



# **The DNA of ISFM**

**A Ministry of Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, USA**

**Developed by Jerry Gibson**



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Produced by Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, USA,  
a ministry of Assemblies of God U.S. Missions

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1445 North Boonville Avenue  
Springfield, Missouri 65802

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# Acknowledgement

There are certain moments when you realize the work you do has value only because of the people who have gone before you. The adage which proclaims, “We are all standing on the shoulders of great men who have come before us” became more than a slogan to me the day I sat down with David Schaumburg in October of 2006.

As I sat and listened to the founder of International Student Friendship Ministries (ISFM), I quickly realized much of the framework of what we have been doing in Chi Alpha for so many years was articulated by David back in 1981 as part of his graduate studies. I also realized in that moment, we in Chi Alpha have been deeply blessed to have such a man who is so passionate about his calling to love and serve international students, that his passion has left its DNA in all of us. David, we are forever grateful for your trailblazing contribution to Chi Alpha and ISFM.

I am deeply grateful for the contribution of David Schaumburg’s “Manual for Ministry to Internationals.” From his original work I have edited and condensed much of the section entitled “*The Framework for International Student Friendship Ministry: The 5 ‘Cs’*.” A vital part of Chi Alpha is the recognition of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Thus, I have taken the liberty to add a 6th ‘C,’ Connection with the Holy Spirit.”

I thank the former directors of ISFM, Dr. Samuel Mathia, who served from 1989-1995 and Dr. Barry Chole, who served from 1997- 2002. The development of the ministry in these years has been the steady work of these servants who have pounded out practice on the anvil of biblical thought.

I wish to thank our ISFM work team for the sacrificial support you have shown to this ministry and to me, your “Johnny-come-lately” leader. You have openly accepted, trained and encouraged me these past couple of years, as we have dreamed together of seeing the nations touched with the love of Christ.

I am especially grateful to my partner in life and ministry, my wife Gwen, my sounding board and most trusted confidant. Thank you for your investment of love and consistency that has modeled to me true service and commitment these 28 years.

Finally, all glory and honor and thanks go to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who is the master of crossing culture, modeling servanthood and choosing to love and serve me, by giving life eternal.

# Introduction

What's your name? Where are you from? What are you studying? These are the questions we ask early on in becoming acquainted with a new friend. These types of inquiries aid us in understanding a person and connecting them in some way with our world. These questions also betray our universal desire to be connected to a larger whole. Being part of a family, a nation or a group of people, is important for a sense of history and identity.

One manifestation of this desire is the rise of genealogical DNA testing in recent years. People will send in DNA samples (chewed gum or cheek swabs) to companies who will match their DNA to any number of ethnicities or regional groups. Indeed, DNA testing has become so trendy some people believe a person can determine if they are part of the 10 lost tribes of Israel through such tests.<sup>1</sup>

It is true: DNA, or deoxyribonucleic acid, is responsible for the genetic propagation of most inherited traits. It is the information that determines what color of hair we will have, to what potential diseases we might contract. It is a powerful influence in the course of our lives.

In ministry, there is also a spiritual and social imprint that occurs, in turn influencing what ministry looks like and how it will function. In this booklet, I would like to propose a blueprint of the essential information, the core elements, or DNA of International Student Friendship Ministry in a Chi Alpha group (be it a church based, student led or traditional model of ministry). We may not all look exactly the same (do you look just like your brother or sister?), but we can share the same core beliefs and foundational reasons for what we do and desire to accomplish.

I understand this booklet is just information. It does not become alive and part of us until it becomes our practice and passion. Yet it is a place to begin. I challenge you to consider these elements and ask yourself how you might begin to implement them into your student ministry. In doing so, we

will be individuals who find connection with the whole. We will become connected together as a movement.

## The Shared Elements of ISFM Vision



*We see every Chi Alpha ministry loving and serving international students, proclaiming Christ and discipling the nations.*

Virtually every campus in America today has at least a few international students. In the years following the incidents of 9/11 there was a decline in international student enrollment in the United States. However, this trend has recently reversed and numbers are, for the first time, surpassing the highs of 2000.<sup>2</sup> Universities which once simply waited for international students to apply are now actively recruiting the best and brightest from around the world.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the arrival of new friends on your campus is more than likely on the rise!

God has called you to ministry among the students of your campus and this means every student, even those from other countries. We are committed to loving and serving these students and to sharing Christ with them in word and in our life style. As God opens up those opportunities we will make a place for them in our discipleship process. This will prepare them for a life of kingdom effectiveness wherever God may take and direct them.

### **The core competencies of every Chi Alpha ministry when it comes to international students on campus**

1. Every ministry is continually taking steps to inform themselves of the international community on their campus. Action almost always flows from awareness. Making ourselves aware of the internationals' life here is a simple and intentional step that every campus ministry should take. Below is a list to begin investigating.
  - A. The International Student Services Office and its staff
  - B. The general demographics of the international student population

- C. Where internationals live, gather, study, etc.
  - D. What ministries are already focused in reaching out to internationals
  - E. What are some of the specific programs being offered by the university
  - F. What might be some of the specific felt needs and challenges of internationals on your campus
2. Every Ministry is **intentional** about their ministry to internationals. The commitment to being intentional begins with asking, “What are we currently doing in our ministry that, with just a little bit of thought, we could include international students?” Let me just say, I believe in divine appointments; I believe in being led by the Spirit; I believe in God supernaturally putting opportunities in front of us; and I also believe in planning and strategy. When it comes to reaching out to internationals let’s not just wait for them to “show up.” Let’s consider ways we can be purposeful in how we reach out to them. Here are three models of what this might look like.
- A. **Informal and Intentional:** This is the entry level model of a student-led group on campus or for a church-based group who wants to begin to have a cross-cultural impact—“One More Friend.” Every person in the ministry becomes intentional about forming a cross-cultural friendship. Contact points could be in your class room, cafeteria, dorms, library, etc. Volunteering through the International Student Services Office in campus-sponsored programs is also a good idea. Think: What do I like to do with my friends? How can I include my new friend in my life?
  - B. **Formal and Intentional:** This can be for the Chi Alpha ministry that really wants to develop a structured ministry that focuses on the specific needs of international students. A variety of service opportunities present themselves to you by working through the International Student Services Office.

Conversation partners, conversation clubs, services for proof-reading papers, meeting transportation needs, and community orientations are just some ideas. It might be a good idea to add a special Bible study for international students along with excursions. Additionally, you may consider developing an International Student Friendship Partners Program, matching international students with church families in the area for monthly activities.

- C. **Integrated and Intentional:** Using the best of both program ideas, structured ministry and an informal relational approach is what is intended here. This model adds the dynamic of the informal friendship approach with specialized ministry just for international students. Large group meetings are a great place to mix your students. When possible, how about including some of your internationals into the worship team, singing some choruses in other languages, hanging national flags in the meeting area? Internationals want to be included and a part of what Americans are doing. Special venues for international students such as investigative Bible studies, cultural enrichment events (Discover America) and “International Student Talk Back” can provide “safe places” for internationals to explore the deeper questions they may be experiencing, concerning culture and faith, while at the same time not being isolated from the mainstream activities.
3. Every ministry that desires to have a Kingdom view of international students will be **inter-relational**. By using the term inter-relational we mean we are committed to being relational bridge-builders for our international friends. This occurs when they leave our ministry and transition to the work place here, return home, or transfer to another university to continue with educational goals. We are willing to take the time to help connect our friends with others in the body of Christ whether it is here in the United States or on the other side of the world.

This inter-relational connection can begin with simply asking your international students at the end of the semester what their plans are for the upcoming semester. Will they be returning home? Will they continue their studies or will they be moving to another school? If they are returning home, we should take steps to help them consider how they might need to prepare for the “re-entry” back to their home culture. If they have become believers, we have the obligation to work with them to build some kind of relational connection with the established body of Christ in their home city. As an Assemblies of God ministry and even greater body of Christ, we should not underestimate the incredible network of churches we have around the world. If you personally know of a missionary working in the student’s country, contact them and ask to see how you could facilitate an introduction and pass on the friendship. If you don’t know anyone, you can contact the national office of Chi Alpha/ISFM and ask for assistance in building this important relational bridge.

One word of caution is in order here. In most cases this connection process is straight forward and simple. However, in some situations where the security of our missionaries and the national church is an issue, we ask that you do not give names of our missionary personnel directly to the international student. In these countries it is also important that you do not attempt to contact missionaries or national church leaders directly. You can pass the contact information along to the national office of Chi Alpha/ISFM and it will be followed up with the proper security protocols. The countries in which this caution currently applies to would be China, Sudan, Cuba and Middle Eastern countries. If you have questions, be sure to check first. Obviously, if your student is moving to another part of the United States, we can assist them by making introductions and connecting them through both our internal Chi Alpha network and Assemblies of God churches and with external ministries who are focused on international student ministry in that area. We can do so much more for our students than just having an end of the year party and wishing them a great future. We can be a bridge-builder to a fruitful ministry.