
Here's what people are saying about the program:

“A free and open society must have the full participation of all of its citizens. Because of the fall of the Taliban, Afghan women now have the ability to pursue their dreams of becoming teachers, doctors, judges, business and community leaders and politicians. The Initiative to Educate Afghan Women provides opportunities for Afghan women to attend American universities to develop the skills needed to be leaders in their country's new democracy.”

Mrs. Laura Bush
Former First Lady of the United States of America

“Education is the key to empowering the women of Afghanistan and preventing their re-marginalization in the society. Indeed, there is no better protection for Afghan women against the miseries of poverty and gender inequality than the power of education both to exercise their equal Constitutional human rights and to achieve economic self-reliance for the general welfare of our society.”

Said Tayeb Jawad
Afghanistan's Ambassador to the United States

“The IEAW has helped to mature so many young Afghan women by providing this chance for international higher education. They are talking about their future and their role in rebuilding our country. These young women plan to help their post-war country by coming back as educated and capable people. I simply cannot wait to see them in official capacities in various ministries. Suffice to say that this is the best gift anyone could give Afghanistan.”

Fatima Gailani
Director of the Red Crescent of Afghanistan

“The Initiative to Educate Afghan Women has succeeded in transforming high-school graduate Afghan girls into young professional Afghan women. These young women already exhibit sophistication and professionalism. I am looking forward toward their graduation so that we can hire them for important professional positions. Through these young professional Afghan women, the Initiative to Educate Afghan Women will play an important role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the promotion of gender equality in my country.”

Dr. Anwar-Ul-Haq Ahady
Former Minister of Finance
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan



The Initiative To Educate Afghan Women

*...my life,
my dream,
my country's future.*

The Initiative to Educate Afghan Women
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The Initiative to Educate Afghan Women

Not so long ago, the faces of Afghan women were hidden, shrouded in the burka.

Deprived of the right to basic dignities, they were also people deprived of their basic human rights, including the right to education. Under the rule of the Taliban, education for women was forbidden – punishable by beating or worse. Many brave women escaped with their families to Pakistan. Still others learned, secretly, in their basements or in illegal schools that were dangerous for all the participants.

With the liberation of their country, young Afghan women are being educated again, albeit slowly, at the schools in their towns and cities. Unfortunately, decades of war have left the school systems devastated and bereft of basic supplies. But still, the spirit to learn in Afghanistan's youth has remained.

Seeing images of these young women and sensing their desire to learn and improve their lives and their country, Paula Nirschel wanted to help. She weighed how America

could make a difference and made her decision. Believing in the vast importance of education as a culture's most powerful tool, Mrs. Nirschel established the Initiative to Educate Afghan Women (IEAW) in 2002.

All U.S. colleges received a letter from Paula Nirschel encouraging them to offer scholarships for these worthy women. Many colleges have enthusiastically offered their partnership and support to IEAW.

The IEAW students are well cared for by this program and by their universities. In January of each year, all students come together from around the U.S. for an intersession period. With the director and staff and key volunteers they reunite and tour a part of our great country. The students also return home each summer to visit with and help their families. This is also a time when they work professionally to help with the reconstruction of their country.

The future goal of the IEAW is to ensure that more women from Afghanistan have the opportunity to benefit

from an American education. The voices of the women of Afghanistan have been missing for years. These remarkable students know that they will return to Afghanistan after graduation. All of these gifted young women are committed to serving their country as high-level professionals. In addition, they understand the risks involved and that they will be positive role models for all Afghan women.

To learn more about this important initiative, please contact:

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"The gift of education in the United States empowers us to be distinguished leaders of our country."

Montclair State University

"IEAW and our colleges will help bring our country out of darkness and into light."

Mt. Holyoke College

"Studying in the United States gives us the opportunity to concentrate more on our education in a peaceful environment."

Meredith College

"IEAW students will be confident and courageous role models for other women when we return home."

Breanu University



"Fulfilling this dream of higher education fills our hearts with warmth and hope."

Mt. Holyoke College

"Kandahar's first internationally educated female lawyer will be from the IEAW family."

Russell Sage College

"Our dream is to serve our country and make a better life for our people."

Russell Sage College

