to 6 months at an IEP while other options for funding are explored.

UWM has approved a discounted rate for IEP fees, and Dr. Chia Vang, Vice-Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, provided funds from a Social Entrepreneurship, Justice & Equity Compact to pay the segregated fees. Thanks to a connection in the IEP, the Eastbrook Church community offered to pay the \$50,000 in IEP fees for the spring and summer sessions. [Eastbrook Church](#) was founded with the mission of welcoming and supporting refugees and international students in Milwaukee, so this need fits their mission. Because of the generosity of all involved, the IEP can welcome eight of the 187 displaced students to the program.

The Intensive English Program at UWM has looked into creating a UWM fund to directly support these students once they are ready for degree study; however, due to several factors, that is not possible. Once again, Eastbrook Church has stepped up to financially support these students' education by creating its own scholarship account where 100% of the donations will go to student undergraduate tuition. If you or your department would like to help support these students, reach out to Interim ELA Director Brooke Haley, [haleyb@uwm.edu](mailto:haleyb@uwm.edu) or Pastor Dan Ryan [dryan@eastbrook.org](mailto:dryan@eastbrook.org) to learn how.

They are excited and happy for the opportunity to study at UWM- if a bit daunted by the recent frigid weather. There is no doubt that they will make the most of their situation and excel in their student careers here.





## Reflections **AN INTERVIEW WITH KATHLEEN KOCH**



**In which unit do you work?** The Office of Research. Our office oversees sponsored programs (external money), internal awards, undergraduate research support programs, central research development, and research policy. I'm an Administrative Manager for three internal funding programs that have approximately 100 active grants. My initial full-time employment on campus was as a receptionist in Graduate Student Services. But that was not my first job on campus! As a student in the mid-70s, I was Office Manager for the Student Association, which was great training for my future work on committees. Fun fact: I also was a server for the jazz nights at the Kenwood Inn.

**What do you enjoy about your job?** I get to work with smart, generous, creative, caring, inspiring people. I have been truly fortunate in having supportive supervisors who allowed me to pursue interests and develop skills that would fill needs within the unit and assume responsibilities that would let me advance in my career. For example, when the Research Growth Initiative (RGI) was established, I was asked to be one of the applicant liaisons and, at that time, I didn't know anything about research administration. And that was my entryway!

**What project have you been most proud of?** Keeping in mind that the final products of my work are shaped by many people, I would say the Research Assistance Fund (RAF). With research support diminishing in smaller units, we recognized the need for a "small award" program (max \$5,000) that would have a wider reach than the other funding we offer. The need was great, and the time was right. One of my colleagues developed a questionnaire that we called the "What do you need?" survey. I spent some time with the responses and that helped us design the RAF. There was a bit of serendipity involved in being able to offer the program in 2021, but the collective experience in writing a call for applications and creating an online application allowed us to mount the RAF quickly once we knew the budget was in place. So those talented people I was talking about – many of them are in my unit and make my job easier. We were able to offer 140 awards.

**What is most challenging about your job?** The hardest thing over the years was leaving good projects unfunded because of budget limitations.

The other thing is staying current with technology. I wish I had time to explore tools for project management and collaborative work. Wouldn't it be great if professional development were valued enough that a reasonable percentage of every position description and a small budget for every employee were devoted to that?

**What advice do you have for other academic staff?** Firstly, get involved. I'm inherently introverted and involvement in both team-based projects and in governance led to meeting people and making friends I would not have otherwise, especially outside my own unit. You find out about career paths you might not have considered. You find out about good units in which to work and those to avoid. You find role models and mentors.

Secondly, find out the answers; avoid the phrase "it's not my job." Even if it's not your job, find out whose job it is and a little about the process. Sometimes you find a gap you can fill. It's an opportunity to learn and grow. For me, this led to opportunities for higher level decision making.



## VOLUNTEERING WITH THE CCBLR

For academic staff, volunteering for UWM community events plays a critical role in gaining indefinite status. UWM's volunteer work in the community is a core part of the university's mission. In order to learn more about the main center that coordinates these events, I spoke with Elise Miller Jaffee, the Program Coordinator at the Center for Community-Based Learning, Leadership, and Research (CCBLR). The center was developed to help UWM fulfill its civic mission and commitment to graduating students who are dedicated to community engagement and leadership. They support volunteerism through co-curricular opportunities, service-learning, and community-based work-study options.



Jaffee received her MS in Administrative Leadership in Higher Education at UWM's School of Education and interned at CCBLR at the time. As a program coordinator, Jaffee runs the Community Leaders Internship Program, also known as CLIP, which is an internship program for students who earn federal work-study through their financial aid packages. This program allows students to be placed in internship positions in the Milwaukee area in organizations mainly within the non-profit sector, although as of Fall 2021 the program has begun to expand to the for-profit sector as well.

But while this is the main program Jaffee works on, she reiterates that staff collaborate on other opportunities as needed. Food security is a big priority for the center. For example, CCBLR staffs the Hope House Food Pantry every Tuesday and Thursday from 11:30am to 2:30pm at Friedens Community Ministries. Currently,

because of COVID, the center is only staffing about six students for this project. In addition, the center works with an organization called Running Rebels on Milwaukee's south side to run the Gathering Meal Program, which provides breakfast from 7:00am to 10:30am to community members who would otherwise go hungry.

COVID has taken its toll on some of the programs that the center has to offer, unfortunately. For example, every year CCBLR offered their Alternative Spring Break program, which was exclusive to UWM students and allowed 30 students to be taken to Asheville, NC the week of spring break. The students would work with various nonprofit organizations for a different cultural experience in providing community service.

Not all of these events are in person, however. When COVID hit, CCBLR implemented their Virtual Tutoring Program. The program is designed for Milwaukee students grades K4 through 12. Students and their guardians register through the UWM website and will get matched with a UWM tutor. Tutors can be anyone from UWM, including students, faculty, or academic staff.

Jaffee is passionate about the work she does. "I would say the most rewarding part for me is seeing that internal and external growth for students; seeing them develop holistically outside of the classroom and apply what they're learning in the classroom to the outside world, but really gaining that real life experience in the community and building their civic identities and seeing how much community-based work can help students grow more than they would just being in the classroom."

Staff who want to volunteer for these and the many other community events that UWM has to offer can do so by going to [www.uwm.edu/community](http://www.uwm.edu/community). There are several events listed as well as sign up forms. After signing up, staff will receive emails with reminders and updates about the event, as well as any additional information they may need such as safety precautions and parking.







# A Look Back AT UW-MILWAUKEE

## 20 YEARS AGO - 2002

Students complained of numerous annoyances stemming from eight years of rapidly rising enrollment: classes filled quickly and students languished on wait lists and dorms were packed full. Parking and transportation infrastructure was a particularly acute problem, exacerbated by cuts to Milwaukee County Transit System enacted that year by County Executive Scott Walker. The Cycling Club went so far as to pilot a program distributing free bicycles to students living nearby while Facility Services struggled to mitigate damage to Spaight's Plaza caused by skateboarders.

## 40 YEARS AGO - 1982

A bill to allow collective bargaining by faculty and academic staff sharply divided faculty and administration in the spring, with UWM Chancellor Horton coming out "unalterably" against it. Despite furious lobbying by union organizations the bill narrowly failed in the Assembly. Sandburg Hall renovated The Cabaret, UWM's popular and lucrative on-campus disco, expanding the dance floor, installing new speakers, and upgrading the bar. Litigation relating to the granting of student organization charters compelled the university to incorporate two separate student organizations both called "Feminists for Life." One supported abortion rights; the other opposed them.

## ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS



The Communications Sub-committee will be hosting a virtual workshop in the Spring. Zoom link will be sent at a later time.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ACADEMIC STAFF – CAPTIONING WORKSHOP

This session strives to provide UWM's instructional staff with background knowledge as well as resources and tools to meet the goal of UWM's campus with universal design standards.

Attendees will:

- Gain an understanding of accessibility from a Deaf and Hard of Hearing standpoint
- Learn how to add captions to media on Youtube/Canvas media options
- Learn the benefits of using captioned media in your instruction for all students

**Date:** Friday, April 8th 2022

**Time:** 11:00am – 12:00pm

**Location:** Zoom (link to be sent separately after registration)

This event is funded via the Academic Staff Group Professional Development Award.  
To register go to: [https://milwaukee.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_ai9ansFminNFB0G](https://milwaukee.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ai9ansFminNFB0G)



## ACCESSIBILITY TIP

### AIRA: DESCRIPTION OF LIFE



Aira is a service that connects people who are blind or low-vision to highly trained, remotely-located agents in real time. Using a smartphone app and the phone's camera, Aira users can connect to live, sighted trained agents who provide on-demand visual descriptions and guidance. Agents use real-time video and audio feeds from the user's phone camera, as well as GPS, maps and other online information, to help users explore their surroundings and enhance everyday efficiency, engagement and independence.

The app can serve as a visual interpreter to help guide users around campus, navigate physical barriers caused by construction or weather, locate resources, read signage or take the bus to campus. Students can use Aira to read class handouts, manage online interactions, upload assignments, locate classrooms or use vending & laundry machines. For a video demonstration of Aira, there's a link to a video on this page. <https://aira.io/become-an-aira-access-partner/>

UWM is the first university in Wisconsin to offer this service to students, staff, faculty and visiting community members. Aira is available on all three UW-Milwaukee campuses as well as the Zilber School of Public Health and the Innovation Campus in Wauwatosa. It can also be used at outside campus events such as graduation and sporting events.

Initial funding for the Aira service for campus came through a grant from Industries for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) coordinated the grant and is using the funding to pay for a subscription to the service through 2022.

Aira is available on any iOS or Android phone by downloading the mobile app and completing a brief registration. When a user enters an Aira access location, they will receive a notification and be able to use Aira for free.

Aira is also available at a multitude of places in Milwaukee, including Milwaukee County's General Mitchell International Airport (MKE), Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS), the Milwaukee County Courthouse, Mitchell Park Domes, the Safety Building, Vel Phillips Youth and Family Justice Center, Milwaukee County Zoo, and retail places like Walgreens, Target and Starbucks.

More information is available on the Aira education information page at <https://aira.io/education/>

### **The A.S. Connection team consists of the following members of the Academic Staff Communications Subcommittee:**

Amanda Brickner, Shiraz Bhathena (Chair), Jean Creighton, Gina Lukaszewicz, Sarah MacDonald, Nicole Palasz, Mingyu Sun, Beth Traylor, Lynn Washatko Uhyrek, Derek Webb, Jason Williamson.

If you would like to join this committee, please contact Shiraz Bhathena at [bhathena@uwm.edu](mailto:bhathena@uwm.edu).