

InterVarsity ISM Conference Models

(Summary in her own words by Amy Brewster from her own thoughts, from conversations with Lisa Espineli Chinn and Katie Rawson and through the KY conference paper)

Fall Conference Model (based on Kentucky Area Conference)

Primary Goals:

- Community Building: The need for friendship and a family away from home is vital for Internationals. This conference solidifies new relationships and builds well into the small group structures back at school.
- Drawing Closer to Jesus: Jesus is better explained, people have the chance to witness Christians up close and see who we really are, and students are challenged to follow Christ and given significant time to consider the invitation.
- Relevant Teaching: A vital goal is to have speakers who understand how to communicate with internationals and has experience in doing so. They also need to understand the issues internationals face.
- International Involvement: The conference is structured so that international students have a chance to lead in some way.

Complementing Event:

- Unknown, but Spring Break opportunities offer unique chances to see faith lived out in service while learning about Jesus and His redeeming nature.

Spring Conference Model (based on North Carolina Area Conference)

Primary Goals:

- Harvest Event: After having a 1 ½ semesters of relationship building, this is a chance to have a weekend to really consider following Jesus including a clear gospel presentation and invitation.
- Leadership Development/Empowerment Event: Christian International Students are highly encouraged to take a leadership role at this event. They are given very detailed guides to adequately prepare them to give a testimony or lead a small group discussion. They are also linked with more experienced leaders. Many times they then feel more confident to have a regular leadership role in the chapter the following summer or fall.
- Visibly show that Christianity is not a Western Religion: All visible roles are filled by foreign-born Christian Internationals (students or community members invited to participate) as much as possible. These include main speaker, seminar leaders, small group leaders, Emcee, Worship leaders and those who give testimonies.

Complementing Event:

- Fall Trip for Community Building where non-Christians feel very welcome to attend. Many times these non-Christians hang around the rest of the year.

- The trips are to interesting locations, but theirs tend to be connected to where they know people who could offer a home for everyone to stay.
- This may operate campus-by-campus or done together if that makes sense

International Student Conference Tips from other Successful Conference Directors (KY and NC conferences)

Food Considerations:

- Have rice offered at every meal
- If bacon is served, ensure that it is turkey bacon (Muslim consideration)
- On registration form, ask for students to mark if they can't eat any certain foods or are vegetarians
- Consider bringing soy sauce and hot sauce for those who desire more flavor ☺
- Work with camps that will accommodate our food restrictions and requests

Camp/Conference Centers Advice

- Being in the country has a great appeal in our region...and it is new to internationals
- Hotels are not cost-effective and social enough
- Offer hiking, but consider other activities, whether outdoors (hayride, horseback riding, zip line, canoeing, rock wall climbing, ropes course, etc.) or indoor (karaoke, line dancing, etc.) as money or staffing permits. Kentucky has the cost of one "extra" activity included in the price of the conference and any others the students choose to do they pay for themselves.
- Be sure to have a place that can accommodate families should they want to come (childcare is not a required service and can be done by the families themselves if staff and volunteers can't offer it)
- **Always brings lots of extra bedding and towels!!!**
- Try to limit travel time for all students to 2-3 hours so that students can work a full day on Friday and still get some work done on Sunday late afternoon/night. Internationals are very studious and won't come if it cuts out their work.
- Try to find a center that will be flexible with numbers. Many students sign up last minute so we need to be able to plan for that to happen.
- Don't pick anything too rustic. Heat is a good thing!

Teaching/Content Advice

- The topic should be interesting to both Christians and non-Christians
- Many Christian Internationals are newer Christians, so basic things are still great.
- If a conference is purely evangelistic, believers won't feel as personally satisfied, so we need to address both audiences.
- Have speakers send questions in advance for Small Group leaders to use during their discussion groups before the teaching time. We may tweak them slightly, but it will prepare our students for the talk.

- Consider preparing a booklet for each student that has each passage we teach on inside along with the questions the small group leaders will be asking. Being able to hear and read the material will aid in understanding. Plus they can take the booklet home with them. Also include in the booklet the schedule, activities, etc.

Teaching Elements Recommended

- Main speaker is vital...one who understands how to communicate well to internationals in content, English clarity, examples, jokes, etc.
- Seminars are common to all to more fully un-pack the topic. Kentucky has asked students to choose between a track for those who feel they are actively following Jesus and those who are investigating and that worked well for them. North Carolina splits more on topics of discussions.
- Testimonies of internationals are notes as extremely helpful for all conferences. This helps people see how others worked through issues of belief from their own background.
- Small Group Discussions are important for processing, too. Kentucky had discussion questions after the speaker spoke. North Carolina did their small group time before the speaker and used the time to first study the passage the speaker will teach just after the small group time. They found this switch in schedule to aid students understanding of the upfront teaching.
- Emcee to guide everyone through the event and be a welcome agent!
- North Carolina always loves to do a "tough questions" panel with lots of different internationals and apologetic specialists. Students love to ask their questions.
- Worship by an international team with different languages/styles is a big plus with students. It again shows Christianity is not just Western. CD's can even work.

Student Empowerment

- Both conferences highly value using this event as a way to empower their Christian internationals for service. This can be a launch for them into great service commitments when they return to campus.
- Ensure that the internationals are prepared as much as one is able. Provide clear directions for how they are to perform their roles, include questions they are to ask if they are leading small groups and help them learn how to foster good group dynamics (such as managing talkative people, not pressuring for certain answers, etc.).
- It is possible to offer internationals ways that they want to add to the conference...such as culture evenings or help in planning the conference itself.

Funding the Conference

- Both Kentucky and North Carolina does significant fundraising to offset the costs of their conferences. Both note that fundraising for such events are quite easy as many people get excited about the idea.
- Kentucky found that students weren't willing to come when charged the full amount for the conference. Their conference costs \$80/student, but they only charge \$35. Automatically reducing the cost saves students from "losing face" by asking for a scholarship.
- Kentucky has gotten gifts for the conference from individuals, churches, businesses and a student government diversity grant.
- North Carolina fund raises more to pay the way for community Christian Internationals to attend and to bring in International Staff workers to serve. This is due to their commitment to have non-Western Christians be the only visible leaders as much as possible.
- Consider having students write a thank you card to the supporters who made it possible for them to go to the conference. It's good for students to know that people were generous for their sake and for donors to get the note of appreciation.

Previous or Future Teaching Topics

- Kentucky previously taught on "The Kingdom of God" and the "I Am" statements on Jesus. Next fall they will teach on "Living Wise Lives"
- North Carolina previously taught on "Created for Relationships" with tremendous response. They talked about man/woman created, relationships broken, relationships restored, and the body of believers. Their seminars were on the topic as well and dealt with Forgiveness (big response) and marriage/singleness Biblically. Next spring they teach on "Jesus, Who Do People Say I Am?", though "Created to Serve" was another idea they considered.

Speaker Ideas

- International or even American InterVarsity Staff are well-liked because they understand student's needs, they honor time constraints reliably and they don't need an honorarium.
 - Kenny and Achlai Wallace: African American man who is well traveled and Haitian Canadian woman; both experienced worship leaders and teachers (NC)
 - Sam Elisha: mentioned by Katie Rawson, need to follow up who it is (*Indian man who grew up in Hindu/Muslim background*)
 - Jovin Adjeitey: African staff working with Internationals (TX)
 - Lisa Espineli Chinn: (*former director of International Student Ministry (SC)*)
 - Eva Liu: International Student Ministry Staff (CA)
 - Paul Tokanaga: Strategic Ministries Director (GA)
 - Bok and Heidi Chew: Malaysian man and German woman, ISM Staff (OH)
 - Multi-Ethnic staff are sometimes very impacting if they are well traveled
 - Hermann Alb: Guatemalan staff (LA)

- Other community members can be considered, however it is recommended that they are foreign-born internationals who can speak well to international students today.
 - Pradhip Ayer: Church Director of Missions and former 20-year missionary, Memphis; Indian-born with Malaysian Chinese wife

Other tid-bits

- Consider supplying bottled water. Some students are not use to well water at camps and really are bothered by it.
- See if cell phones get reception at your camp ground. You may want to supply walky-talkies for staff for communication purposes if not.

Points of Discussion for Initial Deep South Area Conference Planning Meeting (April '08)

- 1) Decide if a Fall Conference or Spring Conference better suits our needs.

- 2) Brainstorm the goals we have for our conference.

- 3) Decide which conference sites and dates we would like to further pursue.

- 4) Brainstorm topics for our teaching at the conference.

- 5) Decide which teaching elements we would like to include in our conference.

- 6) Prioritize who we would like to invite to be our main speaker or help teach in some other way (worship, seminars, panel, etc)

- 7) Decide if we would like to fundraise to cover some of the conference expenses and commit to inviting our own networks to partner with us financially if so.