Summer is definitely here in Wisconsin! Warmer weather means hiking, beaches, biking, outdoor music, and festivals galore. Those working within international education might be on break or may be preparing for the upcoming semester. Hopefully, whichever season you're entering is filled with friends, family, rest, and easy breezes. But first, let's revisit this spring and early summer and take a look at all of our positive efforts in "unlocking the promise of international education" for displaced people from around the world.

Spring can be a busy time for us at Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE) as many of us prepare to go to the largest conference in the field of international higher education hosted by NAFSA: Association of International Educators. This year was no exception as thousands of international education professionals converged in Washington D.C. for the 75th anniversary of the NAFSA annual conference. You'll read about my experience this year and learn about what I presented at this year's poster fair. In addition, you'll read about World Refugee Day, as well as quarterly ECE® Aid updates. Enjoy!
NAFSA 75th Annual Conference: Washington D.C.

For the past 75 years, NAFSA: Association of International Educators has held their annual conference hosting thousands of international education professionals from over 100 countries. This year, the conference was held in Washington D.C. from May 30-June 2.

Over the course of four jam-packed days, attendees engage with each other through professional development workshops, learning sessions, exhibitors within the expo hall, networking and open meetings, poster fairs, and more.

Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE) is quite familiar with annual NAFSA conferences. For many years ECE has sent staff for professional development opportunities, to speak with colleagues at our exhibit booth, and to present at workshops and sessions, as well as the poster fair.

This year, I was fortunate enough to present at one of the poster fairs, which I will talk about more on the next page.

Another highlight for me included meeting with one of our active ECE® Aid participants, the Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), at its national headquarters in Arlington, VA. I always appreciate meeting with colleagues in person to speak about potential collaborative projects and how we can support each other with those we serve. It was an excellent meeting, and I thoroughly enjoyed speaking with staff at ECDC.
Poster Presentation
I was honored to present the work we do within the framework of ECE® Aid during the "Increasing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in International Education" poster fair at NAFSA 75.

My poster, seen below, was entitled "Providing Access to Higher Education for Refugees and Other Displaced People." You can zoom in on the image below to see that the poster explains challenges many displaced people face when attempting to access higher education. Additionally, the poster offers solutions, including the work being done through ECE® Aid.

PROVIDING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES & OTHER DISPLACED PEOPLE

OBJECTIVES
- Describe challenges refugees and other displaced populations face when seeking access to higher education.
- Recognize solutions to assist the higher education community in providing more equitable outcomes of marginalized people in higher education.

I. BACKGROUND
Displacement Statistics*
- 103 million forcibly displaced worldwide
- 32 million are refugees
- 4.2 million are asylum seekers
- 70% are from one of five countries: Afghanistan, South Sudan, Syria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Venezuela

*UNHCR Refugee Population Statistics Database, 2023

II. CHALLENGES
Barriers to Higher Education for Refugees & Displaced Populations
- Policy challenges
  - Federal
  - State
  - Local
  - Institutional
- Academic & documentation challenges
  - Interrupted periods of education
  - No official proof of achievement
  - Unofficial documents
  - Unrecognized schools
- Financial challenges
  - Lack of funds or scholarships due to extreme hardship
  - Special immigrant status
  - Refugee or asylum status

III. RESEARCH
ECE Conducted Higher Education Institution & Resettlement Agency Surveys in 2015
- What are the main concerns or pain points for refugees in the admissions/credential evaluation process?
- Respondents confirmed our assumptions of main concerns
  - Cost of credential evaluation
  - Documentation concerns
- How can ECE help?
  - Committee work
  - Project development
  - Launch program
  - Connect with stakeholders

IV. SOLUTIONS
General Guidelines & Best Practices
- Know your university/organization & what is feasible
- Review current policies & documentation requirements
- Seek guidance & support from local, state, federal, or national organizations
- Verify situation or claims with supplementing documents
- Ask students what they have & why

V. OUR INITIATIVE
ECE® Aid is a charitable initiative developed to provide free academic evaluation reports for vulnerable & displaced populations.

ECE® Aid process
- Participating organization identifies someone in need of assistance
- Participant sends referral to ECE® Aid
- ECE® Aid sends coupon code back to participant/client
- Client fills out ECE® application form and sends code
- Coupon code waives 100% of ECE® fees
- Credential evaluation process begins when documents are received for review

ECE® Aid accomplishments
- 800+ evaluations issued since 2016 at no cost to recipient.
- ECE® Aid has served people educated in over 80 different countries.

ECE® Aid relies on experienced, trusted institutions and organizations to distribute fee-waiver coupons to qualifying applicants. ECE does not distribute fee-waiver coupons to qualifying applicants. ECE® Aid is a charitable initiative developed to provide free academic evaluation reports for vulnerable & displaced populations.

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What is credential evaluation?
- Review of educational achievement
- Multilingual
- Conversion of international academic degrees to U.S. or Canadian education system
- Based on deep understanding of education systems worldwide

Steps to evaluating credentials
- Identify official status of institution & program
- Determine authenticity of documents
- Identify nature of education represented
- Assess qualifications over time
- Convert credits or hours
- Convert grades

ECE.org/ECE/ECE-Aid

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World Refugee Day

This marks the 23rd year of World Refugee Day. With no end in sight of forced displacement of people worldwide, there is no better time than now to get involved with assisting refugees in whatever capacity is available. The theme for this year was "Hope Away from Home," and we like to think that ECE® Aid provides some glimmer of hope for those not able to return home due to conflict, environmental catastrophes, or persecution. We support all efforts in trying to assist refugees in their search for better lives, with the hope for peaceful resolutions and innovative solutions to global crises.

Quarterly Updates

61 completed ECE® Aid evaluation reports in April, May, and June.

Top countries of education: Afghanistan, Ukraine, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Recent ECE® Aid activities & outreach:

- Kentucky Humanitarian Assistance Scholarship, Community of Practice panel.
- 4th Annual Refugee & Immigrant Family Community Resource Fair, Milwaukee High School of the Arts.
- "Inclusive Workforce: Employers in Support of the Newcomer Experience" event, International Institute of Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

Zachary Holochwost (he/him)
ECE® Aid and Market Research Manager