

Refuge Shared Agreement

Introduction

This shared agreement is between Student Wellness at Wheaton College (IL), Refuge's Adviser, Refuge's Faculty Resource, and all participants in Refuge, including Cabinet members. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact Student Wellness (student.wellness@wheaton.edu).

Mission

Refuge exists to provide opportunities for community building through dialogue, activities, and resource-sharing primarily for and among Wheaton College undergraduate students personally navigating same sex orientation and/or gender identity under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Vision

Refuge seeks to be a caring and social group through participant-only activities and weekly meetings that foster belonging and acceptance in Christ-centered community.

Joining

- Participation in Refuge is contingent upon meeting with a Cabinet member before attending any participant-only meetings or activities. Such pre-participation meetings are done in order to verify a prospective participant's interest, confirm their alignment with the group's mission and vision, secure their commitment to privacy, and answer any questions they might have.
- Pre-participation meetings are not required at the beginning of each new semester or academic year for returning participants.
- The refuge@my.wheaton.edu email is maintained solely by the Refuge Cabinet.

Structure

Weekly meetings, which are for participants only, will alternate between conversations (i.e., emotional check-ins, topical discussions, current event debriefs, etc.) and social outings (i.e., shared meals, movies, games, other activities, etc.). Participant-only activities will be as often as planned by the Cabinet, ideally a few per semester. Campus-wide events will be limited to one per semester and planned in collaboration with a college department.

Participation

- Participation in Refuge is only open to Wheaton undergraduate students who self-identify in a variety of ways, including but not limited to lesbian, gay, bisexual,

transgender, or questioning.

- Participants cannot bring any guests (i.e., non-students, or students who have not had their own pre-participation meeting with a Cabinet member) to meetings or activities without prior approval from the Cabinet.
- Participants are not required to attend meetings or activities in order to retain the opportunity to participate.
- Participation is free.
- Meetings will occur on campus; other activities may occur on or off campus.

Practices

All Refuge participants further commit to the practices of...

Hospitality:

Refuge participants should seek to practice hospitality (Romans 12:13; 15:7) toward one another because God's love and welcome to us in Christ Jesus moves us to love and welcome each other (1 John 4:19). Part of this welcome includes earnest respect, insistent protection, and self-sacrificing love toward one another, given the dignity of every person as made in the image of God. Another part of this welcome is listening with humility in an attempt to understand each other's perspectives, and, when needed, voicing disagreement with respect. We celebrate with joy the value of all participants and commit to cultivating a non-judgmental, supportive, and respectful environment. We also commit to avoiding any and all gossip, complaining, presumption, and resentment toward one another, as well as renouncing discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

Promise-Keeping:

Refuge will also be marked by keeping promises (James 5:12), specifically to this Shared Agreement, the Community Covenant, and the Student Handbook. Because all participants have signed the Community Covenant they agree to abide by it; abiding by the Student Handbook is a condition of enrolling in Wheaton College. Refuge will not promote a vision of human sexuality that is inconsistent with the Community Covenant and Student Handbook.

Privacy and Safety:

Participants agree to not share both self-disclosed and observed information about any other Refuge participant, including, but not limited to, their name, age, sex/gender, stories, experiences, and identity with absolutely any non-participants of Refuge, be they other students, parents, faculty, staff, administration, etc. All personal information about participants will enjoy the safeguard of strict privacy unless required by law. To further safeguard the flourishing of the entire Wheaton College community, participants must note the following:

- Threats of harm to self and others, including reports of child/elder abuse, are required by law to be disclosed to the appropriate authorities, including the Adviser, the Director of the Counseling Center, the Dean of Student Wellness, a Residence Director, the Dean of Residence Life, or Public Safety if the Director of Student Care Services is not available.
- If the immediate well-being of a participant becomes a matter of concern due to a change in behavior (i.e. not eating, not sleeping, consistently not attending classes and/or chapel, isolating themselves from others, homelessness, etc.), Student Care Services may consult with other Student Development offices on campus (Residence Life, Learning & Accessibility Services, Counseling Center, and/or Student Health Services), and/or Public Safety in an effort to offer support options.

Leadership

Refuge is facilitated by a Cabinet of student leaders who plan events and weekly meetings, moderate conversations, provide support, and meet with students interested in participating. Refuge and its Cabinet are overseen by an Adviser with assistance from a Faculty Resource employed by Wheaton College.

Cabinet Positions and Responsibilities

- Cabinet members must follow all standard expectations and practices required of all other Refuge participants.
- Cabinet members attend, beyond Refuge meetings, activities, and events, an additional monthly planning meeting with the Adviser and Faculty Resource.
- At least two Cabinet members should be present at each Refuge meeting, activity, or event.
- Cabinet members are appointed to a term of one school year but can serve as many terms as they are a Wheaton undergraduate student.
- There are five Cabinet positions:
 - President
 - Facilitate all Refuge participant-only activities, weekly meetings, and monthly Cabinet meetings.
 - Communicate the concerns of Refuge participants on their behalf to faculty, staff, and administration as needed, in collaboration with the Adviser.
 - Vice President
 - Manage Refuge's documents and meeting minutes.
 - Carry out any duties of the President when the President is unable.

- Event Coordinator
 - Organize participant-only activities and campus-wide events by reserving locations, organizing volunteers, and managing any other logistics.
 - Manage Refuge's funds and finances and track the budget.
- Director of Marketing and Communication
 - Promote campus-wide awareness of Refuge's mission through posters, email announcements, and any other forms of advertisement.
 - Send out any internal communications within Refuge.
- Chaplain
 - Take prayer requests and open/close weekly meetings in prayer.
 - Provide spiritual support for participants of Refuge via one-on-one meetings, referring to campus resources when appropriate.
 - Coordinate informal events, such as worship or prayer nights, to encourage community building.

Cabinet Succession

When necessary, as when current Cabinet members anticipate graduating by the end of the school year, the Cabinet will self-appoint and train a Junior Cabinet for the duties and responsibilities of each Cabinet position, including President, Vice President, Event Coordinator, Director of Marketing and Communication, and Chaplain. Any Refuge participant may nominate themselves for the needed position(s). The succession process would begin one semester before the anticipated graduation date; for example, in anticipation for a Spring graduation, Junior Cabinet nominations and appointments would be officially announced at the end of the Fall semester. Training via active participation in Cabinet meetings and event planning, such as Know Your Neighbor, would begin at the start of the Spring semester.

Adviser's Responsibilities

- Meet regularly, at least monthly, with the Refuge Cabinet and Faculty Resource to assist in planning meetings, activities, and events.
- Share concerns with the Cabinet if the Refuge Shared Agreement is violated, as well as collaboratively discuss how best to address such violations.
- Train the Cabinet to both promote wellbeing among participants and recognize when to consult with the Director of Student Care Services about concerns.
- Approve room reservations and speakers for meetings, activities, and events.
- Approve campus-wide advertising and events.

- At the request of the Cabinet:
 - Attend Refuge meetings, activities, and events.
 - Invite other Wheaton College faculty and/or staff to attend a Refuge meeting, activity, event, or Cabinet meeting.
 - Communicate the concerns of Refuge participants on their behalf to faculty, staff, and administration, in collaboration with the President.
 - Meet with Refuge participants experiencing interpersonal conflict to help them communicate with each other in an effort to reach resolution.

Faculty Resource’s Responsibilities

- Meet monthly with the Refuge Cabinet and Adviser to assist in planning meetings, activities, and events.
- Share concerns with the Cabinet if the Refuge Shared Agreement is violated, as well as collaboratively discuss how best to address such violations.
- Encourage the Cabinet to promote wellbeing among participants.
- At the request of the Cabinet:
 - Attend Refuge meetings, activities, and events.
 - Invite other Wheaton College faculty and/or staff to attend a Refuge meeting, activity, event, or Cabinet meeting.
 - When appropriate, accompany the Cabinet and/or Adviser as a supportive presence with student leaders’ discussing concerns on behalf of Refuge with members of the college community.

Participant Commitment

Having understood the mission, vision, and practices of the Refuge community, I fully agree to them all and commit to Refuge’s flourishing.

Print & Sign _____ Date _____

Approved: 3/13/2023

*Signed Shared Agreements will only be accessible to the Refuge President. Students are required to sign the Shared Agreement every school year in order to participate in Refuge. Signed Shared Agreements will be expunged at the end of each year.

**Student Care Services responds to care needs, concerns, and referrals from faculty, staff, and students. They serve as the central point of contact for proactive, responsive, coordinated care and support for all Wheaton students. Their care encompasses the emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual, physical (medical), and mental health concerns of every student.