

Two Oxford University Colleges Launch New Scholarship for Refugees



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Two Oxford University colleges have jointly announced a new refugee scholarship to provide support for outstanding scholars who have been forced to migrate from their home.

Starting from October 2020, Somerville and Mansfield Colleges will each offer a fully funded place for a refugee student.

The new refugee scholarships are intended to meet the needs of highly able students whose education has been disrupted by forced migration. According to the UNHCR, while half of refugees worldwide are under the age of 18, only about 3% enter higher education and funding is a major barrier.

The new initiative will be funded through donations made by Mansfield and Somerville College alumni, friends and students, and Somerville College also plans to launch a crowdfunding campaign in February to maximize the support that can be offered.

The two Colleges also announced plans to seek recognition as a College of Sanctuary. The scheme, which grew from the City of Sanctuary movement, involves pledging to provide the most welcoming and accessible environment possible for refugees and asylum seekers.

The new scholarships reflect a broadening of efforts at the University of Oxford to support refugees. The Oxford Students Refugee Campaign, a student-led initiative, has provided financial support for seven refugee students at Oxford in recent years and work is taking place to create new provision across the collegiate university.

Full details about eligibility criteria and how to apply will be made available in the Spring.

Helen Mountfield QC, Principal of Mansfield College, said:

“Mansfield College takes welcoming, supporting and engaging with refugees and other forced migrants seriously. The Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, housed on our site, is conducting research on issues of modern slavery, and the College regularly hosts and supports workshops, events and activities designed to welcome and support refugees. Our next such event will be a performance of the Messiah in the Sheldonian Theatre on Sunday 23 February 2020 to raise funds for the charity Asylum Welcome.

I am delighted that our community is coming together to offer a refugee scholar the opportunity to study at Mansfield, and that Mansfield and Somerville Colleges are working together to apply for College of Sanctuary status.”

Jan Royall, Principal of Somerville College, said:

“Somerville and the University of Oxford have a proud tradition of offering refuge to those fleeing persecution and violence around the globe.

“Lotte Labowsky, a classicist and a Jewish woman from Germany, escaped her native country after Hitler came to power and became a Fellow here at Somerville. She was one of a number of eminent German scholars, persecuted under the Nazi regime, who were assisted by Somerville. Her connection with us lasted until her death in 1991.



“I am delighted that we are building on that tradition by offering an opportunity to a student to achieve their full potential at Somerville. In recent years, the college has worked hard to engage with refugees in our local community, and I look forward to strengthening that further as we apply for College of Sanctuary status.”

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