

**Latino Community Outreach at Bennington College: A  
Comparative Study of Vermont colleges**

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Table of Contents:

Part I. Introduction: A historical background on immigration in the U.S. and Vermont ..... 4

Part II. Case Studies: Examining the model at other colleges

Middlebury College .....15

University of Vermont.....20

Sterling College .....22

Castleton State College.....24

Champlain College .....25

Part III. Design and Practice: Examining the Models.....28

Part IV. Recommendations and Conclusion.....32

Bibliography.....36

## I. Background on Vermont and the Undocumented: A History

Since the first arrival of immigrants on Ellis Island in 1892, immigration to the U.S. has formatively changed the cultural and societal landscape of the country. For over a century, immigrants have played a significant role in shaping the economic relations of the U.S. service market. This has been manifested through migrant contributions to labor, business, and commerce. There is an established history of immigrants “doing the work” that naturalized U.S. citizens just don’t want to, and immigrants have, time and time again, risen to the occasion through intensive work. And while the law is relatively clear on where undocumented, illegal workers stand, a complex employer-employee relationship exists regardless. For the last 50 years or so, one of the country’s most heated debates on immigration has been around agricultural workers, and largely the complicated relationship that has been formed by needing immigrant labor, yet rejecting migrants through strict, unyielding immigration laws.

Though there has been immigration to the U.S. by individuals from Europe and Asia, it is the Latino (particularly Mexican) immigrants who have characterized much of the farm work that requires immigrant labor. This picture of characterization, however, is complicated. The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that of the 12 million undocumented immigrants residing in the U.S., 3.8% work in the agricultural sector.<sup>1</sup> Of those, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) states, “about half of the hired workers employed in U.S. crop agriculture were unauthorized, with the overwhelming majority of these workers coming from Mexico.”<sup>2</sup>

Undocumented migrants have been serving as temporary manual labor for some time, but the most important moment in Latino migrant history in the U.S. has been with the Bracero program. The Bracero Program, initiated by the U.S. federal government in 1942 in conjunction

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<sup>1</sup> Carrie Kahn. “Study details lives of immigrants in the U.S.” NPR. June 2005.

<sup>2</sup> H.A. Goodman. “Illegal Immigrants benefit the U.S. Economy.” *The Hill*. 23 April 2014.

with the Mexican government, “set up a labor contracting system by which the U.S. government negotiated the temporary importation of 4.8 million Mexican workers to be used primarily in agriculture between the years 1942 and 1964.”<sup>3</sup> Between 1947 and 1949, 74,600 braceros (*bracero* referring to those enrolled in the program) entered the fields, while the number of unauthorized crossers registered through the U.S. government upon arrival had ballooned to 142,200.”<sup>4</sup> Worker contracts included strict parameters established by the governments, including the prohibition of unionization between workers, and in some cases, a portion of the workers’ salaries was held until they returned back to Mexico.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the Bracero program set a precedent for illegal border crossings; because the program did not have adequate infrastructure to accept the number of applicants that applied for the program, there was still illegal immigration to the States.

After the program ended in 1964, U.S. immigration policy on unauthorized Mexican migration often operated by “looking the other way,” even though occasional displays of control at the border appeased public concerns (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002; Bean and Fix 1992). Shortly after the end of the program, Congress passed the Hart-Celler Act (Immigration Act of 1965), which eliminated previously established immigration quotas for Eastern European and Asian migrants, and made the wait times for receiving visas longer. The H-2 visa was also introduced, which grants employers the ability to hire temporary workers (including migrants) to work for agricultural purposes, primarily seasonal, though this does not apply to dairy farming, since it is year long.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Justin Akers Chacón and Mike Davis, *No One Is Illegal: Fighting Racism and State Violence on the U.S-Mexico Border* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2006). Page 140.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Page 146.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> In 2010, Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy tried to amend H-2 visas to include dairy farming, but it has not been passed.

## II. Current State of Affairs: Looking at Vermont's Dairy Farming in Perspective

In Vermont, migrants are not concentrated in crop agriculture, but in dairy farming. Statistics from 2010 indicate that there are over 1,000 dairy farms in the state of Vermont.<sup>7</sup> Statewide, there are fewer than 5,000 undocumented immigrants. Numbers from Migrant Justice, an immigrant rights group, place the number who work on dairy farms somewhere between 1200-1500.<sup>89</sup> Dairy farming constitutes 80% of the state's agricultural revenues and 3% of state GDP; undocumented farmworkers are thought to contribute heavily to this labor pool. It is estimated that an influx of Latino farm workers arrived in the 1990s to address a labor shortage in the dairy industry; in the late 80s, the USDA tried to reduce the national milk shortage, closing down numerous farms in the process.<sup>10</sup> Since then, Vermont has seen more and more migrant labor surface to work in the dairy farms.

For a state with roughly 600,000 people, Vermont does not necessarily garner the same attention that states with larger immigrant populations, such as California or Texas, do. The American Immigration Council reports that in 2014, of the 25,000 foreign-born population in Vermont, 61.2 percent were naturalized citizens.<sup>11</sup> Residual counting methods could imply that the other 10,000 are undocumented, but Vermont is also known for its refugee state status, and has passed multiple pieces of legislation to ensure that refugees are protected within the state.

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<sup>7</sup> Daniel Baker and David Chappelle. "In Vermont, Se Habla Español: Using Occupational Spanish to Help Dairy Farmers Manage a Changing Workforce." *Journal of Extension*.

<sup>8</sup> Placing the number of undocumented immigrants anywhere involves a lot of guess work; the primarily accepted method of measuring the count is through "residual counting," which is done by subtracting the number of legally present individuals subtracted by the foreign-born population.

<sup>9</sup> Another recent study places this number close to 3,000.

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin G. Jastrezemski. "The New Braceros: Mexican Dairy Workers in Vermont." Honors Thesis. Dartmouth College, June 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Immigration Policy Center. "New Americans in Vermont: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in the Green Mountain State." American Immigration Council. May 2013.

Additionally, worker conditions on the farms are uncertain – that is to say, it is unknown how much undocumented farm workers are paid, or where and how they live. Life for dairy farmers includes 60-80-hour work weeks, and, as a report from Middlebury College suggests, “feelings of isolation.” Due to their status, undocumented farmers rarely leave their farms, for fear of being caught by authorities. Radel et al. estimate that 90 percent of Mexican farmworkers in Vermont do not have documentation and Latino workers are rarely seen off-farm.<sup>12</sup> Not only are these workers affected emotionally, but also because of the risks associated with working illegally, they are usually heavily dependent on their farmer bosses. Because of their limitations in leaving the farm and these dependent relationships, it is uncertain what kind of access to basic rights the workers have (i.e. worker’s rights, health care, schooling and transportation).<sup>1314</sup>

Certainly, this also puts the farmers in a difficult position – because dairy farming is not covered by the H-2 visas, they are also at risk to face sanctions from authorities. After passage of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), it became illegal for employers to knowingly hire undocumented workers, with possible fines and imprisonment as punishment. Additionally, E-Verify was established, which is an online system that allows employers to verify the eligibility of their employees to work in the United States.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the interactions between farmer and worker can be complicated; language is a primary component of this. A Vermont Workforce survey found that only 4 percent of Latino workers reported being able to “speak English well,” and 64 percent considered their English to be

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<sup>12</sup> Baker and Chappelle, *Health Status and Needs*.

<sup>13</sup> Multiple Authors. *Working Hands in Vermont’s Borderlands: A Guide to Resources for Migrant Workers in Addison County, Vermont*. Web.

<sup>14</sup> The size of the farms matters as well – currently the OSHA cutoff for inspection of farms is 10, which means that if there are fewer, they don’t go to inspect and look at things like worker safety.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. “E-Verify.” Website. <<http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify>>



poor/very poor.<sup>16</sup> Yet there have been programs in place to try and amend language barriers on both sides. For example, there was an experimental pilot program created by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture from 2007-2010 called the Vermont Dairy Spanish Project (VDSP), which “sought to provide farmers with basic-work oriented Spanish language skills.”<sup>17,18</sup>

There is demonstrated evidence that the demographics of these farm workers are skewing towards larger Latino representation. A longitudinal study done from 2002-2005 in farms in New York, Pennsylvania, and Vermont revealed a consistent increase in the proportions of farms with at least one Spanish worker (see Table 1 below); additionally, in 5 years from the time of the study, “linear models predicted that 53.2% of the large and 18.1% of the small farm workforce would be Spanish speaking.”<sup>19</sup>

TABLE 1. Proportion of Farms Employing at Least One Spanish-Speaking Worker at Baseline and Each Follow-up Period, NY, PA, VT, 2002–2005

Farm size	Follow-up period			
	Baseline	6-Month	12-Month	21-Month
Small	16/197 (8.1%)	18/186 (9.7%)	21/177 (11.9%)	24/166 (14.5%)
Large	50/96 (52.1%)	54/92 (58.7%)	56/91 (61.5%)	60/89 (67.4%)

TABLE 2. Average Spanish-Speaking Proportion of Each Farm’s Workforce, NY, PA, VT, 2002–2005

Farm size	Follow-up period			
	Baseline	6-Month	12-Month	21-Month
Small	5.0% (n = 574)	5.7% (n = 535)	8.0% (n = 522)	9.3% (n = 525)
Large	22.3% (n = 929)	24.7% (n = 883)	28.2% (n = 866)	32.1% (n = 824)

<sup>16</sup> Baker and Chappelle, “Health of VT Latino Dairy Farmworkers.”

<sup>17</sup> Baker and Chappelle, June 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, funding for the program ended in 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Jenkins, Paul L., Suzanne G. Stack, John J. May, and Giulia Earle-Richardson. "Growth of the Spanish-Speaking Workforce in the Northeast Dairy Industry." *Journal of Agromedicine*, 2009, 58-65.

The question then becomes, given the complex picture of farmer and worker within the context of immigration law, can more action be taken to provide the undocumented migrant population with access to community services such as healthcare? Certainly, community development programs, Baker & Chappelle say, could be a possible solution. They write, “community-based initiatives, including partnerships with colleges and universities, outreach to farm employers and the adoption of ‘bias-free policing’ are strategies that can increase access to health care for Latino dairy farmworkers in the United States.” This is the question that advances this work. What do college partnerships within Vermont look like, and how do they serve the migrant community?

The necessity of adopting of bias-free policing is unsurprising. Given that many undocumented people cannot get licenses, not only are they dependent on the farmers for rides around town, but they fear law enforcement, and the consequences revealing their illegal status can bring. In Vermont, these issues have been addressed in the public arena to some degree. In 2012, a bias-free policing law was passed by the state to reduce the effects of racial discrimination in policing.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, other legislation was passed recently to grant undocumented residents in Vermont more rights; in 2013, the state passed a law granting undocumented individuals access to a driver’s privilege card. While not exactly a license, it is one step to allowing these workers more freedom to navigate around the state without fear of being punished by law.

However, both of these laws have met controversy: for example, the bias-free policing law, though implemented to decrease the amount of racial discrimination in policing, has met opposition by groups who say it is not enough. Last spring, a bill was introduced to mandate the collection of data about the race of people law enforcement pull over. Its intention is to not just see

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<sup>20</sup> Last spring, an attempt was made to amend this law to include more parameters for police (such as reporting the race of those they arrest), but has not met with any state congressional action.

how the bias-free policing is taking effect in the state, but to analyze how law enforcement view the people they interact with.<sup>21</sup> And with the Driver's Privilege cards, DMV offices in Vermont have been reporting the illegal status of individuals to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), causing many individuals to be detained. It should be noted that such practices by the DMV are not necessarily under their jurisdiction to report to federal authorities; in many cases, the DMV has its own procedures to deal with potentially fraudulent applications.

Vermont is no exception to the complicated, nuanced problem that, as mentioned earlier, happens when undocumented workers and their employers are placed in a situation with confusing, restrictive laws. It is not only contradictory because the labor is necessary, but does not allow room for basic human requirements, such as the need to live and work with dignity. And so, the question becomes, is there anything that we, as students from Bennington College, can do to examine and potentially contribute something positive to this dilemma?

### **III. Addressing the Question of Access in Bennington: What is Available?**

This question has manifested itself in a number of ways. At Bennington College, it has found a place in the form of GANAS, a community action project that wants to interact with the migrant farming community in Bennington and surrounding areas through planned outreach programs. Here, our mission statement reads:

GANAS aims to (1) Provide students with volunteer opportunities to engage with the Latino migrant worker population in Bennington County through our partnership with community organizations and collaborators: the Vermont Migrant Education Program, the Bennington Free Clinic and Legal Resistance Alliance. (2) Create a network among the migrant worker population, students, faculty and organizations with expertise and interest

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<sup>21</sup>

in this initiative. (3) Produce informative programming related to legal, educational, and healthcare services for migrant workers.

As Baker and Chappelle write, given the demonstrated isolation that comes not just from being on a farm, it seemed almost natural that the GANAS team would seek out ways to not only understand what community organizations exist for migrant workers, but become a player in collaboration for those efforts to provide valuable services like the aforementioned.

The GANAS team has identified and established relationships with many of these groups already, such as with Migrant Justice, the Vermont Migrant Education Program, and the Bennington Free Clinic. Many of these established programs have actually been created through legislation – for example, the Vermont Migrant Education Program is funded through the federal Title I Migrant Education Program, established by President Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s as part of the war on poverty.<sup>22</sup>

Yet it is through volunteer opportunities and community action building from within the College itself that the GANAS team is hoping to make a significant contribution to the surrounding Bennington community. To start that, however, required some thought, and a good deal of questions, some of which included: What is already available? Where are most of these workers located? Do they have any present needs that we as a college community can assist with? What are feasible goals? What is beyond the scope of our mission?

### **On Methodologies: Threading together various perspectives**

Because this project is centered in community service aspects, identifying any sort of research methodology presents certain challenges. Furthermore, all of the group members are approaching the project from different perspectives. For example, one participant in GANAS is an

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<sup>22</sup> The University of Vermont. “Vermont Migration Education Program: About VMEP.” Web. <<https://www.uvm.edu/extension/agriculture/vmep/?Page=about.html>>

undocumented immigrant himself, so his perspective offers a certain degree of familiarity. Others have lived in Spanish-speaking countries abroad, participated in tutoring services for migrant workers, and have had family members work labor-intensive jobs like those of the dairy workers in Bennington. Not only that, but our end goals may be different, as well. Personally, my role feels more like that of a historian or archivist, while others seek to take a more active role in the community development, such as through translating for undocumented immigrants at the Bennington Free Clinic. We need to find a common goal or theme under which to fit ourselves.

One pathway to unraveling a “research question” or inquiry can be summarized in the GANAS mission statement, which, at its core, seeks to uncover more of the “mystery” that surrounds the undocumented population in Bennington and surrounded areas. There are plenty of books written about U.S. immigration policy, and even a substantial amount that have case studies in “Border States,”<sup>23</sup> yet the amount available on Vermont and New England is much smaller. In some ways, this is actually a positive thing, as it narrows down the scope of this project into something not only feasible, but progress is more easily measurable. Last semester, the GANAS project took the form of a tutorial, where we 1) identified a mission statement and 2) created some goals with what we’d like to accomplish. For the most part, the process itself was very exploratory, with much of the semester dedicated to establishing relationships with relevant community groups in the area.

There were two major events that shaped our first semester: first, we attended a Candidates’ Forum hosted by the Vermont Workers Center, where one of our group members gave a powerful testimony about the story of a young man who had been working on a farm who

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<sup>23</sup> This term is occasionally used in immigration literature to describe the states surrounding Mexico that experience the highest amounts of immigration (i.e. Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas.)

had been detained after applying for a driver's license. Second, we hosted a community potluck dinner for farmers and migrant workers, with outreach assistance from the Bennington Free Clinic. The event was small, but it provided some valuable insight into the ways that these workers already network within themselves, and also gave the group a chance to really see reflection and mission-planning manifest in a moment of action.

Next semester, the GANAS group will take form in another tutorial, and there are multiple visions and ideas for what our work for the semester should be. Given that we have established a good number of relationships with relevant groups in the area and we have established ourselves as best we can within the College's world of academia, now is the time to move forward and begin some more action-based approaches. One of those approaches includes visits to local dairy farms in the area, and raising more awareness about health services offered in Bennington (i.e the Free Clinic), and offering out translating services for those who need it (primarily Spanish-English).

## **PART II: Case Studies**

### **I. Introduction: On Middlebury**

Middlebury College is a private liberal arts school in Middlebury, Vermont. A relatively small institution, its (student) undergraduate population is 2,493. In many ways, at a general statistical glance, there are many parallels to Bennington: its small size, its curriculum, and even the demographics of its location. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that the 2014 population for Addison County was 37,009, and the Bennington County's 36,445.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, both populations are similar racially: 95.4% of Addison County is reported to be White only, and 96.5% in Bennington, compared to the statewide average of 95.2%.<sup>25</sup> Certainly, there are notable differences as well: for one, Middlebury was founded significantly earlier (1800), and its endowment is over \$1 billion.

#### **Middlebury and Migrant Farm Workers: The Academic Side**

One center of information for migrant resources in the town of Middlebury is hosted on the Middlebury College website.<sup>26</sup> It has been a vital part of information for us as Bennington students (and GANAS) to understand what resources we can compile for our area. The Middlebury site was created through an environmental history class entitled "Unnatural Border," overseen by faculty member Mary E. Mendoza. The introduction of the website moves their resource guides from the understanding of Vermont as a *borderland*, or a series of "places of

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<sup>24</sup> U.S Census Bureau. Quick Facts: Addison County and Bennington County. 2013-2014.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Multiple Authors. *Working Hands in Vermont's Borderlands: A Guide to Resources for Migrant Workers in Addison County, Vermont*. Web.

cultural exchange . . . as migrants seeking work cross the border and travel into the far reaches of the United States, they carry their border crossing experiences with them as well as their customs, creating pockets of cultural interaction all over North America.” From this understanding, the website was created. It features personal stories of a few migrant dairy farm workers, a brief history of the current federal and state laws that apply to migrant farm workers, descriptions of push-pull factors for Mexican immigration, and a description of work life/environment for a typical migrant farm worker. The site itself is very concise and detailed in its materials, and seems to be a useful end product for the “Unnatural Border” class.

Another approach taken has been through multimedia. For example, two Middlebury graduates produced the documentary *HIDE*, which was funded by a \$3000 grant from the College.<sup>27</sup> The thirty-minute documentary profiles the lives of migrant farm workers from unidentified dairy farms in Addison, Chittenden, and Franklin counties. The picture is meant to be unbiased, but because its 2013 release came before the Vermont state legislature was deciding whether to allow undocumented immigrants to apply for driver’s licenses (now known as driver’s privilege cards), it was perceived with a political slant. The content of the film describes the workers’ experience with long workdays without breaks and in isolating conditions, which, as Baker and Chappelle (2012) have written, only serve as a detriment to the mental health of this population. It’s unclear whether conditions have improved for the workers at all, but in terms of legislation, undocumented immigrants are able to drive as of a 2013 law. What is clear, however, is that the work done by these groups at Middlebury, including the website and documentary, made an impact on the nature of immigration policy in Vermont.

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<sup>27</sup> Picard, Ken. “Midd Kids’ Documentary Shows How Vermont Dairy Workers Get Milked.” *Seven Days*. 09 January 2013.



## **Student Organizations Build Community with Migrant Farm Workers**

Aside from work produced for academic courses, there is also organization at the student level to engage with migrant farm workers. This is important, as it provides a level of interaction that is not necessarily achieved with only learning and producing work within the classroom.

In a list of student groups that are meant to work towards student-generated activist movements, there was a group specifically mentioned that aligns with GANAS. Both “mission statements” are included here for comparative purposes:

Juntos is a student group working in alliance with migrant farmworkers in Vermont.

Together, migrants and students are defending human rights, combating a racist immigration system, strengthening communities, and creating a more just dairy industry.

We work with Migrant Justice, a Burlington-based grassroots organization, to expand farmworkers’ access to transportation, health services, and language acquisition, while building an intersectional movement for collective liberation.

GANAS aims to (1) Provide students with volunteer opportunities to engage with the Latino migrant worker population in Bennington County through our partnership with community organizations and collaborators: the Vermont Migrant Education Program, the Bennington Free Clinic and Legal Resistance Alliance. (2) Create a network among the migrant worker population, students, faculty and organizations with expertise and interest

in this initiative. (3) Produce informative programming related to legal, educational, and healthcare services for migrant workers.

From observing the two different mission statements, there seems to be more of an activist bent to Middlebury's student-run mission, whereas Bennington's is more focused on outreach, service delivery, volunteer opportunities. Both programs are aligned with activist groups such as Migrant Justice to help access and engage migrant farmer communities.

### **Brief Recommendations**

Moving forward, the GANAS project could certainly benefit from some of Middlebury's methods. From this study's review of their published information, the following is recommended: continuing to work on the plans for a multimedia project, heavily documenting the GANAS presence on the Internet, and increasing the organization's publicity. Currently GANAS has a website and utilizes Google Drive to archive and organize its documents; a possible direction moving forward would be to start moving these to a more accessible forum, such as a more interactive website. To this author's knowledge there are members of the tutorial putting things in an archival portfolio, but having an online presence would really lend the organization more credibility, both with the Bennington community and any public interests.

I think there are some things we are doing as an organization that are fair and should be continued. The Middlebury student website operates from a couple of assumptions that GANAS does not - primarily, that the populations we are working with are Mexican, when in the group's experience, they have found contradictory evidence to this. It may in fact be the case that a majority of migrant farm workers in Addison County are Mexican, but it's important that whatever is produced comes from a more Latino vs. Strictly Mexican perspective.

Additionally, I firmly stand by our use of terms that do not alienate the communities with whom we are working. Some of Middlebury's resources included phrases like "illegal immigrant" and "alien," and though those terms are present within some literature, I believe we are acting correctly in using migrant farmworkers, immigrants, and undocumented to describe the people we want to reach. This is a practice that has been evolving even in recent years, and we should continue to act with these changes.

## **II. Background: the University of Vermont**

The University of Vermont (UVM) is Vermont's largest public college, based in Burlington, Vermont. It has an undergraduate population of almost 10,000 students. UVM is Vermont's land grant university, and has an endowment of \$350 million (2013). Burlington is located in Chittenden County, which is estimated to have 11,400 immigrants (almost half the Vermont immigrant population of 26,000).<sup>28</sup>

### **Migrant Ed at UVM: VMEP and FAACP**

The UVM Extension program has been instrumental in service provision for the migrant community. Funded through the Vermont Legislature since 1913, they have been focused on projects of community development, human nutrition, youth, natural resources, and agriculture. Currently, one of the programs they oversee is the Vermont Migrant Education Program (VMEP), which is conjointly done with the Vermont Agency of Education. The VMEP is designed to provide educational support services for children (age 21 or under) of migrant families. The migrant families who qualify for the VMEP by federal law are involved in agricultural-related fields such as dairy farming, fruit orchards, vegetable fields, food processing plants, nurseries, and logging.

The extension program also helped pioneer the Farming Across Cultures Communication Project (FAACP), which was a program started May 2010 in Franklin County to increase: "communication, understanding, and training on farms with Latino employees, in the areas of work, health and the home." Later in July 2012, the FAACP evolved into the VT Agricultural Labor Management Program (VT ALMa). The VT ALMa program had a similar focus to the FAACP; it consisted of three components - a series of workshops offered statewide, customized

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<sup>28</sup> Migration Policy Institute. "U.S. Immigrant Population by State and Country." 2009-2013.

on-farm communication and labor management services, and Spanish language work trainings for Latino dairy employees.<sup>29</sup>

### **UVM Student Involvement: ESL Focused Programs**

Perusing the UVM Student Campus page, the primary group I found had a focus on English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching. Currently I am unsure whether that is aligned with the VMEP; it has a minimum participation of an hour a week, and does not emphasize a need for fluency in Spanish. It seems that the primary actors who are involved in this initiative are from the UVM Extension program, which is important to note. I am unsure of why this is the case - perhaps the structure of the Extension program is part of the reason. Given that they are federally funded, their programs do require much stricter regulation and organizational structure and accountability. However, they may also be vulnerable to shutdown; the FAACP and VTALMa programs were short-lived, something that may not necessarily happen at a private university.

### **Current Observations and Comparisons**

I do not observe anything resembling our program at UVM. However, they do have an established, backed system of tutoring, which is something we've suggested implementing within our own organizational structure. Additionally, something important to note about UVM is that they may be the most established in terms of websites; every organization has their own server space via the Lynx system UVM employs, giving them their own legitimacy and viability as part of the university's supported programming. I would certainly recommend us trying to get server space and be part of the college's website. However, after noticing the lack of student initiative - for whatever reasons - I am hesitant to recommend we push our volunteer coordination to Student

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<sup>29</sup> UVM Extension. "Farming Across Culture Communication Program." The University of Vermont. < <http://www.uvm.edu/extension/agriculture/faccp/> >

Life. Should we want to do that, however, looking at the UVM Extension's practices might be worth it for reference.

### **III: Sterling College**

Another college, Sterling College, has had some experience engaging with their surrounding migrant community. Sterling is a very small four-year liberal arts college located in Craftsbury Common, Vermont. Its undergraduate program consists of 125 students, and their endowment is \$1.1 million. It is one of seven colleges that make up the Work College Consortium, where students integrate work and service opportunities while pursuing an undergraduate education.

I spoke to Professor John Zaber, who says that every semester, he teaches a course called Education and Culture, where visiting local farmworkers is part of the class. He describes the purpose of the visits as a venue for introducing students to concepts of immigration, motivations for migration, and informing students of “this hidden population so crucial to the viability of Vermont's dairy industry.” Additionally, he described visiting a local community member, a Mexican woman, and “discussing her background and reasons for coming to the U.S., while making corn and flour tortillas and eating salsa and beans.” He also noted one of the course readings is *Of Borders and Dreams: A Mexican American Experience of Urban Education* that details the challenges of a young Mexican with a learning disability within the Chicago school system.

As one of our struggles is identifying where farms and farmworkers are, I also inquired about his own connections to this community; he initially made contact with farmworkers through another Sterling faculty member. Craftsbury has two farms with workers from Guatemala and Mexico; one of the local vegetable farmers (Pete's Greens) has seasonal workers that are employed

legally on work visas. Zaber's primary connection with farmworkers is Dan Cohen, who is hired as a migrant educator via UVM extension. (Note the importance of UVM extension in connecting people).

Additionally, Professor Zaber remarked that it was a struggle to get students involved, noting that a couple years ago he had a group of students who mainly provided transportation for workers (something we've self-identified as a problem in our area, though some research may not indicate it as such). Also, they've had Middlebury's Juntos group come to campus to talk to students.

Sterling is one example of a small, but potentially useful way to involve non-Spanish speakers in GANAS efforts. Though ESL tutoring efforts are certainly helpful, getting students more engaged in the political and cultural climate of immigration can serve as a useful venue for establishing long-term sustainability of student involvement. If this issue isn't properly contextualized for Bennington students, it is unclear much they'll be able to viably contribute to our mission and overarching goal of connecting to a vulnerable population.

#### IV. Castleton State College: Graduate Courses and Website

Castleton State College, founded in 1787 as Vermont's first college, describes themselves as having the "longest history of service of Vermont and Vermonters of any college in the state."<sup>30</sup>

Does this practice extend to Vermonters who also happen to be undocumented farmworkers?

There are both academic and curricular activities that support this idea: the first is a graduate school course designed to help explore the migrant community through an integrated arts approach; and second, similar to Middlebury, a resource guide created to facilitate an understanding about refugees and immigrants for incoming Castleton State students and faculty.

In 2012, the Invisible Odysseys three credit course was offered at Castleton State for graduate students. The course, sponsored by the Vermont Folklife Center, the Treleven Institute, the Addison County Farm Worker Coalition, and the Addison Central Supervisory Union was taught in collaboration by Artist B Amore, Dr. Cheryl Mitchell, Dr. Gregory Sharrow, and Dr. Susannah McCandless. Invisible Odysseys consisted of two components: a two day residency in Vermont, and a ten week online course. The course is an interesting example due to its emphasis on integrating a visual arts component to understanding the migrant community in Addison County; the class included analyzing and discussing work created by migrant farm workers, and then navigating through different approaches within the visual arts to portray issues representative of the migrant experience.<sup>31</sup>

As part of the sponsorship, the Vision & Voice Documentary Workspace of the Vermont Folklife Center hosted the artwork that migrant farm workers made for the course. The collaborator-teachers of the course brought a variety of art supplies to the migrants; what resulted

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<sup>30</sup> Castleton State College. "Quick Facts." < <http://www.castleton.edu/about-castleton/quick-facts/>>

<sup>31</sup> Invisible Odysseys Syllabus.



was 14 autobiographical dioramas in which the artist-farmworkers expressed their journeys from Mexico to Vermont and their lives as undocumented workers in a foreign community.<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, the exhibit also featured the stories of the workers, both in English and Spanish text.

This example demonstrates, in some ways, aspects of the GANAS project that, if harnessed and designed correctly, can support the furthering of community development for migrant farm workers in the Bennington area. As will be described later, one of the project ideas that has been developing within the GANAS tutorial course is a multimedia arts exhibit that includes migrant farm workers' art pieces, designed to facilitate an increased awareness of this "invisible" population to the Bennington community, both within and outside the College.

The second project, hosted on Castleton State's website<sup>33</sup>, is an online resource guide created for supplemental understanding for the required summer reading for first years, *Outcasts United: An American Town, a Refugee Team, and One Woman's Quest to Make the Difference* by Warren St. John. Though its subject content and emphasis is on refugees, there is dedicated web space on immigrants and migrant workers in Vermont. This website, though not completely focused on migrant farm workers, still raises an important aspect of community development: educating a student community on the presence and plight of the migrant in Vermont.

## **V. Champlain College: Academic Papers in the Global Connections program**

Champlain College, in contrast, does not appear to have any student organizations actively working on migrant farmworker outreach, but does have some exposure to immigration topics.

Champlain, similar to Bennington, emphasizes an interdisciplinary program; however, their

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<sup>32</sup> Vision & Voice Documentary Workspace. "Invisible Odysseys: Art By and About Mexican Farm Workers in Vermont." Vermont Folklife Center. < [http://www.vermontfolklifecenter.org/vision-voice/exhibitions/vv\\_invisible-odysseys.html](http://www.vermontfolklifecenter.org/vision-voice/exhibitions/vv_invisible-odysseys.html)>

<sup>33</sup> Castleton State College. "Outcasts United: Background on countries and cultures." Library Guide. < <http://libguides.castleton.edu/c.php?g=18185&p=102459>>

program structure is called the “Core,” which designs a four-year course of study for students that requires certain classes. During the Global Connections course, students are allowed to select research topics of international relations/politics, some of which include U.S./Mexico border relations and immigration. The materials submitted by students are both embodied by academic and artistic intentions - as indicated by the information on the Champlain College Global Connection website.

The website presents breadth in subject material related to immigration; the U.S.-Mexico border tag covers topics from border stories in Mexico, NAFTA’s influence on the border region, photography, film, and cuisine. The post lengths vary from paper abstracts to assignments; and are presented informally, with casual citations, and others with a more thorough line of research and inquiry. For instance, “Unaccompanied Minors, Mental Health, and Refugee Status” describes the psychological implications of detaining unaccompanied minors who cross the border, while “Journal Entries of a \$50 Bill” is a fictional piece that follows around a \$50 bill through journals of immigrants who use the money for different ends, creating some sort of social commentary to contextualize the “hardships presented by migrant labor in context of family bonds and connections.”<sup>34</sup>

The Champlain case study presents a very focused version of college outreach, in the sense that there is little outreach and the work students produce is primarily academic in nature. These papers demonstrate an investment in U.S./Mexico border relations, and there are even papers written about Vermont. For example, “Illegal immigration is right in our backyard” presents an

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<sup>34</sup> Tyler Leno. “Journal Entries of a \$50 Bill.” *Global Connections*. Champlain College. 15 April 2015. < <http://globalconnections.champlain.edu/2015/04/15/journal-entries-of-a-50-bill/>>

earnest summary of some of the current problems facing Mexican dairy workers, and incorporates first-hand accounts and opinions from the author, who is a Vermont resident.<sup>35</sup>

While Champlain's curricular program is diverse in subject matter, it does present one side of the academic-practice spectrum, in that it is almost too academic. The lack of a service component or project is counterintuitive to the GANAS model, which seeks to reach out to migrant communities, while also understanding the historical and contemporary context of their situations. To do so requires academic background, but more importantly, an active connection to the workers themselves. In that sense, GANAS could benefit from producing work similar to Champlain's website, but is likely to do better implementing a model more similar to Castleton State, Middlebury, or Sterling, where there is both research and outreach to migrants.

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<sup>35</sup> Megan Bessette. "Illegal immigration is right in our backyard." *Global Connections*. Champlain College. 14 April 2015. < <http://globalconnections.champlain.edu/2015/04/14/illegal-immigration-is-right-in-our-backyard/>>

## **Part III: Deconstructing the GANAS model**

### **Understanding the GANAS model: Formation and Practice**

The GANAS tutorial, as it is known today, has its work conceived in and executed through the framework of Bennington College's Center for the Advancement of Public Action (CAPA)'s curriculum. Each member came to the group with varying motivations, but at the center of our mission was one central concern: addressing the needs of and helping the Latino undocumented population in Vermont through a combination of service and learning programs. An educational campaign as well as an academic endeavor, its intention is to build a community of students, Latino migrant workers, and local organizations focused on promoting access to services and recreation for migrant workers, and to foster cross-cultural exchanges between Spanish and non-Spanish speakers. In order to facilitate these exchanges, partnering with local organizations has been crucial to access and execution of service learning. This is also a programming aspect that holds true for almost all of the other colleges examined in this study: Middlebury, UVM, Sterling, and Castleton all, to some degree, have relationships with outside organizations, whether institutional (like UVM's Extension program, which receives a lot of state funding) or not (as is the case with Middlebury, where the Juntos group has collaborative relationships in place with activist groups such as Migrant Justice).

The work required to make GANAS a course takes place in two forms: the GANAS tutorial, and the CAPA workshop, where the GANAS group leaders, Andrea Tapia and Selina Petschek, have organized and archived the history and organizational structure of the work into a portfolio. GANAS has changed from an idea to a genuine work in progress; it has developed from a couple students tutoring at dairy farms and translating at the Bennington Free Clinic into an

organization that is positioning itself to be a representative voice for community outreach for Latino migrant workers. In many ways, it has grown out from an educational campaign, but at the same time, it must continue to have an academic foundation.

This tension - navigating through the need to both serve and produce academic work - continues to exist within the tutorial format. Conversations have begun to transform the GANAS tutorial into a yearly course in the curriculum; yet again, reconciling the need to have students grounded in the academic literature of immigration issues while requiring a volunteering service component (and, even further, a working Spanish language requirement) is difficult, but a tension that is being managed through bi-weekly reading from academic journals and individual research projects. Currently, the individual projects can be divided into three categories: analytic, creative, and service-oriented, with natural overlap. As with this study, the projects undertaken by the GANAS project are in many ways unique and multi-faceted. This study is an analytic piece meant to advance the work of GANAS structurally. However, the individual projects all take an aspect of the analytical-creative-service model.

Another analytic project is a health assessment: the proposed health assessment is based on a report conducted by Californian immigrant youth in collaboration with the UCLA Labor Center, examining the health status of approximately 500 undocumented and DACAmented Californians. The assessment will be conducted in collaboration with the Bennington Free Clinic, whose mission is to provide free medical care to adults who do not have health insurance, and will examine the health status of the undocumented population living near Bennington. In addition, there is a focus on determining barriers that impede access to medical care (other than lack of health insurance) such as economic status, language barrier and lack of transportation. The data collected along with personal testimonies will hopefully shed light on the healthcare needs of this marginalized and

isolated population of southern Vermont.<sup>36</sup> Currently, there have been a handful of responses to the assessment survey questions.

Creatively, there is a podcast project being worked on in collaboration with the Bennington Radio Project. The group member leading that effort remarks that the podcast is a collection of stories – so far, four migrant workers have been interviewed (two cousins from Mexico, and another couple from Ecuador). The podcast is a translated script of the interviews, with the GANAS group member taking the lead narrator role, and four other individuals from the Bennington community reading the translations. The project leader describes the effort as, “in a sense, a bilingual podcast, Latino USA NPR style.” They are editing with music now, and the podcast will be ready for production and dissemination on social networks/internet sometime in June 2015. This type of creative project is a unique way to understand the lived experiences of the migrant community; the question categories include: life history, living in/near Bennington, community and sense of place, and future plans.<sup>37</sup> In many ways, the project helps to unearth the motivations and thoughts of the invisible community more than an analytical project such as this study does.

So far, there are two service-oriented projects, both proposed and in progress via the group. One project, based on Migrant Justice’s “Milk With Dignity” campaign, involves partnering with the Bennington Sustainable Food Project (a student-run organization) and the Bennington College dining hall, in order to become more conscientious of the origin of and conditions in which milk was made. Another project aims to establish amicable working relationships with farmers on nearby dairy farms, and create helpful cards with working Spanish translations on them.

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<sup>36</sup> Carlos A. Mendez. “Health Assessment of the Undocumented Population Near Bennington.” 25 March 2015. Draft. *Not for republication/redistribution.*

<sup>37</sup> Andrea M. Tapia. “Committee on Research with Human Participants Tutorial.” 14 April 2015. *Not for republication/redistribution.*

In many ways, it is useful to have established relationships with those whom migrant workers perceive as authority figures, such as farmers. This was seen in practice last semester, when GANAS students with mediation experience and training helped mediate a situation with a couple of workers on their farm with regard to their cable bill; and again, with tax questions. Though GANAS is certainly in no position to be giving concrete legal advice, mediating those tricky situations with whatever capacity is possible is representative of the kind of action-based initiatives that are a direct response to migrant needs, and is why the service projects have their own merit, as they address needs that the other project modes may not be able to, or at least not with the same urgency.

And, naturally, some projects have overlapped. For example, another project involves bringing financial workshops to the campus. The designer of the workshop states that undocumented individuals and migrant workers encounter barriers to establishing financial security through the banking system due to language barriers, distrust of banks, and a lack of documentation.<sup>38</sup> A workshop could be useful in explaining how to establish a bank account, have a W-2 and identify other essential terms for working, such as the Employer Identification Number (EIN). This project is service-oriented, but also analytical, as it requires a significant amount of investigation to ensure that as an organization acting within the institutional constraints of a College, we are within our legal constraints to provide any type of guidance.

### **A Note on Sustainability: Concerns and Questions**

In order to continue this project, the GANAS tutorial team has had conversations about maintaining its sustainability. These conversations, which started in the fall of 2014, have the

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<sup>38</sup> Jeanelle Ortiz Quezadas. "Financial Literacy Programs for Immigrants." April 2015. Draft. *Not to be repurposed.*

ultimate goal of allowing the GANAS tutorial to become a formalized part of the curriculum.

There are two main concerns: as iterated, the tension between literature-based analytical projects and completing volunteer service work. To address this, the team is proposing a sustainability, logistics coordinator - a paid position that serves as the liaison for GANAS to an Advisory Board (consisting of faculty and staff), and ensures that student projects proposed in the spring term are completed. Ideally, the GANAS tutorial would be a year-long course, with the fall term spent doing readings on immigration and migrant populations and introductory events to engage with the migrant community, and the spring term would be for students to complete a project of their choice, with volunteer service work embedded. One of the aspects highlighted by members of the tutorial is the need for flexibility, which is important for bringing in students of different disciplines and backgrounds.

Additionally, there will need to be more institutional support to enhance the capabilities of tutorial participants. For example, more mediation training, ethics certification from the Committee on Research with Human Participants, and potentially more exposure to ESL teaching materials. These requirements should be met with few obstacles, considering the opportunities are already available by the College, or are in the process of being more accessible to students.

### **The future: what will happen next, what can continue: recommendations**

Many of the projects here have models that, if combined, would, in this writer's opinion, make for a not only viable but sustainable model. What is most important in creating a curriculum is the combination of including both student output and the population included. In concert with the ideas forwarded by IDEO's Design Lab, the GANAS projects should be human-centered, meaning that the projects can not fully be implemented without the input of the community it is intended to reach in the design process and execution. As noted in the IDEO Field Guide,



“human-centered design offers [...] a chance to design with communities, to deeply understand the people they’re looking to serve, to dream up scores of ideas, and to create innovative new solutions rooted in people’s actual needs.”<sup>39</sup> For example, a future creative project idea proposed in the group is a map of available services, including free clinics, translating centers, churches, places to get haircuts, etc., to be made into a portable map format, for the undocumented community. Another creative project idea involved gathering artwork done by migrant farm workers and exhibiting it in some format at a Bennington College space to engage community members. Art as a way of exploring a migrant’s sense of community and place has been an underlying goal of the GANAS project.

While these ideas may prove useful in the long run, it is also important to remember that in a citizen-based, tailored design, it is also important to consult your audience at all stages in the project; however, with GANAS already forming connections with members of the Latino community, migrant or not, these intentions can be incorporated without much interference. It will be essential for future projects that there is feedback coming from the intended audience at the design, implementation, and execution levels. This may mean that not all projects, though carried out with the best intentions, will be successful, or even executed at all. It is important to remember that this effort is bigger than the people who intend to carry out its future; rather, it is only one effort in a series of others that exist to try and serve an underrepresented community.

### **Recommendations based on comparable models**

There are certain aspects of each college’s model that are interesting to look at. For example, Middlebury has a good organizational structure, and a strong web presence. It is crucial that we as an organization have an active, updated website, if only to uphold a professional

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<sup>39</sup> Field Guide to Human-Centered Design. IDEO Design Lab. 1<sup>st</sup> edition. 2015.

presence to nearby communities, open ourselves to collaborative projects in the future and, at the very least, document when things happen, (i.e. community dinners). Also, Castleton State has a documented, executed collaborative project in an academic setting that also has artwork made by migrant farm workers, which demonstrates a fusion of the creative-analytical project models.

Although Champlain College has a variety of research projects which easily fit the analytical project model, they lack the kind of informed knowledge that comes from being integrated with these communities, something which service-based projects and education can lend to our course. It is important to maintain the analytical-creative-service project model guideline as a way of establishing what can be gained from the projects and how they can best serve the purposes of the GANAS organization.

### **Conclusion: What do you really need to know?**

GANAS is a Spanish word meaning “motivation to act,” and it is in this spirit that the group was created. It is not meant to be an instructional guide on how to interact with migrant populations, but a resource for those who are – like those who helped found this initiative – curious. The state of immigration reform in the United States is unlikely to significantly advance in the next four years, and it is through an understanding that for every moment there is not a viable policy solution for these workers there is a climate of fear and uncertainty that has motivated this group to act. The process has been rooted in trial and error, success and failure – from community dinners to tutoring to candidate forums, this organization has consistently sought to immerse itself in the Bennington community to engage with Latino migrants and the individuals and organizations that are connected to them. In this sense, what needs to be known about GANAS is that it has a significant investment in the future of immigration policy in all of its facets, down to the case that is most specific to Vermont: migrant labor that is used to serve the state’s dairy industry, a large area

of economic production. Furthermore, there is a personal connection that manifests itself in the type of education-building, action-based practice that GANAS seeks to embody, rooted in a way of organizing that lends dignity to workers and recognizes them beyond what they are able to achieve as units of labor. Above all, we remember that just because a population is invisible, it does not mean they do not deserve to be seen, and that GANAS will always be there to assist in giving a voice to those who are not often heard.

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