

## **Refuge Shared Agreement**

### **Introduction**

This shared agreement is between Student Wellness at Wheaton College, Refuge's Advisor, 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 among Wheaton College undergraduate students personally navigating same sex sexuality and/or gender identity.

### **Vision**

Refuge seeks to be a caring and social group through consistent weekly meetings and activities that foster community, belonging, and acceptance.

### **Joining**

- Participation is contingent upon meeting with a Cabinet member before attending any 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@wheaton.edu email is maintained solely by the Refuge Cabinet, but names of new participants are shared with the Director of Student Care Services ("SCS," which is part of Student Wellness) in order to promote their wellbeing. The Director of SCS will not share absolutely any Refuge-related participation information with absolutely anyone else, and no record (written, electronic, recorded, or otherwise) of participants in connection with Refuge will be documented.

### **Structure**

Weekly meetings will alternate between conversations (e.g. emotional check-ins, topical discussions, current event debriefs, etc...) and social outings (e.g. shared meals, movies, games, other activities, etc...).

### **Participation**

- 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, questioning, etc...
- 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, beginning with the Director of SCS, but may also begin with the Director of Counseling, the Dean of Student Wellness, a Residence Director, the Dean of Residence Life, or Public Safety if the Director of SCS is not available.
- If the immediate well-being of a student becomes a matter of concern due to a change in behavior (e.g. not eating, not sleeping, consistently not attending classes and/or chapel, isolating oneself from others, homelessness, etc...), SCS 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 Advisor employed by Wheaton College, with assistance from a Faculty Resource.

#### **Cabinet Positions and Responsibilities**

- Cabinet members must follow all standard expectations and practices required of all other Refuge participants.
- Cabinet members will attend, beyond the weekly Refuge meetings, an additional monthly planning meeting with the Advisor and Faculty Resource.
- At least two Cabinet members should be present at each Refuge meeting or activity.
- Cabinet members are appointed to a term of one school year but can serve as many terms as they are a Wheaton student.

- There are four Cabinet positions:
  - President
    - Facilitate all Refuge meetings, events for participants, and monthly Cabinet meetings.
    - Communicate the concerns of Refuge participants on their behalf to faculty, staff, and administration as needed, in collaboration with the Advisor.
  - Vice President
    - Manage Refuge's funds, documents, and meeting minutes.
    - Carry out any duties of the President when the President is unable.
  - Event Coordinator
    - Organize events and activities for Refuge participants by reserving locations, organizing volunteers, and managing any other logistics.
  - 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.

### **Cabinet Elections**

In order to be considered for a Cabinet position for the following school year, a Refuge participant must be nominated by a fellow Refuge participant. The nominee can either accept or reject the nomination. Any participant or Cabinet member may nominate or be nominated for any Cabinet position. Current Cabinet members may nominate themselves for their current position. Once all nominations have been made for a position, votes will be anonymously cast by all participants, and the nominee with the most votes wins. This process will continue until all positions are filled. Nominations and voting will be done first for President, then Vice President, then Event Coordinator, then Director of Marketing and Communication.

### **Advisor's Responsibilities**

- Meet monthly with the Refuge Cabinet and Faculty Resource to assist in planning meetings and events for participants.
- 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 as well as to recognize when to consult with the Director of SCS about concerns.
- Approve room reservations and speakers for meetings, events, and activities for Refuge participants.
- Approve advertising.
- At the request of the Cabinet:
  - Attend Refuge meetings or activities.
  - Invite other Wheaton College faculty and/or staff to attend a Refuge meeting or 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**

The Faculty Resource is a secondary mentor after the Advisor with these responsibilities:

- Meet monthly with the Refuge Cabinet and Advisor to assist in planning meetings and events for participants.
- 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 or activities.
  - Invite other Wheaton College faculty and/or staff to attend a Refuge meeting or event, or Cabinet meeting.
  - When appropriate, accompany the Cabinet and/or Advisor 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Last Updated: 05/27/2020

Approved: 05/27/2020

\*Signed Shared Agreements will be stored with the Director of SCS and will be accessible only to them and 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 upon a student's graduation.

\*\*SCS 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.