

Guidelines for ISP Student Reunions

The ISP Board of Directors strongly supports reunions of ISP students as a way of building and maintaining positive and supportive relationships, providing an opportunity for constructive and enjoyable plenary sessions, workshops, and recreational activities. If a local ISP support group wishes to host a reunion of ISP students from around the country, the Board of Directors advises that the following guidelines be followed.

1. Invitations to a proposed reunion should be issued to the leader of each support group—rather than directly to the student(s). Ultimately, it will depend on the resources and guidance of each support group whether or not the student(s) they support will be able to attend a reunion. The sponsor(s) of a reunion may consider inviting a representative from the student(s) support group as well—as a way of expressing and fostering solidarity among ISP personnel.
2. The wording of an invitation to a student reunion must make it clear that the gathering is sponsored by a specific support group (or specific support groups), not by the ISP Board of Directors, and is offered to those students who are free of commitments or restraints that would make it impossible or inadvisable for them to attend. Likewise, it should not be presumed that support groups are obligated in any way to provide resources enabling their student(s) to attend a reunion.
3. Support groups of those invited (and the invitees themselves) must realize that attendance at reunions may not take precedence over commitments ISP students have made to their academic goals, their employment, or other activities directly related to their education.
4. Whether the support group wishes to invite former ISP students (those who have resettled in the USA) to attend a reunion is their decision, based on their judgment of the circumstances, numbers they can accommodate, and the activities planned for the reunion—some of which may be appropriate only for current ISP students. In any case, it should be made clear that only the sponsoring support group(s) may extend invitations beyond current ISP personnel (students and active support group members).
5. Support groups who sponsor reunions should remember that, inevitably, some ISP students will be unable to attend reunions, which will understandably cause them disappointment, and may place support groups with fewer resources in the uncomfortable position of having to deny their student(s) an experience they very much want. One partial solution would be to plan reunions as far in advance as possible, thus providing support groups more time to accrue the resources necessary for their student(s) to attend. Another consideration would be to sponsor regional rather than national reunions—thus diminishing the costs of travel and increasing the potential for more manageable (and perhaps frequent) gatherings.
6. Above all, ISP student reunions should be orchestrated carefully to embrace the larger goals of The Iraqi Student Project. Planned activities should, of course, be constructive and encouraging while not eliminating the opportunity for frank discussion of challenges faced by students as well as by support group members. Of their very nature, ISP reunions promote bonding among all participants by emphasizing the nobility of ISP's ultimate goal: to prepare Iraqi students for becoming influential participants in the rebuilding of their beloved country.

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