

# From Dream to Reality: A Virtual Journey at ISTL - An American Student's Testimony

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It has always been a dream of mine to enroll in a Bible school and study Scripture and aspects of Christian ministry in a more focused and formal manner, but the opportunity had never been in place until I learned about ISTL. I am an American who lives in the U.S. and has the joy to travel to Albania frequently on short-term mission trips, so I already knew I loved the Albanian culture and people. As I came in contact with Albanian friends who are students at ISTL, I heard first-hand the tremendous impact the school is having on their lives and ministry. Could it be possible, I wondered, for a non-Albanian-speaking American to enroll and become a virtual student? What would this even look like? I believed the Lord was leading me, so I took the next step and contacted the ISTL office via email to potentially begin this life-changing journey.

It has been decades since I was a college student in the U.S., so I had a few initial concerns - from my own academic abilities to the ease of using the technology required to participate in a class or submit assignments. But I took the exciting leap of faith and became a virtual ISTL student. Almost instantly I felt like I had become part of a family. The ISTL staff graciously took the time to answer my questions and provided the support and encouragement I needed to confidently proceed.

Each month, I was placed in a class with an English-speaking instructor or with an excellent translator to translate into English. The instructors, who travel in from all over the world to teach at ISTL, are absolutely phenomenal and I began learning and receiving so much equipping and training to be able to use in ministry and also in my personal walk with God. Although I am a virtual student, I actually do not feel like anything is missing academically in my journey at ISTL. I am still able to interact with other students, either in class before the lecture begins or during a breakout session where we are placed in separate rooms for class discussion. The ISTL teacher assistant for each class is easily accessible to me and always eager to answer any question I may have or help in any way. They even allow a time adjustment on deadlines for me to submit assignments and take exams in order to accommodate the time difference between the U.S. and Albania. And all of the instructors interact with the virtual students as if we are sitting in the classroom beside the students who are learning in person.

I have now completed the first year of study with ISTL and it has been awesome. My plan is to begin my second year this fall and continue on this amazing journey of learning and equipping, and I am so thankful for this incredible school. If you are an international student living outside of Albania who desires to enroll in an exceptional Bible/ministry school that is Spirit-led, Christ-centered, and Bible-based, I can wholeheartedly recommend ISTL to you.

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