



Volunteer Coordinator
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FRIENDSHIP PARTNER INFORMATION SHEET

Vision

International students are often very lonely, and new students may need to get oriented to their new surroundings when they first arrive in Columbus. By inviting an international student to spend some time with you and/or your family to have fun together, the student will feel like they have a **friend** here in Columbus. In return, you and/or your family will be enriched by learning about the student's culture.

How is this different from an English Conversation Partner?

The Friendship Partner program was designed to match international students with trained and approved IFI volunteers (individuals and couples). They connect to do activities together, share meals, go shopping, help with conversational English and with practical needs (such as driving them to a store) especially when they first arrive.

What time commitment is expected?

The partners will meet at least once a month for 2-4 hours or longer if the activity is such that it requires that. The time period is one academic year. The student may also periodically reach out to you for help with a ride to the store, or with a question.

When would I be needed?

Most international students arrive in the fall, but we have requests to match students with a Friendship Partner may occur throughout the year.

How will I and/or my family be matched with a student?

After you are approved as a new volunteer (you have completed a training and application, and your background and reference check reviews are approved), we look at our list of students waiting for Partners, and try to find a match with similar interests. The extent to which this is possible depends on who is on the list. If you are a single person, we would only match you with a student of the same gender and near your age. If you prefer a student from a particular country, cultural, or religious background, we will try to accommodate that if possible.

What if I am unable to contact the student I have been assigned?

Please remember that you are the "host" to a guest in our country. It can be very intimidating for an international student to make the first contact. Please do not give up after one attempt. Try the student several times, and call or text them if your emails are not answered. If after these attempts you are still unsuccessful, please contact the IFI office (294-2434), so that we can either facilitate the contact or match you with another student.

What if my student returns to his/her home country, or can no longer meet with me?

Please let us know so we can update our records. We would be happy to match you with someone else! However, your friendship with them doesn't have to end, you can still stay in touch from a distance.

Do students speak English?

Yes, an international student at OSU, must have a high level of English. However visiting scholars and spouses are not required to meet English standards, so they may be less fluent.

What types of activities would be suitable to do together?

If you are meeting with the student one-on-one, feel free to just hang out – share a meal together, go shopping, take a bike ride, or do some cooking, etc. If your whole family is involved, invite the student to a birthday party, for a cookout, to a sports game, or a concert. We have lots of other ideas, which we'll send along after you have been matched!

What about sharing my faith?

Your commitment to the student should be that of unconditional friendship and love. Please be sensitive to the fact that the students come from many different cultural and religious backgrounds, and may have little or no previous exposure to Christianity. Hopefully over time, you will build a relationship of trust, which would be an appropriate context for sharing your faith. We ask that you not force spiritual discussion, but be sensitive to the student and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. In many cases, the students are very open to such discussions. It is appropriate to naturally include your faith as it relates to your life experiences.

International Friendships, Inc.

PH # 614-294-2434

Web site: <https://columbus.ifipartners.org/friend/>