

# THE IRAQI STUDENT PROJECT

*Establishing lasting peace is the work of education.* Maria Montessori

[Contact Info for ISP Board/Staff](#)

## Guidebook for ISP Support Groups

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#### *The Statement of Student Commitment to ISP*

Students accepted for undergraduate study in the United States under the sponsorship of the Iraqi Student Project sign a statement of commitment to accept certain responsibilities in relation to their undergraduate studies, to their support group, to ISP as their sponsor, and to the terms of the I-20 and the F-1 visa. They also agree to take part in opportunities to inform the public about Iraq and ISP.

The commitment describes these responsibilities in some detail. Please read the statement carefully. When issues arise, please contact your Support Group Coordinator or, if necessary, the Executive Director for guidance.

## Statement of Student Commitment to the Iraqi Student Project

I understand that I am coming to the United States to receive an undergraduate education that will enable me to return to Iraq—providing it is safe to do so when I complete my studies—and assist in the rebuilding of my beloved country. I therefore promise:

- to conduct myself in a way that brings honor to ISP, my family, and my country
- to fulfill my duties as a dedicated scholar by making my education my top priority
- to model serious scholarship by attending all class sessions without fail
- to maintain a GPA above the minimum required of me by the college/university
- to provide ISP a copy of my grade reports at the end of each term.

I understand that ISP has brought together a Support Group for me, people who have freely volunteered to support my academic success and general well-being while I am a student in the United States. I therefore promise:

- to establish and maintain a positive relationship with my Support Group
- to seek the help of my Support Group when I encounter problems or challenges with my education or general well-being
- to plan with my Support Group any travel during academic holidays and between academic sessions

I further understand that I will be in the United States in accordance with the terms of the I-20, a government form with which a college or university certifies to the US government (1) that I am eligible to receive an F-1 visa, (2) that I am going to be enrolled as a full-time undergraduate student pursuing a degree, (3) that I have satisfied all admission requirements and been accepted by a college or university, and (4) that I have proven that I will have sufficient financial support to study and live in the United States. I therefore promise

- to abide by I-20 rules and the rules of the college that accepts me
- to remain in the United States until my undergraduate course of study is concluded—the only exception being travel outside the United States directly related to the pursuit of my undergraduate program of studies
- to refrain from participation in any illegal activity
- to refrain from marriage during the entire time of my visa
- to seek employment during the school year and/or in the summer, as allowed by the I-20 and with the assistance of my Support Group and appropriate college offices

Finally, I agree to assist ISP efforts for other Iraqi students and keep American citizens aware of the situation in Iraq by allowing ISP and my local Support Group to publish my story and photos (without my name, if I so request). To the same end, I will accept reasonable requests to give public presentations and interviews about Iraq or ISP.

[cont.]

I have read this document of commitment and I have had the opportunity to discuss it with ISP Staff. Thus, my signature below indicates that I understand my rights and responsibilities and will honor them.

It is my clear understanding that failure to honor this commitment or any part of it will be considered grounds for termination of my association with the Iraqi Student Project.

*ISP Student*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

*ISP Staff Member*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

*[Optional:] Parent(s) or guardian(s)*

We have read this document. We understand it and support our son/daughter/ward in signing it.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: Requiring a Statement of Commitment is not unique to ISP. Indeed, it is modeled after similar statements required by colleges and universities which grant scholarships. See, for example, the following two pages—an example from DePaul University in Chicago.*

Sample Statement of Commitment to Scholarship (DePaul University, Chicago)

	<b>Office of Mission and Values DePaul University</b>
	<b>Mission and Values, Iraqi Student Project Scholarship Agreement Form 2012-2013 Academic Year</b>

I, \_\_\_\_\_ accept the opportunity to become a DePaul University Mission and Values scholarship recipient. I understand that this scholarship was created to support highly promising mission-focused students in reaching their goals. I accept the responsibility to continue excelling academically and as a leader within and outside of the DePaul University community.

I realize that as a Mission and Values Scholar (MVS) I am expected to fully commit to all aspects of the program until I graduate from DePaul University. This will enable me to develop my skills as an intelligent, articulate and well-informed leader. Furthermore, I realize that by committing to become a MVS I must:

- Maintain a cumulative AND quarterly grade point average of 3.0 or higher Initial \_\_\_\_\_  
**Important Note:** Failure to meet this requirement results in forfeiture of the award in the next academic quarter. Failure to meet this requirement for two consecutive quarters results in permanent forfeiture of the award.
- Schedule, attend and participate in all required meetings or communications, including but not limited to: Initial \_\_\_\_\_
  - o 1 monthly meeting with Scholarship Coordinator
  - o 1 quarterly Reflection Session with the Office of Mission and Values
  - o A yearly scholarship retreat
- Submit quarterly updates of the following: Initial \_\_\_\_\_
  - o Personal Contact Information
  - o Academic Tracking Form
  - o An Unofficial Transcript
- Be actively in attendance and punctual to all required Mission and Values events and/or programs Initial \_\_\_\_\_
- Notify the Office of Mission and Values Scholarship Coordinator in the event of any of the following: Initial \_\_\_\_\_
  - o Any address, phone or email change
  - o Breaks in Attendance: If for any reason you are unable to attend for a quarter. Please notify the Scholarship Coordinator as soon as possible and no later than the end of the second week of that quarter
  - o Registration Change: If you make any registration changes after the end of the second week of the quarter
  - o Concentration Change: If you change your major, concentration or college. Please notify the Scholarship Coordinator as soon as possible and no later than the end of the second week of that quarter
  - o Crisis: Any emergency situations that impact my participation as a MVS
- Respond Promptly (within 24 hours) to all Office of Mission and Values communications Initial \_\_\_\_\_
- Abide by general university rules, regulations and standards Initial \_\_\_\_\_

[cont.]

I understand that if I fail to meet the terms of this agreement it could result in the termination of my Mission and Values Scholarship for the duration of my time at DePaul University.

As a scholarship recipient, I also understand that my name and scholarship amount will be listed in the Office of Mission and Values' Annual Report.

I have read and understand the above terms and conditions of this agreement and by affixing my signature, do agree to these terms and conditions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mission & Values, Iraqi Student Project Scholar

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Office of Mission and Values Scholarship Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **The Responsibilities of the ISP Support Group**

The support group is responsible for the physical, social, emotional and financial needs of the student. Some of these young people will be entering college for the first time. Others will have begun college but could not continue because of the hardships in Iraq (or as refugees in Syria or Jordan). Most of the students will have been away from school for a year or more.

**Transition:** All ISP students will be coming from years of war and occupation and violence. Some of the students have been refugees in Syria. They will be good students and they will be skilled in English, but still the transition will be difficult. The support group comprises people bringing all the care they can to nurture each student. They are there to be friends, to recognize what is needed, and help out. It may be as simple as learning to get around town or showing how to get through a northern US winter. A household or host family in the support group may offer a home for the student if the college/university package does not include on-campus housing and/or a meal plan.

**Welcome:** The support group will

- greet the student upon arrival, usually at the airport
- introduce the student to the admissions office at the college/university
- show the student around the local community
- help the student make good use of whatever assistance the college/university provides for international students, such as orientation sessions

**Hospitality:** The support group will invite the student over for dinner in their homes, and will be helping the student stay in touch with his or her family in Iraq or Syria. As relationships develop and deepen, the support group will provide a sense of family for the student, include them in

outings to interesting places in the area, celebrate holidays and connect them with a religious community if the student desires. The constant presence of the support group will strengthen the student emotionally and enhance his or her ability to be successful in school.

**Financial Support:** In most cases the college/university will have granted a tuition waiver. In some cases on-campus housing will be provided as well, and perhaps some assistance with health insurance or a meal plan. Even before the student arrives, funds will be needed, though ISP can cover these costs and then be reimbursed by the support group. (See page 7)

The I-20 form, completed by the college in April or May, requires that each receiving community demonstrate through letters and official bank records that the support group members can provide board and room and other immediate needs such as books, transportation, and health insurance, and that individuals have the financial liquidity to support the students in the event of unforeseen needs.

**Submitting Monthly Financial Reports and Bank Statements:** Regular reporting of income and expenses is required to maintain our status as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The information you submit is confidential and is used only for reports and statements to the IRS. A [template](#) is provided for your convenience only. If you prefer to use a different program to keep accounts, such as Excel, please do so—being sure that all the information requested on the template is supplied each month—**along with a copy of your monthly bank statement.**

**Maintaining Communication with ISP:** If you have issues to address as a support group, please contact your support group [coordinator](#) or the U.S. [Executive Director](#).

### **The relationship between a support group and the Iraqi Student Project**

The ISP is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a volunteer Board of Directors and a volunteer Executive Director. A specialist in non-profit finance is provided a stipend for managing ISP accounts. A grant writer is engaged to pursue opportunities for grants from foundations sympathetic to ISP's mission.

The ISP Founders and Co-Directors in Damascus, Syria, accept qualified Iraqi students who then spend ten to twelve months in Damascus preparing for undergraduate studies in the US.

Once the student is accepted at a college/university and arrives in the US, ISP depends on the support group to sustain the student. The ISP Support Group Coordinators in the US enable the support groups to be in touch with one another so that members can pose questions and can share ideas, successes, and challenges.

## ***Getting Started***

### **Forming a Support Group**

- Begin by gathering people together. Make a list of people in your community who might be interested — think about people you know from all the circles you belong to: religious/civic groups, neighborhood, peace and justice, work, local university and college community.
- Remember that each person you invite also belongs to circles beyond your own. Encourage your invitees to invite others who would be interested. The first gathering will be about information sharing and answering questions, giving folks an opportunity to learn more and to hear about your connection to ISP's mission.
- Meet regularly with your developing support network realizing that the composition of the group will change over time—some becoming a core group and others coming and going for specific tasks.
- Develop a list of committees/tasks that volunteers in your group can focus on. You might consider the following roles and decide what will work best for your group:
  1. **Support Group Chair:** Plan support group meetings and maintain communication with student and all support group members.
  2. **Housing Coordinator:** A housing coordinator could be a person in your support network who works to make arrangements for housing for the student—either for the entire year, if the student will live off campus with a host family, or for breaks and during the summer if the student will live on campus only during the school year. In this latter case, planning for summer housing can be challenging and should begin in the early spring.

When the student lives year-round with a host family, someone from the family is normally a member of the support group.

3. **Fundraising Coordinating Committee:** To plan fundraising events and work with student in preparing for events.
4. **Bookkeeper:** Opens a bank account so that contributions are tax-deductible through national ISP's 501(c)(3). Keeps track of all donations, writes thank you notes to donors, and sends [monthly financial reports to the ISP Accountant](#).
5. **Educational Liaison to College:** The liaison will communicate with the campus International Student Advisor and other college representatives to ensure that the student is aware of available resources and opportunities. ISP students are asked to sign

a FERPA waiver (consent to have grade reports sent to sponsors). The Academic Liaison in the support group will follow through on the FERPA waiver and be regularly aware of—and in consultation with the student about—academic matters and GPA.

6. **Marketing/Communication:** Some support groups have created biannual newsletters to donors to keep them updated on how their contributions have been helpful and to seek more support. Other support groups have started their own websites. Additionally, communicating stories of student success and progress helps with marketing for ISP and your support group, in particular. Please send stories to the Executive Director.
7. **Hospitality Coordinator:** Hospitality might involve preparing or gathering orientation materials for the student (information about the town and local community) and planning support group gatherings or holiday parties to encourage a sense of community.

### Opening a Bank Account

The Iraqi Student Project is a non-profit organization 501(c)(3) and, as such, can accept tax-deductible contributions. To create a bank account, download ISP's [Non-Profit Document and Articles of Incorporation](#) and present them to bank personnel. *Do not name your account simply "The Iraqi Student Project."* We recommend making your account name specific, such as ISP-Spokane or Michiana ISP) and having at least two signatories from your support group (e.g., bookkeeper and leader) on the account. If you need a letter of further support to open the account, please contact the [Executive Director](#).

Each student can set up an individual bank account at an easily accessible site—rather than having cash on their person or in their rooms. The passport and proof of residence is required. Proof of residence can be obtained from the college (registrar); a letter will suffice. The bank will offer both ATM and Debit cards to the student.

### Determining Costs:

Before fundraising, it is important to determine costs for which your support group will be responsible. Since each student's scholarship package is different, cost varies by support group.

Typical Costs Sustained by Support Groups:

- Room and board, if applicable (check college website for specific costs)
- Transportation costs to school (if student lives off campus)
- All college fees (tech/lab fees, library fees, etc. unless covered by the scholarship)

- Books and school supplies (about \$700/semester, but can be quite variable)
- Monthly stipend for your student. If the student is able to get a campus job, providing a starter allowance is necessary. If the student is unable to work on campus, the support group would be responsible for providing a modest monthly stipend to cover expenses.
- Health Insurance (check the college website for specific costs and means of coverage)

#### Other Common Needs:

- Laptop/desktop computer
- Cell Phone monthly service (some support groups have found it less expensive to add the student to an existing family plan)

*PLEASE NOTE: If students wish to travel to visit relatives or friends during breaks and vacations, the support group is not responsible for the expenses incurred. However, if program travel (e.g. an official ISP reunion) is planned, the support group could help with finances if funds are available.*

#### **Fundraising Ideas:**

##### NEWSLETTERS

- Information for the support group as well as the community/donors and may be used, with the student's help, as a way to educate potential supporter about the recent history and current situation in Iraq—part of ISP's reason for being.
- Can be made into more of a publication utilizing stories and photographs

##### FUNDRAISING LETTER

- Compile a list of names, businesses, other organizations/ religious institutions that have participated or may be interested in participating
- Send out a plea letter or engage in other direct mail fundraising campaigns to those who would be receptive to ISP mission and message, i.e., civic-minded people, churches, people active in community service, etc.

##### PRESENTATIONS

- Identify organizations where you can make presentations about ISP with a direct message on how they can be of help. Student participation in these presentations is most powerful:
  - Local churches/mosques/synagogues
  - Local radio stations
  - Rotary Clubs
  - Kiwanis Clubs
  - University student groups
  - House parties

## FLYERS, POSTERS, BROCHURES

- Using stories and photos of the student is very appealing
- Create a Facebook Group/Website (see ISP National's [Facebook](#))

## BUSINESS PARTNERS

- Try to locate local businesses/business owners who would like to be partners with ISP by providing matching gifts or help with advertising costs, events, or postage/printing for mailings

## HOST A BIG EVENT

- Fundraising dinner at local church/organization
- A showcase of student artwork/music with food
- Coffee Shop/Poetry Reading
- Golf tournament/ 5K race

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**[Information about Visas](#) (Links to ISP Website: <http://www.iragistudentproject.org>)**

*It is important for all ISP support groups and students to be aware of the following guidelines and policies. If you have any questions or concerns related to these documents, please contact your support group coordinator or the ISP Executive Director. [Contact Info for ISP Board/Staff](#)*

**[ISP Graduates: Options & Opportunities](#)**

**[New Policy on Operation of Motor Vehicles by ISP Students](#)**

**[Guidelines for Work Permits: F-1 Students](#)**

**[Student Reunion Guidelines](#)**

**[Resettlement Policy](#)**

**[ISP Policy on Seeking Asylum](#)**

**[Internship Search](#)**

***Please visit the ISP Website frequently for other helpful links, news, and updates.***

# THE IRAQI STUDENT PROJECT

*Establishing lasting peace is the work of education.* Maria Montessori

**Heartland ISP**  
2045 Corazon Ave  
Warrenton, MO 64308

Sunday, October 21, 2012

Matt & Emily Wunderkin  
4325 High Street  
Lofften, MA 01938

Dear Matt & Emily,

On behalf of our students Nadia and Mohammed, **Heartland ISP** would like to thank you for your donation of \$300.00. Your goodness helps us continue our work of helping war-displaced Iraqi students study at colleges and universities across the United States. Please keep this written acknowledgment of your donation for your tax records. It attests that no goods or services were exchanged in connection with your donation.

ISP has now brought 61 young Iraqi men and women to the US from countries where they were forced to seek refuge and were not able to continue their education. Forty-three colleges and universities have partnered with ISP by offering tuition waivers, including Walshman University here in Warrenton.

None of this good work would be possible without generous financial support from people like you. Together we will prove the truth in our motto: *“Establishing lasting peace is the work of education.”*

The need to work for justice and peace never diminishes. Please help us spread the word about Heartland ISP—on Facebook or Twitter, by email or snail mail. Check out [www.heartlandisp.org](http://www.heartlandisp.org) There’s a great article on the website about Nadia and Muhammed and the warm welcome they have received here.

Warm and grateful best wishes,

*Linda Brookston*

Linda Brookston  
Support Group Secretary: **Heartland ISP**  
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