

# Haiti School Project: An Executive Summary

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## Project Title

### **Reconnection Through Reconstruction SIUC Community Supports Education in Haiti**

## The idea

This project aims to raise funds from SIUC faculty, staff and students for the construction of at least one primary school in Haiti. This idea has both immediate and long-term objectives.

## Primary Rationale – The immediate objective

Although the international community has mobilized a great deal of aid in support of the victims of the Haitian earthquake, there is now an urgent need to focus on the future. One area that needs to be addressed is education. Here is what Katty Rebecca Matin of *Oxfam America*, an international Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), wrote (February 9, 2010) about the state of education in Haiti: *“The (Haitian) government wants to see all schools reopened in less than three weeks. But where? With what resources?”*<sup>1</sup>. The challenge to provide meaningful education for millions of Haitian children is enormous. As members of a university community, we believe that contributing to the education of children in Haiti is a constructive and appropriate way for SIUC to get involved and support the reconstruction process in that devastated nation.

## Secondary Rationale – The long-term plan

SIUC had a study abroad program in Haiti in the 1980s. It was an initiative by the late Prof. Davis Pratt in the school of Design. In a way, this proposal is a revival of that initiative, and it comes at a time when the country is in dire need of such assistance. However, this project has a broader scope in that: **(a)** it deals with the establishment of a school, not taking students on a study-abroad program **(b)** it establishes a relationship between Haiti and SIUC, and paves the way for our university to register its presence in that part of our hemisphere and **(c)** it

increases our scope for future student recruitment from that region (not just Haiti).

### **Fund Raising**

This is a fund-raising effort. Due to SIUC's current financial health, the university itself is not expected to contribute money in this fund-drive. However, we anticipate some logistical support from the university. This project solicits a voluntary contribution of \$5 from faculty, staff and students interested in helping Haiti. Each dollar represents a letter in Haiti's five-letter name. Donors will be encouraged to give more if they wish. Our alumni office will also be urged to be involved in this endeavor. The amount to be raised is yet to be determined. But we understand that it does not cost millions of U.S. dollars to build and equip a standard primary school in Haiti (*see Appendix*).

### **Fund Raising Management**

1. Faculty, Staff and Students would be encouraged to make their donations in cash or check through their departments. A signed list of donors and amount donated would be kept by each department.
2. Each department would then forward its list and donations to the appropriate Dean's office. From there, it would be forwarded to the President's office for final collation.
3. A committee of 7 would be established in the President's office to manage this project. Its composition will be determined later.
4. Checks should be written to: *SIUC Help Haiti Fund*. This means that an account would be set up for this project. Modalities will be discussed.
5. We can agree on a period in which this fund-raising will take place. However, it should be noted that if its commencement is delayed we might encounter donor fatigue on the Haitian issue.
6. The *Daily Egyptian*, WSIU Radio and WSIU TV would be urged to publicize this project. Professors would be encouraged to announce the project in their classes. The President's office would also be urged to issue mass emails in support of this project, but make it clear that this is a voluntary initiative so that no one feels compelled to donate money.

### **Miscellaneous**

1. We will contact the Haitian embassy in Washington D.C. to seek ways to formally make our intentions known to the Haitian government and officials, and solicit their cooperation and support in executing this plan.

2. The following members of the SIUC family would be urged to contribute their expertise toward the success of this school project: College of Education & Human Services – to assist with curriculum design and have students and faculty go on study/teach abroad trips; College of Engineering, School of Art & Design in the College of Liberal Arts, and the School of Architecture in the College of Applied Sciences & Arts – to assist with the design and construction of the school; and our International Programs and Services office to help with the study abroad program and establishing a long-term foothold in the country and region.
3. We will explore the desirability of having a campus-wide committee for this project (including faculty, staff and students).
4. We will also explore the most feasible and pragmatic way to manage the proposed primary school: either by handing it over to the Haitian government or to any reputable and local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in the country, especially those with international affiliations.
5. The school will be SIUC-branded. In this regard, we are considering involving students in school districts in Carbondale in some form of competition to come up with the best name for the proposed school, as a way to involve our community in the Haiti school project.
6. SIUC will have the potential to develop a Study Abroad program each summer whereby our interested students will travel to Haiti to assist in the construction of the school and later, with teaching.
7. Local labor would be used in the construction of the school.
8. Construction would be expected to commence next summer (2011).
9. SIUC would find creative ways to document every step in the execution of the project in various media forms.

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1. <http://blogs.oxfamamerica.org/index.php/2010/02/09/in-a-camp-in-haiti-a-pillowcase-of-books-feeds-a-dream-for-the-future/>

## **Appendix:**

### **An overview of key details from a Haitian doctoral student at SIUC**

1. Schools typically run 2 streams per day: 8a.m. to 1p.m.; and 2p.m. to 7 p.m.
2. Schools have the average of 500 students per stream.
3. A class in a private school has an average of 30 kids; public school, 45 or even 50 kids.
4. A grade is divided into two classes, taught by different teachers.
5. Depending on neighborhood, scope of school project etc, a standard school might cost about \$100,000 i.e. \$25,000 to purchase the land; \$75,000 to construct a school with 14 classrooms, a cafeteria, an administrative building; two sets of toilets; a library/reading room; raw material and labor; school equipment. Estimate can go down by 30-40% if embarked upon in a poor neighborhood.
6. Private schools are fairly easier to embark upon because of less bureaucracy. But management would be a concern.
7. Others: pupils wear uniforms; some kids bring their lunch; others buy from nearby canteens; At times, school authorities offer school facilities/infrastructure for a variety of community services such as adult education, at no charge.

### **Contact**

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