Empowering extraordinary young Israelis from underserved backgrounds to reach their highest potential, igniting positive change in Israeli society.
Dear friends,

It gives me great pleasure to share this report with you, as ISEF marks its 42nd year supporting higher education for bright young Israelis from immigrant and underserved communities.

This past year, we empowered 424 BA, MA, PhD and postdoc students from Israel’s periphery—most the first in their families to pursue degrees! This included 120 new STEM degree candidates in our pioneering Science Builds the Nation Partnership with the Prime Minister’s Office. Our “brain trust” of 53 PhD students in Israel—a record!—along with our 16 International Fellows pursuing MD, PhD, and postdoctoral research at places like Harvard and Stanford, are all doing ground-breaking work that reinvigorates my faith in Israel’s bright future.

What makes ISEF stand apart from other scholarship programs for marginalized students is our emphasis on excellence, our supportive family atmosphere, and our holistic approach to developing the whole person through leadership training and hands-on volunteering. These are the elements behind ISEF's unparalleled success rate – retaining over 97% of our students.

The ultimate proof of ISEF's value is that, long after they've graduated, thousands of our alumni stay involved with ISEF. Year after year, these busy professionals share their journeys to success and guide ISEF's newest grads forward, to grad school or to a first career position.

This is a watershed year for ISEF: after 42 years of inspired leadership, ISEF’s co-founder and Chairwoman Emerita Nina Weiner is leaving New York and making aliyah to Israel. We know we can count on her continued passionate involvement with ISEF’s family of supporters, students, and alumni, and wish her great success as she embarks on her next exciting chapter!

With all the changes, ISEF remains true to its founding vision: that higher education holds the key to transforming young Israelis' lives from lack of opportunity to productivity. Educating Israel's young people is the single most vital task all who care for Israel can undertake, and I thank you for your continuing support for ISEF's deserving students.

Carlos Benaim
President
Dear friends,

I write to you on the eve of my aliyah. While it is bittersweet to part from so many long-time friends and family in New York, I am excited to return to Israel—which has kept a major place in my heart—and its people, whom I admire for their courage, sense of purpose, and joie de vivre. For 42 years, I have devoted myself to ensuring that every bright young Israeli, no matter their background, has an equal chance at a good education and a good life. Now I'll have the privilege of witnessing the fruits of my labors.

For example: I'll be living in Tel Aviv, near Sourasky Medical Center—whose CEO is an ISEF alumnus. I'll visit the universities and see myriads of ISEF faces, not just among students, but among leading faculty. With your support, ISEF has transformed the landscape of higher education in Israel, making it more reflective of Israel's incredible human diversity.

I'll also visit with our graduates who are now physicians, scientists, teachers, attorneys, entrepreneurs, philosophers, social workers, college presidents, NGO founders--and meet not just their children, but for some of our earliest graduates, their grandchildren!

When I look at all that we have achieved together, the results are far more outstanding than I ever dreamed possible. Yet many thousands more underserved youth in Israel's periphery remain to be reached. I plan to continue my deep involvement in shaping ISEF's growth and direction as we approach our jubilee year in 2027!!

Words cannot express my gratitude to each of you, for your unwavering friendship and generosity to ISEF's students through the years. I'm in the ISEF family for life, and I'm counting on you being with us as we embark on a new era under the wise leadership of President Carlos Benaim and our devoted board members. I am deeply thankful for the knowledge that ISEF's future is in such capable hands.

This isn't good-bye, but rather, “l’hitra’ot.” I look forward to seeing you when you next visit Israel! I cannot wait to introduce you to some of the wonderful Israelis whose lives have been transformed by your constant generosity.

With much affection and gratitude,

Nina A. Weiner
Chairwoman Emerita
Science Builds the Nation

Our major partnership with the Prime Minister’s Office supported over 120 STEM degree candidates from the periphery; this year, 200!

Building Social Capital for Our Graduates

Personal connections are key to jump-start new grads’ careers. ISEF’s new Career Placement Coordinator is building a wide network for them to tap into!

Successful ISEF Alumni in a wide range of professions meet with and guide new ISEF grads. Hot job opportunities are shared in real time through social media.

Mentoring At-Risk Teens

ISEF’s Bridge to College Projects are having measurable impact on vulnerable high school youth from Israel’s marginalized communities. 85% of project enrollees succeeded in earning their high school diploma—a major advance over the national average of 69%. (Graduation rates in marginalized communities are even lower—40-50%.) This visionary project is supported by the Luna and Selim Benardete Bridge to College Fund.
ISEF’s Students in Israel – A Snapshot

408 students on 18 campuses: 320 BA, 35 MA, and 53 PhD candidates

Where They Study

Our Institutional Partners

Bar-Ilan University
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Haifa University
Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya
Open University of Israel
Technion-Israel Institute of Technology
Tel Aviv University
Weizmann Institute of Science

Afeka College of Engineering
Azrieli College of Engineering
Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design
Holon Institute of Technology
Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance
Max Stern Jezreel Valley College
ORT-Braude College of Engineering
Sami Shamoon College of Engineering
Sapir College, Netivot
Investing in Human Capital for Maximum Impact

Prof. Eitan Yaakobi, The Technion

B.A., M.Sc., The Technion; Ph.D., UC San Diego; Postdoc, Cal Tech.
ISEF support from B.A. through Postdoc. 
International Marconi Society Young Scholar Award, 2009. 
Intel Ph.D. Fellowship, 2011.
Associate Professor, Computer Science.

Prof. Eitan Yaakobi is a pioneer in information and coding theory and data storage—especially impressive for the son of immigrants sent to live in Kiryat Shmonah on the Lebanon border. He writes:

My parents never had the chance to get an education. My father, an immigrant from Iran, had to go to work at age 15 to help support his many siblings. He became a taxi driver. My mother had to leave school after 10th grade because her mother died; she worked as a home health aide. Seeing me earn my Ph.D., win the Marconi Award, and become a professor is the fulfillment of their most cherished dreams.

Kiryat Shmonah is a distant development town, and no one in its schools had ever encouraged me, or anyone else, to reach for more than the minimum. But in 11th grade I saw a poster for a national math contest, which opened the door to a different world where I had the good fortune to encounter ISEF.

When I won the 2009 Marconi Society Young Scholar Award, the Israeli media were surprised that someone from Kiryat Shmonah had won, and even more surprised by my parents’ lack of schooling. I hope that one day, people will no longer be surprised when students from places like Kiryat Shmonah win awards. But I could not have won that award, I could not have done my postdoc at Cal Tech, and I could not now be part of the Technion faculty, without the tremendous support of my birth family and my ISEF family.

I believe my success is proof that many others could follow a similar path, if they got the right encouragement. I was lucky to have the constant help and support of ISEF over the long years of my training. But there are many others like me who don’t get the same opportunities, just for lack of funds. They also deserve help such as ISEF gives.

Photo: Prof. Yaakobi shares his path to success with ISEF’s 2019-2020 scholars in Haifa, November 1, 2019.
Key Program Features

**Tuition Scholarships**

This year, 408 ISEF scholars pursued degrees on 18 university and college campuses in Israel. 320 undergraduates received partner funding from their institutions and Israel's Council on Higher Education. 120 studied for STEM degrees in ISEF's "Science Builds the Nation" partnership with the Prime Minister's Office, including many of ISEF's 88 Master's, Ph.D., and postdoc candidates.

ISEF's reputation attracts thousands of applicants, and acceptance rates are under 10%. Students are chosen based on:

- socio-economic disadvantage
- academic record
- completion of military or national service, and
- prior community involvement

Second-stage applicants attend group evaluation workshops; the most promising have personal interviews.

**Advanced Degree Initiatives**

Advanced degrees are increasingly essential for top positions in Israel.

ISEF's Advanced Degree Initiative helps undergrads understand how advanced degrees improve their career prospects and shows them how to balance family and work with advanced research. ISEF's 53 PhD students met with our BA and MA students, sharing experiences and showing an advanced degree isn't out of reach.

**International Fellows Program**

ISEF's proactive support for advanced training extends outside Israel. The ISEF International Fellows Program awarded support grants to 16 outstanding students pursuing MD, PhD, and postdoctoral training at top international institutions from Harvard to Stanford.

Graduates of the International Fellows Program are today college presidents and professors, heads of hospitals, ground-breaking cancer researchers, and founders of major NGOs.

ISEF's sustained investment in human capital development—from BA to PhD and postdoc—achieves real results. ISEF's advanced degree alumni hold top positions throughout Israel's economy, diversifying every sector and shattering old notions of what immigrants can achieve.
Safety Net

First-generation students often struggle with feeling they “don’t belong.” Their families and communities may doubt the value of earning degrees, particularly for women from traditional homes. **Today 60% of ISEF’s students are women, including some who are the very first in their communities to study.**

ISEF provides a strong safety net. Emergency financial aid, new laptops, counseling, professional tutoring—all are provided on an as-needed basis. Above all, ISEF serves as a second family, creating strong bonds between staff, student leaders, and newer students.

Leadership Training Programs

Twice each month, ISEF’s veteran student leaders run group meetings of ISEF students that explore identity and other current social issues. Empowering students to take charge of these meetings develops their leadership capacities. In spring, ISEF’s National Student Convention gathers all 408 ISEF students for an intense weekend of discussions, workshops, and fun.

**This program forges a strong sense of belonging and powers ISEF’s extraordinary results—97% get their degrees, and 25% go on for advanced degrees!**

Community Service Projects

ISEF students devote four hours a week to tutoring and mentoring over 3,600 at-risk youth enrolled in ISEF projects all over Israel. They lead group workshops and tour nearby campuses to help these teens see a BA as an attainable goal. ISEF students, themselves from marginalized homes, are ideal role models.

ISEF is deeply grateful to **Luna and Selim Benardete** for creating the **Luna and Selim Benardete Bridge to College Fund** that underwrites intensive interventions targeting at-risk youngsters in five cities. Other partners in ISEF’s community service projects include the Council on Higher Education, municipalities, and major NGOs.
Exciting Year at ISEF New York

Record Gala for ISEF: Hundreds of guests, including ISEF co-founder Lily Safra, loyal board members, and many new friends, flocked to ISEF’s 42nd Annual Gala in New York on May 9, 2019, to honor Israeli entrepreneur Rony Zarom, founder of Unistream; Young Leader Joseph Aiken; and ISEF co-founder Nina Weiner for her lifelong devotion to ISEF’s mission. The young and enthusiastic crowd raised a record $1 million for ISEF’s programs.

The May 9 Gala crowned an event season that featured:

- A reception at the home of Israel’s Consul-General Ambassador Dani Dayan, featuring celebrated author, former MK and ISEF alumnus Daniel Ben-Simon on Moroccan Jewry;
- An Iraqi cultural evening at the home of ISEF Board Member David Dangoor, with distinguished guest speakers Abraham Sofaer and Maurice Shohet and Iraqi cuisine;
- A Finance Round Table featuring ISEF VPs and top tax experts Avi Abergel and Michael Vaknin discussing the altered tax landscape.
Our Alumni Are a Force for Change!

More than 5,000 ISEF grads are active members of ISEF’s Alumni Association – proof of ISEF’s crucial role in their lives.

Alumni include: College presidents, Members of Knesset, heads of hospitals, surgeons, scientists, professors, engineers and entrepreneurs, architects, legal experts, and heads of NGOs improving life for all Israelis.
ASSETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash and Cash Equivalents</td>
<td>$371,603</td>
<td>$740,911</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investments (fair value)</td>
<td>4,829,307</td>
<td>4,423,155</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accounts receivable</td>
<td>202,983</td>
<td>121,071</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pledges receivable</td>
<td>144,763</td>
<td>14,324</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property and equipment (net)</td>
<td>32,753</td>
<td>34,965</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other assets</td>
<td>4,060</td>
<td>4,060</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
<td>$5,585,469</td>
<td>$5,338,486</td>
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LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Liabilities:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Accounts payable</td>
<td>$ 62,187</td>
<td>$ 123,973</td>
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<td>Accrued expenses</td>
<td>52,571</td>
<td>45,376</td>
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<td>Note payable related parties</td>
<td>290,000</td>
<td>290,000</td>
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<td><strong>Total liabilities</strong></td>
<td>404,758</td>
<td>459,349</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Net assets</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
<td>229,420</td>
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<td>Temporarily restricted</td>
<td>172,707</td>
<td>71,851</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanently restricted</td>
<td>4,778,584</td>
<td>4,439,419</td>
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<td><strong>Total net assets</strong></td>
<td>5,180,711</td>
<td>4,879,137</td>
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**Total liabilities and net assets**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total liabilities and net assets</strong></td>
<td>$5,585,469</td>
<td>$5,338,486</td>
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TOTAL REVENUES AND OTHER SUPPORT

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<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>$3,316,162</td>
<td>$2,991,589</td>
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<td>Special events (net of expenses)</td>
<td>470,203</td>
<td>616,361</td>
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<td>Interest and dividends</td>
<td>111,660</td>
<td>124,740</td>
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<td>Realized/unrealized gain on sale of investments</td>
<td>364,165</td>
<td>506,394</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total support and revenue</strong></td>
<td>$4,262,190</td>
<td>$4,239,084</td>
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OPERATING EXPENSES

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<tr>
<td>Scholarships and Program services</td>
<td>$3,256,841</td>
<td>$2,933,619</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>457,158</td>
<td>439,312</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management and general</td>
<td>339,934</td>
<td>359,710</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total support services</strong></td>
<td>797,092</td>
<td>799,022</td>
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**Total expenses**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
<td>$4,053,933</td>
<td>$3,732,641</td>
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ISEF’s investment in educating Israel’s next generation for excellence is made possible by a leadership grant from

The Edmond J. Safra Philanthropic Foundation

And by the extraordinary generosity of dozens of foundations and corporations, and our worldwide family of loyal individual supporters

MAJOR INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Anonymous Foundation
Luna and Selim Benardete Bridge to College Fund
Robert I. Goldman Foundation
Ministry of Education, Israel
Prime Minister’s Office, Israel
Israel National Lottery
Israel Council on Higher Education
Jewish National Fund
United Israel Appeal – Canada
Mel Cutler Foundation
Elezra Foundation
Joseph S. and Caroline Gruss Life Monument Fund
Louis and Harold Price Foundation
Weininger Foundation
Yahel Foundation

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“My parents couldn’t support me with my studies, but with ISEF I felt I could literally break down the economic and social barriers, and I succeeded in completing not-easy-at-all studies with huge pride. I grew up in a place where people don’t dream big, where even the people who wanted to study didn’t always get the chance. The boundaries were clear. That’s why I won’t ever give up on my success, because I know how hard I worked for it and how lucky I am. I really couldn’t have done it without ISEF. You have supported me all the way long, so I would like to say thank you, again, from the bottom of my heart.”

— Rotem A., B.A., Accounting and Economics, Bar-Ilan University
OUR IMPACT ON ISRAELI SOCIETY

LAST YEAR, WE SUPPORTED

408 STUDENTS, BA TO PhD

AT

18 ISRAELI UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

INCLUDING

14% ETHIOPIAN ISRAELIS

59% WOMEN

77% DEGREES IN STEM, BUSINESS, & LAW

98% GRADUATION RATE

THANKS TO ISEF’S WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

2,800 AT-RISK TEENS

BEING HELPED TO GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL AND QUALIFY FOR COLLEGE

16 INTERNATIONAL FELLOWS ABROAD

GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCHERS IN SCIENCE, MEDICINE, AND SOCIETY

ISEF by the Numbers