

WOMEN'S INITIATIVE

Women's Initiative Fellowship



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Empowering women worldwide by promoting access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunity, and supporting First Ladies from around the world in using their unique platforms effectively.

BACKGROUND

Research shows that one of the best indicators of a woman's success is her network. The Women's Initiative Fellowship, a signature program of the Women's Initiative, is uniquely structured to establish a robust women's network, which enables women to have a greater voice on issues that affect them. By recognizing the importance of networks for socioeconomic success and stability, the Fellowship empowers and equips women to become effective leaders.

Each Women's Initiative Fellowship class is comprised of approximately 15-20 women from one country, representing the six most influential sectors of society, including business, education, health, law, media, and politics/civic engagement. Fellows are female leaders or "rising stars" who possess the vision, desire, and capacity to transform their respective communities and country. The structure of the program ensures that the fellows' impact in their community is substantial, concentrated, and powerful.

The year-long program begins with four weeks in the United States. During their visit, fellows participate in leadership courses, visit civil society organizations and Fortune 500 companies, and shadow their mentors, who are prominent American women in similar fields to their own. Fellows also attend courses at Southern Methodist University specifically designed for women in leadership, covering topics such as Leading Change, Negotiation, Powerful Presence and Effective Communication, Building Power Networks, Collaboration across Boundaries, Influence without Authority, and Building Effective Teams.

Upon conclusion of their time in the U.S., fellows return to their home country for ongoing training and to implement an action plan they develop to improve their communities and countries. They participate in multiple in-country seminars and trainings, which are facilitated by professors, experts, and alumni fellows.

"Investments in the success of women are investments that pay off."

- Mrs. Laura Bush

PROGRAM IMPACT

Since the program began, 64 women in Egypt and Tunisia across multiple sectors have been identified as fellows and welcomed to the Bush Institute to participate in the Women's Initiative Fellowship. These leaders create our powerful and expanding network of leaders, reporting more than 17,000 women in their growing networks. The fellows also reported that after participating in the program, 33% received a promotion at work, 30% were awarded a new leadership position, and 53% accepted a new job.

EMNA'S STORY

One fellow who put her Fellowship experience into practice to affect a vulnerable segment of society was Emna Ben Arab. Emna's passion is education reform, but her struggle was how to reach more of Tunisia's 2.3 million children, beyond the kids in her own secondary school and the students she taught as a Professor at Sfax University. A trip to Google in California's Silicon Valley and a meeting with the Google X group, which pioneers Google's "moon-shot ideas," such as the self-driving car, led Emna to ask what are "my own moon-shot ideas and my own wide dreams?" She returned to Tunisia determined to create an education campus where any child can arrive at age four and leave at 21 having learned the skills that will prepare him or her for the global job market.

She developed a new leadership curriculum for Sfax University based on what she had learned at Southern Methodist University during her fellowship, and she and her business partner opened another private secondary school in Sfax. Together, their two schools have 430 students and employ 36 teachers, many of whom are women. Emna's schools teach to the whole student, emphasizing not just academics but also social responsibility projects to improve the community. She created an online portal to bring together teachers, thought leaders, community members, parents, and other Tunisians to discuss education policy and issues.

Emna's ultimate dream is to become "a real decision-maker in my country," to run for political office with "education at the center of my political platform." The fellowship taught her both practical skills and to believe in future success. "I learned that I have to 'own' my own path. I learned to take thoughtful risks, and finally I learned that I should always say, 'Yes, and...' not 'Yes, but.'"

For more information on the Women's Initiative Fellowship, please contact Farhat Popal.

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