



Mission Grant Report Form

Iowa District West

Grant recipients are asked to complete and submit the report form within one month of the completion of the effort or, if a continuing ministry, by January 31 of the following year in which the grant is received. Please submit any pictures, as well, that would help to share the story with other congregations to encourage them in their ministry.

1. Please provide a brief overview of the effort.

Our vision was to involve two American ISU students more intentionally in the ministry and provide some financial assistance in-exchange for their time which could otherwise be spent working a part-time job. The grant provided the finances, and both students we asked agreed to be ISM assistants by serving about 10 hours per week of their time in the ministry in-exchange for scholarships at the end.

Both of our American students were able to start new programs within our ministry and build strong relationships with internationals. One of them focused on Hispanic outreach and the other focused on the new group of undergraduates now coming to Ames. The ISM assistants also met with the ISM director on a weekly basis to focus on their own spiritual growth, share struggles and praises, ask questions and pray together.

2. What goals were established for this effort; that is, what did you hope to accomplish?

Our goal was to provide the students with challenges and opportunities to recognize and use both their spiritual and natural gifts to serve, love and witness to others. We hoped it would both strengthen the faith and witness of the students and also create more intentional outreach to internationals by giving each student a group and specific individuals to focus on.

3. Did you achieve your goals? If not, what do you think were some of the contributing factors?

The two students definitely grew in their faith and witness, and it was really neat to be a part of that. They grew in different ways, but I saw their quiet times slowly become an important part of their daily lives. It was fun to hear about the things they were reading, learning and digesting while being able to pray with and for them about how to apply it. They are also continuing to work on memorizing verses in the Bible about God's heart for the world so they can share that with others.

Many internationals have also greatly benefited from it because the students have the time and are focused on the relationships whereas I, as the director, cannot possibly do that with every international. There are two women who contact the one student almost every day about many things going on in their lives so she can pray with and for them, and the other student has developed great friendships with a group of Chinese undergraduate guys because of the Friday fellowship group. There have definitely been challenges because relationships take time and effort, and cross-cultural communication in the midst of that is difficult, but I can name many internationals who have been personally touched by the students in ways I couldn't have ministered to them, and the students have been equally impacted by them.

4. Is there anything you would do differently if you were to undertake this effort again?
We probably wouldn't choose a graduate student again in the future simply because they don't have near the time or availability an undergraduate has. It has been challenging to work out schedules at times with the one who is a graduate.

5. What lessons were learned through this effort?

As a director, I learned a ton about leadership and how to let go of micro-managing projects and people. There was one activity that was not getting planned the way I would do it and the details were slipping through. My instinct was to tie up all the loose ends and not let the assistants fail, yet I knew that wouldn't help them. So when they came to me to see if I would do exactly that, I told them it was their project, and I wanted to see them fully own it. They stepped up, and the activity turned out to be a wonderful one which was really neat to see.

I also learned how to be a better encourager by being available to the assistants for all aspects of life – when a former teacher died, when they did well on a stressful paper, when grading papers was frustrating and time-consuming, in the midst of family struggles, when a serious relationship for one of them ended, etc. I learned that coming alongside others in a personal way to help them grow in their faith takes a lot of prayer, a lot of grace (both for them and for me), a lot of accountability check-ins (mostly via text messages) and a lot of willingness to be open to God's leading. So many times we'd meet for discipleship time, and I'd end up scraping my original plan of things to work on together because of something that came up in their life that was more applicable.

For the students, I know they learned a lot about communicating with others, organizing volunteers, leading their peers, modeling their faith in daily life, building relationships, praying, continuing to invite people to Bible study and answering tough questions about God and His Word. One of the students started a Friday fellowship Bible group and was really discouraged when people

weren't coming at first. We went back to truth and spent a lot of time talking and praying about how God brings the willing hearts, but our job is to keep inviting, and I know that struggle the first month or so greatly impacted him. He realized the importance of prayer over human effort in ministry, and he also learned a lot about the challenges of starting something new.

6. What suggestions would you give to a congregation considering a similar effort?

Pray. Pray for God's wisdom in who to invest in, for the individuals as holistic people (not just co-workers), for God's protection, for the relationships established, for Godly wisdom in those relationships, for everything.

Be flexible and patient – you're working 100% with people, and you can't strategize or rationalize things away. No plan ever goes as planned, but that's the beauty of it.

Focus on challenging and encouraging them in their daily walk with the Lord, and trust He is the one actually growing them and making disciples. I had to remind myself of this every day. I'd often give them mini assignments like asking them what verse stuck out to them in a passage we read together and tell them to go home and memorize it for the next week. And I'd keep it on their "assignment" list until it got done. Or one would want to work on praying out-loud in front of groups without feeling insecure about it, so I'd tell them to pray with two different individuals in the course of the week and keep it on the list until it got done. Listening to a sermon, making an answered prayer inventory list, opening their Bible for a certain amount of time every day, studying the Bible with new tools – all were examples of "assignments" I'd give them, and it was always based off things they were learning about, struck or challenged by or desired to grow in but needed accountability.

Lastly, I know a lot of congregations don't have the population we do (college students and internationals), but I know every church has high school youth. See if there might be an opportunity for a high school youth to serve in this way – organizing the Christmas program, teaching younger children, being a summer "intern" and leading summer Sunday School, organizing service projects, etc. It's amazing how much my high school youth grow when given some responsibility and leadership along with someone's confidence that they can do a great job. More than anything, their faith grows leaps and bounds when they stop being the learner and start being the teacher.

7. Contact person

Name: ___Hannah McCulloh (ISM Director)_____

E-mail: ___ism.mlchurch@gmail.com___ Phone: ___515.460.5110_____

Congregation: ____Memorial Lutheran Church (Ames, Iowa)_____