Faces of the University
Rodin Napso is one of the University of Haifa’s few Circassian students. He sees himself as a proud ambassador of his community and is steeped in the tradition’s folklore, native language and special history. “The Circassian tradition embraces democratic values and teaches tolerance of all religions and ethnicities,” he explains.

Growing up in Kfar Kama, Rodin graduated from Kadoorie, a pluralistic high school that boasts Yitzhak Rabin among its alumni. He participated in a number of exchange programs, where he connected with other Circassian students in Germany, Turkey and Syria. Rodin’s father was an IDF career officer for more than 20 years, and Rodin elected to serve in the IDF Education Corps.

“What really attracted me to the University of Haifa, in addition to the sheer beauty of the campus and its spectacular landscapes, is the multi-cultural composition of the student body,” notes Rodin. “At the Faculty of Law, I study with students from all backgrounds – Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Druze.”

Rodin recently completed a BA in economics and received an ISEF scholarship. It was only natural that after earning his degree in economics he would continue to a degree in law. “I’ve always been the argumentative one in my family,” he jokes. But he is very serious about his future goal of becoming an advocate for the Circassian community. “I hope that my dual degrees in economics and law will prepare me to lobby effectively and raise awareness for the rights of Circassians in Israel and around the world.”

Scholarships Driving Success

Curious, engaging and resourceful, University of Haifa students are exploring their academic passions in fields from advancing medical research and public health, to safeguarding civil liberties in the new information society and protecting Israel’s natural resources.

Students are our most important resource. In keeping with our commitment to providing education to the full spectrum of Israeli society, we provide scholarship assistance to more than one-third of our students. Without financial assistance, many students in Israel’s northern peripheries would not have access to higher education or be able to dedicate themselves fully to their studies.

Student scholarships are a driving force behind the University of Haifa’s success. They represent a key investment in the academic future of Israel, and in meeting the significant social, economic, security, and technological challenges that lie ahead.

Amos Shapira
President, University of Haifa

Investing in Education, Investing in our Future

The University of Haifa is a microcosm of Israeli society, reflecting all of her varied populations: Jews, Arabs, Druze, Ethiopians, new immigrants and veteran residents, secular and religious, men and women, and people with a range of political views and differing outlooks on life. For many of our students, the University campus is the first meaningful point of contact with “the other” in Israeli society.

Our institution is playing an important role in forging common ground by modeling excellence in research and teaching within an environment of tolerance and mutual respect. There is a special atmosphere that is present in our classrooms, laboratories, and public spaces. This unique atmosphere adds richer dimensions to our research and our teaching, and produces graduates who are better prepared to contribute to Israeli society.
"I was called up for 36 days of reserve duty with my unit during Operation Protective Shield," recalls Mkonet Gadamu. "After the war, when I returned to the University, I was very stressed about how I would be able to prepare for my final exams, having missed much of my second semester classes."

To his pleasant surprise, Mkonet was met by unsolicited help from the University of Haifa – private lessons to bring him up to speed on his studies and financial assistance. "My teachers came on weekends to meet with me to fill in the gaps. It was touching and overwhelming," he admitted.

Like many immigrants from Ethiopia, Mkonet has faced challenges and has learned to be resourceful. He arrived as a young boy with his parents and eight siblings during Operation Solomon and was educated at the Yemin Ode Youth Village. An alumnus of the Hatzor Glilit pre-army academy, where he has served as a madrich for four years, Mkonet grew to love nature and respect the environment. Now a graduate student in the Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Management specializing in sustainability, he sees environmental protection as one of Israel's most pressing issues. "I see myself working in the public sector, preferably energy related; this is where I can affect the most change."

Mkonet is a recipient of the Rich Scholarship program and has been commended for his outstanding volunteer work with the Ministry of the Environment. Having traveled abroad as a goodwill ambassador for various causes, Mkonet’s future looks bright with attractive opportunities. With his typical modesty, he attributes his good luck to "just meeting good people along the way."

Lian Nagmi was diagnosed with a rare muscular disease when she was just 11 years old has not slowed her down one bit. "Shortly after I got the diagnosis, I started to volunteer at a community center here in Haifa. Volunteering helped me shift the focus away from my illness. It felt good to help others." Lian smiles playfully when she explains that she does not let her illness interfere with her goals and she does not take no for an answer. When she finished high school, Lian convinced her parents to let her go to Germany on a study abroad program. The trip kindled her interest in politics and foreign languages. When she returned to Haifa, she immediately applied and was accepted to the School of Political Sciences. "I was nervous when I first arrived at the University, but the faculty members have been extremely supportive; I love my studies!" As an Arab-Israeli student, Lian appreciates the diverse atmosphere on campus and is delighted to take part in the University’s Jewish-Arab Community Leadership Program. "I’m really pleased that the University encourages dialogue and promotes shared existence projects. We need to build a better society here in Israel. We need to thrive together."

Lian Nagmi, Haifa
BA Student
School of Political Sciences

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Yaeli Cohen, Tel Aviv
BA Student
Ofakim Honors Program, Faculty of Humanities

Yaeli Cohen is not your typical computer science student. “In high school, I studied computer science and literature. After my military service in the IDF spokesperson’s unit, I spent time in Naharia and Acre volunteering in various educational frameworks for at-risk youth. I came to the University of Haifa for the Ofakim honors program, which gave me the opportunity to combine a degree in computer science with the humanities.”

Yaeli believes that one of the exciting things about studying computer science is that you learn a fundamental way of thinking and problem solving. Once a week, she shares this type of thinking with a group of local students in the newly launched “Computer Science in the Community” program. “We don’t just teach them coding or how to build a website. They can learn that online. Our lessons are designed to stimulate their curiosity, help them identify problems, see patterns, and find solutions.”

Yaeli has a lengthy track record of volunteering with disadvantaged students throughout communities in the north and she is especially interested in encouraging girls to pursue careers in computer science. “There has never been a better time for women to enter computer science.”

“...you need to come to the University of Haifa.”
Matthew Sparks brims with excitement when discussing the University’s International Graduate Program in National Security Studies. After completing his undergraduate degree in the United States, Matthew began investigating international graduate programs in security studies. While there were many high profile options to choose from, Matthew was impressed by what he found at the University of Haifa. “The program is extremely interactive and the lecturers actively encourage dialogue and debate. We are lucky to have people from a wide variety of countries and backgrounds enrolled in the program. The hands-on practicum opportunities are tremendous because the faculty members have so many connections in the military, the government, and the private sector. Studying at Haifa offers a unique blend of academic and practical experience in national security that is universally applicable and gives not only the knowledge, but also the perspective required to be a successful practitioner in the field.”
Born in Daliat El Carmel, a local Druze village, Hiba Zaidan decided to travel the road less taken. “I come from a traditional family where women are generally encouraged to enter practical occupations such as teaching, engineering and medicine. Very few people from my village go into research.”

After finishing at the top of her high school class, Hiba enrolled in the University’s Department of Psychology and is still here eight years later. Now a doctoral student, Hiba is enthusiastic about her studies and the supportive environment at the University. “I had offers to study elsewhere, but I like the collegial atmosphere in our lab and really appreciate the encouragement and accessibility of the faculty members.” Hiba’s research, which garnered her a Presidential Award for Innovative Research, is focused on gaining a better understanding of how stress prior to pregnancy may have a long term effect on children and even grandchildren. Discovering the neurochemical mechanisms underlying stress before pregnancy may one day enhance our ability to screen for risk factors for stress-related disorders and possibly lead to earlier remedial or preventive intervention. When she is not in the lab, Hiba devotes time to volunteering with organizations that promote science education in the Druze community.

A Priest and psycho-clinician by training, Abang Fidelis Abah, began volunteering at a local Center for Children in Distress in Cameroon in response to a plea for help from the Center’s Director. The Center provides shelter for orphaned and abandoned children, many from birth to 5 years of age. Abang quickly realized that these at-risk children needed access to professionals with training in child development, but Cameroon offered no academic programs in the field. He found out about the University’s International MA Program in Applied Child Development through a local psychology network and immediately applied. With no local governmental funding available, Abang received scholarship support from the University to attend the program. “It was a miracle that I made it. My country does not have this kind of information, and we need it,” explains Abang. “The program is giving me the knowledge and tools needed back home to take care of these children.” Abang is also excited about spending the year in Israel. “I look forward to visiting in person many of the sites I read about in the Bible.”
Avi Marciano is worried about our privacy and civil liberties. A third-year doctoral student in the Department of Communication, Avi’s research focuses on the discourse surrounding Israel’s controversial plan to issue “smart” identity cards and passports with microchips for identification purposes and to build a national biometric database to store facial and fingerprint data. “Israel is the only democratic country in the world that has passed such a comprehensive law. The law was put in place to help security agencies fight crime and terrorism, but there is a fine line between gathering data to maintain security and using modern surveillance technologies to infringe on citizens’ basic freedoms.”

Avi shares his research at local, national and international conferences dedicated to the topics of surveillance studies and biometric technologies. “My advisor, in fact - all of the faculty members in the department, go out of their way to support our research and make sure that we get opportunities to present at international forums.”

When Avi first expressed an interest in pursuing a graduate degree in communications, he was told by people in the field that the University of Haifa’s program was the best option. “At first, I was a bit nervous. I thought that the learning would be impersonal, but I found the exact opposite.” A recipient of a number of merit-based scholarships, including two from the prestigious Wolf Foundation, Avi is eager to complete his doctorate and pursue post-doctoral studies at a leading university in North America.