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It was heartbreaking when I first heard about the IISMA program. I have applied to numerous scholarships to study abroad since junior high but I had never been accepted to a single one. The news about IISMA came to me from a friend's social media post where he was being interviewed for a scholarship in early 2021, a scholarship that I've been dreaming of. Everything was perfect for me except for the timing, as I had known about it too late. **I did not get the chance to apply, and the perfect scholarship for me turned into my biggest heartbreak.**

A few months later I accompanied my friend, who was accepted to IISMA 2021, to the airport for his departure to Hungary. **I promised him, myself, and my parents that I would be back in that same airport for IISMA the next year.** Turns out my biggest heartbreak turned into an amazing opportunity for me to grow. Within one semester I was able to do an internship, win multiple competitions, and even lead an organization.

My preparation started way earlier than everyone else. I approached alumni left and right, created peer groups for IISMA, and dedicated my whole sixth semester for IISMA application. I made three versions of my essay and had them reviewed by multiple person each. **I gave it my all and prayed to God to lead me to the best path,** which finally landed me to choose Monash University as my host university selection.



Being selected as one out of the 21 IISMA Monash University awardees has to be one of my proudest moments of my life. I remember not being able to sleep the whole night just **smiling cheek to cheek thinking about the adventures I was going to embark on.** I was also extremely excited to be able to be part of The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Research of Indonesia, as one of my life goals is to make an impact in Indonesia's education.

"Walk the Talk" means to always keep your word. I fully intend on keeping my word on everything that I have stated in my essay, my promises to myself, and to be accountable for what this opportunity brings. **I became the Vice Student Representative for IISMA Monash** and I helped in preparing everything the awardees needed for our time in Australia. Our SR and I also arranged several meetings with our peer awardees so we can get to know each other better and help each other before departure.

IISMA committee and awardees **were extremely helpful with everything.** They made compulsory sessions to talk about a wide range of preparations, from the preparation for the program itself to psychological preparations.

I can't begin to describe how magical, adventurous, educational, and eye-opening my experiences in Australia had been. **First time in university where I feel like class is the best time of the day**, where I would look forward to having discussions with lecturers, and roam around the walk-friendly campus. **Monash University itself had the biggest orientation events** I have ever seen and allowed me to make a lot of new friends from all around the world. Melbourne is more diverse than I could have imagined, I can hear a different language being spoken on every turn when walking on the street or just going to class.

One of my fondest memories of the whole program is living in the dorms. The amazing people from every floor and every building meeting together for weekly snack and chats or dorm dinners are memories I will always look back on. **My IISMA Monash peers were also my family throughout my time in Australia**, we would always do our assignments together in our dorm's common room, or watch scary movies in the tv room.

The people might be the best thing that I would take from this experience. From the friends that I met along the way that have turned into the people that know me best, the teachers at Madrasah Westall that **taught me to be connected to our community**, to the lecturers that introduced me to a whole new perspective on education and what it's all about

It feels like life has reset itself. **Coming back to Indonesia I can not look at the same things with the same perspective anymore**, whether it be education, opportunities, career, or life in general. IISMA has impacted me so much it altered my career goals and made me strive to make a bigger impact.

Throughout this year's IISMA registration period I often help others to be an IISMA awardee, but not only to be an awardee, but to also **Walk the Talk and make their impact**. I initiated a community called **Ngobrol IISMA** out of my desire to bridge IISMA candidates with previous IISMA awardees. I managed to gather **100+ awardees** to make three events with a total of **1500+ participants**. We held discussion sessions and mock up interview sessions for candidates to practice.

With more and more opportunities like IISMA, I believe that education in Indonesia is **turning in the right direction**, and with more promising awardees today and in the future, hopefully we can become **catalysts for that change to flourish**.