

ISM MODELS 102: SELECTING A MODEL FOR PLANTING, TRANSITIONING and BUILDING

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INTRODUCTION

This document is an addendum to the [Introduction to International Student Ministry \(ISM\) Models in InterVarsity](#) paper. Its purpose is to assist staff and staff directors in understanding the various models and to discern which strategies may be appropriate for their setting in planting, transitioning, and building ISM.

All of the models share these goals:

- **Welcome** internationals into a campus community
- **Introduce** internationals to Jesus with cultural sensitivity
- **Disciple** internationals to follow Jesus, to lead, and to serve God
- **Send** internationals as world changers

International fellowships fall into three main models: International Witnessing Communities (IWC), Integrated, or Collaborative Chapters. Their actual form may be a “hybrid” of these that may change over time. Staff need to evaluate periodically which models and their corresponding strategies are most effective.

DESCRIPTION OF MINISTRY MODELS

The following examples and strategies for ISM apply to both undergraduate and GFM chapters and those with a mixture of undergraduate and graduate students.

1. The International Witnessing Community (IWC)

International Witnessing Communities are student-led fellowships with a focus on reaching and equipping internationals. These groups predominantly consist of and are led by internationals, can have a mix of graduates and undergraduates, and often partner with American volunteers who play a key role in the areas of hospitality and practical adjustment helps.

IWC's are often found on campuses with large longer-term international student populations as opposed to short term (language or exchange) students.

IWC's are attractive to internationals who may not be comfortable with Americans due to cultural differences, language proficiency, and/or negative impressions. IWC's provide a good environment for internationals to process experiences, share struggles, express their individual cultures, and take a break from the pressures of living in American culture.

IWC's provide a good environment for strong ownership and missional leadership for internationals who may feel intimidated by Americans.

One key challenge in IWC's is to build a core leadership team of internationals for these reasons: (1) the high non-Christian to Christian ratio, (2) the high turnover rate, and (3) the limited availability of internationals due to language barriers, academic pressure (many are sponsored by the government), and demands of ethnic churches on international Christians.

As a result, IWC's take longer to plant or to build. We need to be patient as we balance staff/volunteer leadership with the development of international student leaders.

2. The Integrated Model

In integrated chapters internationals and Americans partner to form one witnessing community with shared leadership, responsibilities, and vision. Internationals and Americans learn with and from one

another as they seek to transform and renew the whole campus community. Unique to this model, everyone is trained side-by-side for cross-cultural relationships and ministry in an international context. This is especially helpful in preparing American students for the global marketplace, academia, and ministry.

This model is effective on campuses with (1) a high proportion of short-term internationals, (2) lower numbers or ratio of internationals to Americans, and/or (3) internationals who desire interactions with Americans and vice versa, or who are highly assimilated.

Staff best suited for integrated chapters have passion and experience reaching and mobilizing both internationals and Americans. Staff/volunteer teams should be well-trained and capable of navigating both the international and American worlds. The integrated model is often chosen when (1) fewer staff/volunteers are available for a separate ISM chapter, (2) staff are natural collaborators and prefer a larger staff team, or (3) the chapter plant of an IWC is struggling to get off the ground.

There are two unique challenges with this model: (1) balancing power so that no single group dominates; Americans tend to assume leadership and influence decisions leaving some internationals little room to lead; internationals need to be invited and empowered to serve and lead in order to ensure true partnership, and (2) the needs of Americans and internationals are different; staff must ensure the needs of both are met.

3. The Collaborative Model

The Collaborative Model is a ministry where InterVarsity Staff and volunteers partner with other ministries to form a unified and distinct entity. This new partnership is formed gradually as resources are pooled and larger, complex staff/volunteer teams are formed.

This model is suited for a campus or a city where only limited resources are available and where multiple organizations have a strong desire to partner. It requires staff with the vision and ability to communicate and build trust among different ministries. This is a long-term commitment where each organization must let go of some control and distinctives to accomplish what each ministry cannot do independently.

The benefits outweigh the costs. Each group does what it does best and large ministry initiatives are more possible. In addition, the unity in the Body is powerfully demonstrated and trust with the international student office is strengthened.

One key challenge in collaborative chapters is that they require a longer term, more deliberate plan. Large, complex staff/volunteer teams also require: (1) more time and care for significant decisions, (2) additional time and discernment to identify and train staff and volunteers, and (3) extra attention to provide space for student leadership development.

CHAPTER CASE STUDIES

Areas addressed:

- **Structure and Strategies** (weekly rhythms, leadership structure, outreach events and strategies etc)
- **Strengths and “Ingredients” for Success** (campus setting, staff gifts, and personalities that make particular models successful)
- **Ministry Growth**

Chapters:

Potsdam - Clarkson - Integrated Chapter (Paul Holt)

- Structure & Strategies:
 - Prayer - Intensive and extensive prayer for outreach, conversions, and discipleship growth.
 - LG's (large groups) with worship, missional teaching and SG (small group) discussions designed to help internationals process and contribute. Singing, Scripture and prayer in different languages.
 - Invitational Leadership - intentional to create space and invite internationals early and often. President, SG, LG, NSO and outreach coordinator. Also SG leaders and outreach teams.
 - Hospitality, NSO and outreach strategy - always consider how to reach and welcome internationals - meals, culture nights, cooking parties, English conversation partners, and host families. Promotion by personal invitations, flyers, postcards, Facebook, and website.
 - SG's are the engine for outreach and discipleship. Use non-English speaking SG's to focus outreach. Invite the most missional Americans with strong cross-cultural skills and experience into English speaking international focused SG's.
- Strengths and "Ingredients" for Success:
 - Adaptable model to reach internationals with existing chapter and its structures.
 - Internationals want American friends and to learn.
 - Vision for integration must be shared and owned by each generation of students.
 - Americans learn God's global heart and cross cultural skills for now and future ministry.
 - Shared insights and perspectives give chapter best foundation for growth.
 - Staff need to focus on discipleship (especially new believers) and leadership development.
- Growth:
 - Incredible number and level of conversions through the years.
 - Best growth comes from those who initiate, take risks, and are actively mentored.
 - Evangelism, prayer, and missional lifestyle are modeled by internationals. This strengthens the overall chapter's effectiveness as a witnessing community.
 - Chapter health, conversions, and the percentage of internationals have grown since embracing an integrated ISM model (internationals range from 1/5 to 1/3 of the chapter).

University of Nevada, Las Vegas - Integrated Chapter (Mandy Butler, Eva Liu Glick)

- Structure & Strategies:
 - Integrated and missional community structures in SG's, which means, during LGs, students meet in on-going "missional community groups" after worship and other joint activities, with ISM being one of the missional communities.
 - A few internationals are invited to be on worship and/or large group teams.
 - Worship and prayer in different languages and led by internationals; potlucks with food from each person's home country.
 - Strategically mixing up Americans and internationals on car rides.
 - Internationals and American together at a week of Mark (Chapter) Camp.
 - Having a separate table at NSO to help internationals feel more comfortable.
 - Inviting Americans with strong cross-cultural skills or who have recently returned from Global Projects.
 - A lot of prayer!
- Strengths and "Ingredients" for Success:
 - Lack leadership or staff for two separate chapters.
 - Can be easily added onto existing backbone and structure.
 - Internationals wanted American friends.
 - Americans learn about a global God and grow in cross-cultural skills and ethnic identity.

- Becoming one chapter gives international group momentum to grow.
- Freed up staff to help internationals with specific issues such as reentry.
- Growth:
 - In the beginning of the chapter's international outreach, international students were meeting separately (though not as an official chapter). Both the overall population and the percentage of internationals have grown under the new structure (1/3 of the 80 are internationals).

North Dakota State University - Integrated, Collaborative (Collette Michal, Paul Holt)

- Structures & Strategies:
 - International and American student-led (leadership team, small group leaders, worship team, hospitality team, etc.).
 - Involvement of missional students (international & American) in friendship building, hospitality, small group leading, event planning, etc.
 - Weekly Equip & Empower meetings where missional students are trained in cross-cultural ministry skills and encouraged as a ministering community.
 - Regular Praise & Prayer nights (twice a month) where believers gather to pray for the ministry and worship together. The current worship leader is international. Songs are sung in other languages and students are encouraged to pray in their heart language.
 - Weekly Friday night Friendship/Outreach meal where internationals are invited into a house they quickly come to consider their "home away from home" - The Pink House. On Friday nights students are given a free meal and given a place to "hang out" and meet others from all over the world. There is no "program". Rather, missional students strive to intentionally build relationships of trust and help others to do the same. The house is filled with games (from American and world cultures) and students help themselves to these and initiate activities throughout the evening. Those who attend range from freshmen to Phd students and their families (average of 120 a week).
 - Friday night meals are prepared by a variety of different groups: international students from a particular country, church volunteers, small groups from other campus groups (Christian & non-Christian). Many of the meals prepared are international.
 - Tea Talk is provided weekly for students who want to practice their conversational English with native speakers and who want to learn about other cultures. Both American and international students take on the role of experts as they share about their traditions and values.
 - Leaders and potential leaders are encouraged to attend Chapter Focus Week to receive small group leader training. Chapter Staff process the training with students and add additional insights and tips particular to ISM.
 - Traditions are established that students look forward to each year (Fall Retreat, Fall trip to Itasca State Park, Christmas Banquet, and Spring Break).
 - Volunteers are involved in all aspects of the ministry to varying degrees (churches from throughout the community have been involved in preparing & serving meals and providing friendship families for internationals). Some volunteers regularly attend Friday nights to develop friendships with graduate students and their families. A small group of professionals hosts a Bible Study for graduate students and their families.
- Strengths and "Ingredients" for Success:
 - Enough staff or volunteer help to coordinate meals, volunteers, & friendship families. This involves recruitment, training and ongoing follow-up.
 - American & international missional students committed to living out the vision/purposes of the ministry and calling others into it.

- Everyone involved grows in their appreciation and understanding of other cultures. Walls are broken down between people groups who would normally never get to know one another.
- Ministering students and volunteers are developed as cross-cultural disciples equipped to love those who are different from themselves. The local church is mobilized and motivated to do missions at home!
- Successfully meeting the needs of internationals for “home” and “community” has an amazing result. They (Christian and non-Christian) become your best recruits.
- InterVarsity’s witness on campus becomes one of believers actively loving and respecting international students and helping to foster cross-cultural understanding.
- Integrity! Trust! We offer what we say we are going to offer. No tricks or gimmicks. If we say we are having a friendship meal - we have a friendship meal. If we say we are offering a Bible study - we do Bible study. If an event will include Bible content we clearly make that known ahead of time. As a result, students feel safe. And God opens the door for spiritual discussions. We do not force students into anything.
- Growth:
 - An American chapter transitioned into an integrated chapter as they recognized what God was doing in annually bringing international believers and a few of their friends to the group.
 - The Pink House provided a safe place for international students and believers to get to know each other. Average attendance quickly grew to 120+ (at times hitting 140). And international students spread the word about the house. Internationals from some countries heard about it before they even hit campus.
 - This year’s leadership team is made up of 2 Americans and 2 internationals.
 - More and more spiritual conversations are taking place. Friendships are being built that are genuine and continue beyond Friday nights. Seekers are meeting with individuals or joining small groups to have their questions answered.

University of Houston, Main Campus - IWC (Jovin Adjetey, Ron Riesinger)

- Structure & Strategies:
 - International student-led (1-2 Americans in group but all international leaders).
 - Weekly large group meeting with worship and small groups (Bible study, speaker, or movie discussions).
 - Traditional chapter structure with president, Bible study, prayer, special project, and outreach coordinators; NSO, proxe stations; students also serve as small group leaders (separate from the leadership team).
 - Outreach strategy: culture nights, flyers, postcards, Facebook page, welcome night (most effective), coffee house, culture night, a dumpling party, and a tea house
- Strengths and “Ingredients” for Success:
 - No staff for seven years! Alumni helped during the interim with one of these eventually becoming the staff.
 - Good relationship with the international student office.
 - Strong desire for international leadership.
- Growth:
 - Structure has allowed for steady growth of the chapter; seek out Christian internationals and challenge them to grow.
 - Students are encouraged to serve in various activities to help them get excited and feel a part of the fellowship; people who have grown and matured the most are those that have been discipled and those that have served in some capacity (outside their comfort

- zone).
- Volunteers disciple and help where needed and provide more opportunities for students to serve with greater confidence.

University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill - IWC, collaborative (Jim Herman, Ron Riesinger)

- Structure & Strategies:
 - Has two full partners now, Bridges and IVCF, with a third beginning to work with them; numerous local churches involved.
 - Undergraduates recruited as workers for the ministry: ~90% grads
 - Coffee House every other week with local churches supplying meals.
 - Working on development of international student leaders.
 - Seeker and discipleship Bible studies during the week.
- Strengths and “Ingredients” for Success:
 - Staff worker was the only full-time ISM worker on large campus; cautious international student office; felt need to work together.
 - Strong desire for unity, friendships with other worker, giftedness (used Strengths Finder tool).
 - Wide variety of events.
- Growth:
 - Continuous growth; more conversions; more churches doing international student work.

References & Resources:

ISM MODELS 101: AN OVERVIEW

Chapter Planting Appendix for ISM

<http://www.intervarsity.org/mx/item/7171/>

International Witnessing Communities, An Introduction

<http://www.intervarsity.org/ism/article/1727/>