

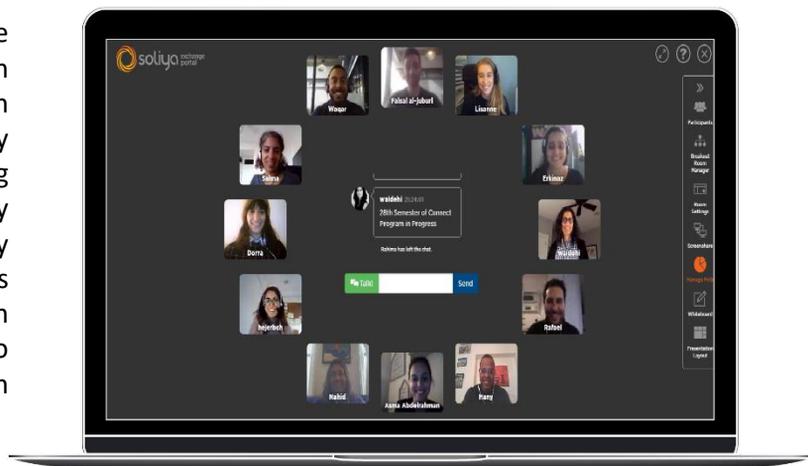
*This document is intended to provide an overview of the Connect Program and to answer some frequently asked questions. We at Soliya are very excited to work with you this semester. If you have any questions or need any further information, please feel free to e-mail [students@soliya.net](mailto:students@soliya.net)*

## Program Description

The Connect Program – Soliya’s flagship Virtual Exchange initiative – is a unique cross-cultural education program that enables college students from around the world to collaboratively explore the relationships between their societies with the aim of improving intercultural awareness and understanding.

Student participants in this semester’s Connect Program will congregate into groups consisting of approximately ten students each. Students will be drawn from institutions in the United States of America, Europe, the Middle East & North Africa, and Asia.

Each student group will “meet” for real-time discussions once a week for two hours via an online, videoconferencing platform. To join their group meetings, participants need simply to turn on their webcam and headset and log on to a designated website at their weekly meeting time. The medium is remarkably intimate: participants can see each other’s facial expressions, hear tone of voice, and even share a joke. Participants are also able to communicate with their fellow students when they are offline.



Each student has access to Soliya’s Exchange Portal where they can continue discussions or post messages to other users. Students can also engage with the broader Soliya community via the Exchange Portal streams, where they can connect with our diverse network of thousands of young people from around the world. Students participating in the Connect Program will engage in one main project with the assistance of one or two expert facilitators.

## Final Project

For your Final Project, you will engage with diverse perspectives in your local community and share them with your peers around the world. You will begin by working with your group to select interview questions. Then, you will conduct short video interviews with 2 of your local community members over 3 weeks of the Program. You will also share the video responses gathered by your group from *their* communities and facilitate an exchange of perspectives. Finally, you will write a paper to summarize the exchanges and reflect on: the process of engaging with different perspectives, your role in enabling cross-cultural exchange, and your Soliya experience. ***Details on the Final Project can be found in the Student Assignments document.***

#### Commitments

- Prior to the commencement of the Connect Program, students will participate in a brief online orientation.
- Throughout the duration of the program, students will spend 2 hours per week “meeting” online with their small group. Periodically, there will be short articles to read in preparation for these discussions.
- Students will write a Final Project paper.
- Students will complete a brief post-program evaluation about their experience.

Students need not have a computer science or media background, but basic proficiency with computers and good English communication skills are required.

#### Discussion Topics

Identity, culture, and stereotypes

Global and social challenges

Values and social norms

Intercultural communication

Life experiences and worldview

Covid-19 and its global implications

In addition, group facilitators will work with students to identify additional topics that they feel are important to discuss.

#### Students Will Gain

- A collaborative exploration of the critical current issues that affect the global community and are most important to young people.
- A chance to meet your peers from peers around the world, share your opinions, and hear their ideas about critical issues and build strong contacts with future leaders.
- The opportunity to gain and / or improve upon key 21st century skills such as leadership, analytical thinking, engaging across differences constructively, and collaborative problem-solving.
- Students who successfully complete the Connect Program will receive the Connect Program Certificate of Participation, attesting to the skills and experiences gained through their participation.

**Please note** the criteria for obtaining the Certificate of Participation:

1. Attend a minimum of 75% of the Connect Program sessions
2. Complete and submit the End of Semester Evaluation by the deadline: **May 8<sup>th</sup>**.
3. Complete and submit the Final Project Paper by **Friday, May 6<sup>th</sup>**.

## Program Deadlines

The Connect Program will run from **March 14<sup>th</sup> to May 6<sup>th</sup>**.

### Week of March 1<sup>th</sup>

- **Connect Program Begins.** Introductions and first week of online dialogue sessions.
- Discussions will be based upon the required readings on “**Global and Social Challenges**”.

### Weeks of March 21<sup>st</sup> and March 28<sup>th</sup>

- Second and third online dialogue sessions.

### Week of April 4<sup>th</sup>

- Discussions will be based upon the required readings for this week on “**Intercultural Communication**”. Please make sure you have read these articles before your online session.

### Weeks of April 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 25<sup>th</sup>

- 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> online dialogue sessions .

### Week of May 2<sup>nd</sup>

- Last week of Connect Program dialogue sessions.
- The Final Project is due on **Friday, May 6<sup>th</sup>**.
- Complete the online evaluation of the Connect Program by **May 8<sup>th</sup>**.
- Upon completion of the online evaluation, students will receive their certificate from Soliya, verifying their successful participation in the Connect Program.

## Need Help?

### Contact us:

Technical difficulties: [student-tech@soliya.net](mailto:student-tech@soliya.net)

Attendance concerns: [attendance@soliya.net](mailto:attendance@soliya.net)

All other questions and concerns: [students@soliya.net](mailto:students@soliya.net)

## About Soliya

Soliya staff is composed of a diverse team of talented individuals coming from Egypt, France, Finland, Morocco, Ukraine, Tunisia, Turkey, India, Bangladesh, and the United States of America. In addition to Soliya’s staff members, Soliya's operations are based on an extraordinary network of highly trained facilitators from around the world, volunteering their time to catalyze constructive communication. To date, Soliya has worked with around **23,500 students** from a diverse cross-section of over **200 institutions** in **35 countries**. To learn more about Soliya, please go to [www.soliya.net](http://www.soliya.net) where you can read about Soliya’s staff, volunteer facilitators, and past Soliya participants.