Reach for the Stars
President’s Scholarships for Success

A pioneering program of the University of Haifa to attract the best and the brightest doctoral students – the future academic "stars"
Asaf Sadeh spent his childhood wandering the canyons and forests of Mt. Carmel and the Galilee, where his weekend hikes evoked an emotional attachment to the landscapes of Israel. As an undergraduate, he became a "green" activist, participating in ecological campaigns to raise local environmental awareness and working to prevent the destruction of Eilat's coral reef. Asaf completed his BSc in life sciences with distinction and then proceeded directly to a PhD program.

His research, funded by the President's Scholarships for Success program, examines amphibian and temporary pools as model systems for understanding general ecological and evolutionary processes, especially with regard to environmental unpredictability, climate change and habitat fragmentation — processes that are considered a serious threat to biodiversity worldwide. His current research in ecology enhances basic understanding of natural systems as an aid to the development of conservation management policies. Asaf believes the University of Haifa is a model academic base, with ideal surroundings for both lab and field research.

Asaf was recently awarded a Fulbright doctoral dissertation grant for a three-month visit to UC Santa Cruz, where he will develop mathematical models to advance his research.

"The President's Scholarships program," Asaf says, "enables exceptional students to focus on their research and participate in international conferences and workshops, greatly increasing creativity and productivity."

Itai Kloog, recipient of the University's 2006 Rector Award for Excellence, is a 33-year-old PhD student whose research into understanding how "light at night" affects the occurrence of breast and prostate cancers has captured the attention of medical and scientific communities around the world. With far-reaching implications for preventive medicine, Itai's study shows that excessive exposure to light at night can increase the risk of developing breast and prostate cancers by interfering with the brain's production of the tumor-suppressing hormone melatonin.

Itai completed his MA cum laude at the University of Haifa's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Management. He chose to pursue his doctoral studies at the University and hopes that his research will make an important contribution to the critical medical and environmental issues it raises. Itai realizes what a tremendous opportunity the scholarship has afforded him in his academic career. "Thanks to the scholarship I received from the University of Haifa, I was able to continue my MA thesis at the doctoral level and have already published three academic papers. As a husband and new father who has to support a family, I realize how fortunate I am to receive a scholarship that enables me to dedicate myself solely to my research."

Asaf Sadeh
Department of Evolutionary and Environmental Biology

Itai Kloog
Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Management

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Department of Evolutionary and Environmental Biology
President of the University

The University of Haifa was founded 37 years ago on the principle of creating a better world through research, scholarship and service. Today, as academic landscapes become more competitive, the University is more committed than ever to academic excellence and seeks the best and brightest doctoral students for its prestigious fellowship program, with the aim of enticing them to choose the University as their academic home. Today's doctoral candidates – tomorrow's faculty luminaries – will bolster the prestige and standing of the University.

It is my fervent hope that the President’s Scholarships for Success program will prove pivotal in maintaining the University’s competitive edge, while contributing to Israel’s academic progress and renown by attracting doctoral students of the highest caliber.

Prof. Aaron Ben-Ze’ev
President, University of Haifa

Promoting Academic Excellence - The Primary Mission of the University of Haifa

The University has launched a unique fundraising campaign, the President's Scholarships for Success Program for outstanding doctoral students. The program will provide each doctoral candidate with a scholarship of $15,000 a year for four years, to cover tuition and living expenses. Recipients are required to finish their doctoral degrees within four years and undertake to not work outside the University during that time, allowing them to focus their creative energy exclusively on research.

Today over 1,000 young scholars are pursuing their PhD degrees in interdisciplinary academic programs that boost the quality of scientific research, giving a clear advantage to the University of Haifa. Following are a few of the many exceptional students who have completed or are working within the program.
Taly Goren was awarded an undergraduate degree in psychology and communications by the University of Haifa. She followed this with a master’s degree in special education, which she earned while living in California. Her interest in autism, a lifelong disability that affects social communication, interaction and behavior, was sparked when she cared for an autistic toddler.

As she accompanied the child through the assessment process, she gained valuable insight into the parental role of raising and caring for autistic children and how it affects future treatment. Now, as a second-year PhD student in the Department of Special Education at the University of Haifa, Taly is deeply interested in reaching out to parents early in the diagnostic stage. She is convinced that involving parents at this early stage can lead to a more accurate assessment of a child’s condition, while better preparing the parents to make important decisions for treatment. "Timely diagnosis and access to appropriate support services can make all the difference to parents and families of autistic children," explains Taly.

A mother of two, Taly describes her academic goal as making a unique contribution to the study of autism. Assuring parents of their significant role in the assessment process, she believes, means recognizing that autism really is a "family affair". Taly is grateful for the opportunity that the President’s Scholarships for Success program has given her. The program was instrumental in enabling her family to return to Israel, after spending over ten years in the U.S. and Australia.
Lotem Perry is a young legal scholar who is passionate about children's rights. After working in one of Israel's largest law firms and clerking for Justice Dorit Beinish in the Israeli Supreme Court, Lotem chose to pursue her doctoral research on the regulation of the Israeli ultra-orthodox educational institutions.

A summa cum laude graduate of the University of Haifa Law School, Lotem received a full scholarship for studies toward her master's degree in education law at New York University Law School, where she specialized in multicultural societies, completing her degree with highest honors.

In her doctoral research, Lotem claims that Israeli ultra-orthodox educational institutions violate children’s rights to an acceptable education by withholding basic knowledge that may enable them to choose among alternative careers and lifestyles. She hopes that her research will be a catalyst for structural reform in the educational system. Her goal is to create a model that, while respecting children’s varied cultural backgrounds, establishes minimal standards for government funding.

Lotem is also a member of an interdisciplinary research group at Jerusalem's prestigious Van Leer Institute, studying regulatory issues that impact Israel's educational and political systems and the Israeli social fabric as a whole.

Uri Mayer-Chissick was raised as one of six siblings in the development town of Maalot. He is a father and husband, teacher, nutritional consultant, chef, youth counselor, kibbutznik and historian. Although a less-than-conventional high school student, Uri established a program called Tnufa (“jumpstart”) to help disadvantaged youth complete their high school studies.

Currently a doctoral student in the Department of the Land of Israel Studies, Uri is researching the relationship between nutrition and mind-body balance in the doctrine of Humoural Medicine, a medical philosophy with roots in ancient Greece that was embraced by medieval Arab physicians. The humoural system holds that the human body contains four basic substances (humours) that are precisely balanced in healthy people. The mind-body connection is part of a personal journey for Uri, who has long maintained a deep interest in nutrition.

As an undiagnosed dyslectic most of his life, who mastered reading fluency only at the age of 17, Uri now reads and writes Hebrew, Arabic and English. Today, he calls upon his language skills in analyzing ancient physicians’ journals, cookbooks and medical literature, with the aim of gaining new insight into the wisdom of Humourism and its relevance to modern medicine. He hopes to apply the practical aspects of humoural pharmacology to nutritional concepts.
Investment in the Future

…in the future of the University
With the financial assistance provided by the President’s Scholarships for Success program, students complete their PhDs and then pursue post-doctoral programs to expand their horizons at leading research institutions worldwide, after which they are encouraged to return to the University of Haifa to become faculty stars who will enrich the University’s academic programs.

…in the future of the community
The President’s Scholarships for Success program is an investment in the quality of scientific research and education at the University of Haifa. The opportunity offered to scholars from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds is in keeping with the University’s basic principles of academic excellence and social responsibility. The program will assure immigrants, military veterans and ethnic minorities an equal opportunity to pursue their academic careers.

…in the future of Israel
The President’s Scholarships for Success program is an investment in the future of Israel. Students who return to the University to join the faculty will be furthering its mission to promote ground-breaking research that will help Israel address its future social, cultural and technological challenges.

Reach for the Stars
Mouna Maroun is one of the University’s success stories, having earned her undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degrees at the University of Haifa’s Department of Psychology. After completing her post-doctoral fellowship, she returned to the University to join the faculty of the Department of Neurobiology. Dr. Maroun is the first woman from her village to hold a PhD and one of the first Arab women to hold a University faculty position in science in Israel. She is currently continuing her research on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at the Laboratory for Neurobiology of Emotions.

Mouna’s research focuses on how the brain processes information about fear, danger and safety, comparing the dominance between the brain’s pre-frontal cortex and amygdala, two structures involved in processing fear. She suggests that abnormalities in the circuitry of the brain’s pre-frontal cortex and amygdala could play a critical role in suppressing fear, which would represent a breakthrough in understanding PTSD.

Mouna is the recipient of numerous accolades and scholarships at the University of Haifa, including the University of Haifa’s Dean of Graduate Studies Award for excellent MA students and MAOF, a fellowship designated for outstanding minorities.

“For me, the University of Haifa is not only a place to work, to live and to breathe science – it is a part of my life. I spent so many years in the University as a student and now I am honored to be part of the faculty, surrounded by excellence in research.”

Dr. Mouna Maroun
Senior Lecturer, Department of Neurobiology and Etiology
Laboratory for Neurobiology of Emotions

From Philanthropic Partnership to Personal Connection

"Israel's greatest resource has always been the brainpower and ingenuity of its people. The education of our finest minds is the most valuable asset that we can offer to future generations. The gift of doctoral fellowships is a wonderful way to feel personally connected to students at the University of Haifa, while enabling these young scholars to dedicate themselves to their academic endeavors and ultimately enhance the University's prestige and academic standing worldwide."
Paul Amir, Friend of the University of Haifa

The President’s Scholarships for Success program creates unique professional and philanthropic partnerships between sponsors and potential academic stars. Sponsors can choose to support students with whom they share fields of academic interest, developing symbiotic relationships of professional enlightenment and personal satisfaction.
About the University of Haifa

The University of Haifa is the largest comprehensive research university in northern Israel. It supports a wide range of interdisciplinary programs and cooperative endeavors with academic institutes around the world. As a thriving academic center marked by multiculturalism and tolerance, the University of Haifa is a growing institution with internationally recognized faculties. With some of the world’s most renowned professors, several of whom are recipients of the prestigious Israel Prize, the country’s highest civilian accolade, the University is one of Israel’s foremost institutions of higher education. The University houses six Faculties: Humanities; Social Sciences; Natural Sciences; Law, Social Welfare and Health Sciences; and Education.

The University also has seven Schools: Management; Social Work; History; Public Health; Creative Art Therapies; Political Sciences; and the Leon H. Charney School of Marine Sciences. Within its academic structure, the University encompasses 60 departments and numerous research centers and institutes.

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