



The campus of the future Eastern Mediterranean College. (Courtesy ISRAEL21c)

The Eastern Mediterranean College, due to open in 2014, will offer select students a chance to learn tools for the betterment of their home countries

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www.israel21c.org

It will be the first of its kind in Israel: An international two-year boarding school focusing on what Israel knows best – water management, environment and social entrepreneurship. Offering full scholarships and open to 200 teens in grades 11 and 12 from around the world starting in the fall of 2014, this new non-profit high school, Eastern Mediterranean College, will join the international network of the United World College.

Recently returned from a 30-year reunion in Canada where he had studied at the Victoria campus as a teenager, EMC founding volunteer CEO Oded Rose says his experience way back when influenced his life in a profound way.

He is hoping that such a school in Israel will not only open up young Arabs and international students to the diversity of Israel but that it will also help expand the worldview of Israeli teens. Twenty of the 200 allotted spaces are for Arabs from the West Bank and Israel's neighbor countries like Jordan; another 20 are reserved for Israelis.

With architectural drafts already in the final stages, the EMC campus will

be located at Hakfar Hayarok ("the green village"), south of Ramat Hasharon. It is a place where young students studying film and visual arts can be seen mingling with colorful peacocks roaming freely around the campus.

Until its own buildings can be completed, EMC students will stay in borrowed dorm space at Hakfar Hayarok. The plan calls for students of any background, with high academic merit and proven social action skills, to study in Israel for the final two years of high school.

Built on a program of standards set by the International Baccalaureate run out of Switzerland, the program will maintain extremely high standards, says Rose, and will include two special tracks.

One, focusing on desert ecology, will be linked to Israel's Arava School for Environmental Studies and will explore geopolitical issues in water management as well as Israeli water technologies for making the desert bloom. The idea is that students from other arid countries, such as Jordan, could greatly benefit from learning and transferring Israel's know-how and technology to the increasingly dry region.

The second track will tap into another Israeli specialty: start-up busi-

nesses. "We plan to teach students how to write a business plan, specifically around social enterprises," says Rose, who runs clean-tech company Flow Industries, which provides "green" plumbing solutions to municipal water companies, cement factories and the oil industry.

Acceptance to the college will be decided by an international committee headed by the United World College, which has educated about 1,000 students every year in its 12 schools around the world since 1962. Applicants are selected from about 140 countries and Israel will mark the school's 13th location.

Students can specifically ask to study in Israel but not everyone gets their first choice, says Rose. The program will be in English with a mandate to teach a second language – either Hebrew or Arabic, depending on the student.

Rose is currently looking for donors and sponsors to help provide funding for campus buildings and to subsidize the annual budget of about \$5 million. Anyone accepted to the school who cannot afford to pay will be given a full or partial scholarship so that finances will not bar participation.

"We'll typically look for good academic stature. On the other side, we'll

look for community involvement and community leadership," says Rose, a father of five. "At a young age we already see some kids demonstrating this. We also thought to include one's readiness to live away from home in the selection process. It's not easy, as I recall. For the first few months I really missed home."

Rose got the chance to study at the college in Canada three decades ago after his neighbor, a professor at Bar-Ilan University, told him about the program. Out of the 30 students who applied, Rose was sent to represent Israel and for two years lived on Vancouver Island in British Columbia.

"It influenced my future in so many ways," Rose says. "It basically opened my eyes to the world and the fact that we are all human beings. We all lived in one country and were affected by the media there, not really knowing what's going on in the rest of the world. Then, when you can live in such a place and see hundreds of others just like you, but different in color, you realize that we can actually talk to each other."

Rose looks forward to opening these kinds of international two-way doors in 2014.

"Hopefully, we will gain many new ambassadors for Israel from around the world," he concludes.