



# International Friendship Program

A joint program brought to you by  and **UCDAVIS**  
**SERVICES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS**

## Information Packet



# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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*International Friendship Program*

## What is the International Friendship Program (IFP)?

Welcome to the International Friendship Program - a joint program brought to you by International House Davis and UC Davis Services for International Students and Scholars. IFP matches international students/scholars/visitors with local hosts (families/couples/individuals) from the community to form Friendship Families. Local hosts in the program provide international students/scholars/visitors with an introduction to life in the United States in general and the City of Davis and surrounding areas in particular, while learning about their new friends' cultures and home countries.

IFP aims to build long-lasting cross-cultural friendships between international students/scholars/visitors and members of the local community. Building bridges across cultures and making students/scholars/visitors feel welcome are the primary goals.

*This is not a host family program and does not involve home stays.*

Please review the guidelines and expectations described in this packet in their entirety.

## How does it work?

Both local hosts and international students/scholars/visitors go through the same application process. Participants may make specific requests about matching preferences but an important part of the program is open mindedness and flexibility. Thus, if requests cannot be fulfilled, participants are asked to be flexible.

Since the number of students/scholars/visitors interested in the program is always higher than the number of local hosts willing to participate, it's likely that not all international students/scholars/visitors will be matched. The goal is to match as many new international students/scholars/visitors as possible. Matching is based on hobbies, special interests, etc. that students and local hosts have in common based on their application forms. If the friendships do not work for any reason, the participants may need to be re-assigned.

The cornerstone of any friendship is respect, so we ask participants to please respect each other's religious, cultural and political beliefs, and refrain from trying to change them. Successful matches between local hosts and students/scholars/visitors are dependent on shared efforts on all sides, often resulting in mutual cross-cultural exchanges and life-long friendships.

## Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I get started? What is the application process?
2. How do you match?
3. Am I guaranteed a match?
4. Can I be matched with someone from a particular country?
5. What are the guidelines?

# RESPONSIBILITIES & EXPECTATIONS

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## Guidelines for ALL participants

1. Carefully read all guidelines and orientation materials concerning the IFP.
2. Contact the IFP Coordinator if you have questions, are concerned about your match or if you do not feel comfortable in your friendship.
3. At the end of the academic year, notify the IFP Coordinator as to whether you want to keep the same match, be matched with a new person, or no longer want to participate in the program.
4. Be open to cultural differences, appreciate cultural diversity, and commit to developing a cross-cultural friendship. Respect your match's religion, beliefs, values, and customs.
5. Commit for a minimum of one quarter.
6. Commit to meet at least once per month and attend events.
7. International students/visitors/scholars are not expected to provide child care, language teaching, assistance in the home, etc. that is not entirely voluntary in nature.

<b>Host Families should:</b>	<b>Hosts are NOT expected to provide:</b>	<b>Visitors should:</b>	<b>Visitors are NOT expected to provide:</b>
Contact your match within 1-2 weeks of receiving their info.  Maintain regular contact.  Plan to include your student/scholar/visitor in at least one activity per month during the academic year.	Housing for your international student/scholar/visitor.  Immigration information.  Financial resources.  Employment information.  Academic advising.	Be open to new experiences and trying new things.  Share your values and customs.  Respect the values and cultural differences in your host families.	Child care.  Language teaching.  Assistance in the home.  Anything that is not entirely voluntary in nature.

# MEETING YOUR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT/SCHOLAR/VISITOR

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## Meeting your Match

The Fall Welcome and Spring barbeques and other special events provide Friendship Families, comprising local hosts and international students/scholars/visitors, opportunities to meet each other along with other students/students/visitors and families in the program. The primary goal of the program is to build a sense of community within the Friendship Families.

Generally, it is suggested that the first meeting take place in a public place near campus. Be sure to give the international student/scholar/visitor explicit directions and a clear time. If you feel that the student/scholar/visitor might be uncomfortable meeting you for the first time, encourage him/her to bring a friend.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING TOGETHER

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- Invite your student/scholar/visitor to dinner with your family. Ask him/her to bring pictures of home and family.
- Take your student/scholar/visitor to visit your grandparents or extended family, if possible. Talk about family relationships in the USA. Ask how the elderly are regarded in his/her country.
- Watch a favorite TV show and discuss it. During an election year, consider watching the election results together.
- Go shopping! Try a supermarket. Point out bargains and generic brands, explain unit pricing, how to weigh produce, how to get a check-cashing card or discount card, etc.
- Watch a big game on TV and explain what is happening if the student/scholar/visitor is not familiar with the sport. Also do the reverse: watch a game that is popular in the student/scholar/visitor's country and ask him/her to explain it to you.
- Visit your children's or neighbor's school. Explain the system of education in the USA and compare this to the system of education in your student/scholar/visitor's home country.
- Stop by the local police station or courthouse. Explain the difference between town, city, county and state governments. Discuss the rolls of law enforcement and public servants in the USA, and compare it to your student/scholar/visitor's home country.
- Visit the library or a bookstore. Choose a book you'd both like to read and discuss over coffee/tea.
- Go to an amusement park or a mini-golf course. Especially fun with kids!
- Think about events that may be "uniquely American" in which you could include your student/scholar/visitor. Some examples: pumpkin carving, 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade, Easter eggs coloring, weddings and graduations, Super Bowl party, Thanksgiving dinner, etc.

## Other Activities

Picnics & potlucks

Farm visits

Walking, hiking, biking

Visit a relative's home

Sailing, canoeing, boating

Flea market, garage sales

State Capital Building

State parks

Visit a neighboring town

Social/civic groups

Board games

Movie theatre

Old Town Sacramento

Concerts, musicals, plays

Zoos, museums

Hunting, fishing, camping

Local/state festivals

## Foods to Share

Lemonade

Mac & Cheese

Peanut Butter

Steak (if beef is in diet)

Tuna Hot Dish

Mashed Potatoes

Goulash

Jello Salad

Caramel Apples

Bars / Brownies

Corn on the Cob

Root Beer Floats

Wild Rice

S'mores

## CONVERSATION STARTERS

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### Relationships

1. How do you define friend and what do you generally expect from a friend?
2. At what age do couples typically marry? How do people meet their spouses?
3. Are workplace relationships formal or informal?

### Family

1. What responsibilities do different family members have at home?
2. How common is it for women to work outside the home?
3. How does your family celebrate special holidays? What does the holiday represent?
4. How often do you see your extended family? Do they live nearby or far away?

### Food

1. What dietary restrictions do you have?
2. What is the main meal of the day? Is the meal time a time when your family is together?
3. Can you explain how to make one of your favorite meals?
4. What do you like/dislike about food in the USA? What do you miss the most?

## Daily Routine

1. What is an average workday like?
2. What is transportation like? How do people travel to work? How do children travel to school?
3. How often do people go to a shopping market or grocery store?

## Education

1. What is the education system like in your country? Describe a typical day at school.
2. What languages are you required to study, if any?
3. What are the educational backgrounds of your family members?

## Leisure Activities

1. What is the most popular sport in your home country? What sports do you like?
2. What activities do families enjoy in their leisure time?
3. Does your family like to take vacations? If so, where?
4. How do you spend your time in the USA compared to when you are in your home country? Have you developed new hobbies/interests since coming to Davis?

# ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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## Respect

IFP aims to increase friendship and cultural exchange between international students/scholars/visitors and community members.

## Drugs & Alcohol

The use of non-medical drugs is illegal in USA, although such use may be legal in certain foreign countries. You should not offer or encourage student(s) to indulge in any form of illegal drug use, nor should you use any type of illegal drugs in the presence of your international friend.

Many international students/scholars/visitors do not use alcohol because of cultural and religious beliefs. As a friend, you should respect and honor these beliefs by not offering alcoholic drinks to your students when you entertain him/her. Refer to the student/scholar/visitor IFP application which makes a provision for listing dietary restrictions. Also, you should not offer alcohol to a student under the age of 21 in any circumstance. If your student is over the age of 21, you should not allow him/her to drink excessively and then drive a car.

## Gender

IFP includes single individuals as well as couples and families with children. When an application is received from a single male/female host, it is the IFP's policy to match that individual with a student/scholar/visitor of the same gender, and vice-versa. This policy has been established as a consideration of different cultural beliefs concerning gender issues. As a friend, you should be sensitive to differences in values and beliefs regarding this topic.

## Cultural Values & Assumptions

Culture is the lens through which an individual views the world. The values and assumptions that one holds are highly influenced by one's culture. Often the differences are ingrained and invisible, and difficulties can arise when one does not see and/or understand these differences. We encourage you to research and read about your student/scholar/visitor's home country/culture, as this will help facilitate a successful and rewarding relationship. See the following pages for more information on dominant American values.

When cultures come together, misunderstandings can sometimes be difficult to avoid. You can take proactive steps to limit these misunderstandings. Communicate clearly and honestly, and have an open conversation about each other's" expectations. Take the time to research the country your student/scholar/visitor comes from. Know your boundaries and communicate them, if necessary. Seek information about cross-cultural communication. Ask questions. Most importantly, be open to learning from successes and mistakes and sharing with others. After all, this is what IFP is all about!

# AMERICAN VALUES AND ASSUMPTIONS

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Below is some information about dominant values in the USA. As you read and reflect on these values, remember that they are not necessarily right or wrong. Additionally, these are just generalizations about American culture; you will find many individuals within the USA who do not hold the same beliefs.

Be aware that your student/scholar/visitor may come from a culture with very different norms, values, and beliefs. Having knowledge and awareness about the foundational values of the USA may help you minimize misunderstandings in your cross-cultural relationships.

### **Individualism, Independence, & Privacy**

Americans see themselves as individuals who are responsible for their own situations in life. Personal needs and desires often take precedence over the needs and desires of families and society. There is an emphasis on self-fulfillment and self-discovery. Parents give many choices to their children and instill personal responsibility, even at a young age. It is uncommon to see children beyond the age of 20 living with their parents. If they do, they often pay rent. Americans allow their children to have their own possessions and their own rooms, if they can afford it. There are rules/laws about confidentiality which are seen as “protecting” the right to privacy.

Americans assume that most people need time to themselves. In some cultures one rarely spends time alone, and translations of the word „privacy” have a negative connotation of being outcast or isolated. In contrast, some Americans have difficulty understanding people who always like to be with others and may judge them to be “clingy” or “dependent” – words which have somewhat negative connotations. Americans may be perceived as friendly upon first meeting, but difficult to open up and get to know personally.

### **Egalitarianism**

Even though there are inequalities and prejudice in our society, most firmly believe that “we all are created equal” and that every person deserves some measure of respect. It follows that all people should have access to the same opportunities regardless of race, religion, gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, socio-economic status, mental or physical disabilities. This is a foundational belief in the US and is the basis for many laws and workplace policies.

The USA functions less hierarchically than some countries. Americans may be uncomfortable with obvious displays that indicate social status, such as honorific titles or being bowed to or deferred to. Americans show respect and make distinctions in more subtle ways, such as by tone of voice, order of speaking, or seating arrangements.

Children are often allowed to “discuss” their parents’ decisions. Questioning one’s professor is acceptable, and bosses often go out of their way to seem approachable by helping with some of the less desirable work or joking during business hours. Americans chitchat with cab drivers, restaurant servers, store clerks, doctors, or anyone else they meet in daily interactions.

### **Achievement & Action-Oriented**

Americans value hard work and continually want to improve the situation. We feel that we never achieve enough and should always keep bettering ourselves. Some Americans are seen as very competitive. We are always doing something, and feel bored just sitting and “doing nothing.” Individuals are admired who “work their way up from the bottom”, who “stand out from the crowd”, who do something first, the longest, or the best. Ultimately people are defined by what they do in life, not by the family or economic situation into which they are born.

# AMERICAN VALUES AND ASSUMPTIONS *(CONTINUED)*

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## **Informality**

Americans use first names quite often, even with people who are older or those whose social position is higher. Most people, regardless of their social position, are at times very informal in the way they speak, behave, and dress (even the President!). Relationships between students, teachers, and coworkers are often much more casual than in other countries. Informality is often valued as it creates an image of egalitarianism.

## **Time Orientation**

Americans speak of “using” time well, of not “wasting time” and of “saving time,” while in many cultures time is just something that happens. We value organization and punctuality. We make lists of things to do, carry calendars and schedules, and feel best knowing that time is used constructively. Even leisure time is planned. Efficiency is highly valued; hence many popular magazines are full of suggestions on how to be more efficient in cooking, cleaning, maintenance, raising children, etc.

Americans are generally less concerned with history and traditions than people from countries whose history goes back several centuries. While the US tends to be very future-oriented, other cultures have more of a reverence for the past. We value new things and ideas more than the old, and products are often advertised as “new and improved”. We believe that we can and should improve our situation, as in the phrase “don’t just stand there, do something!”

## **Directness**

“Let’s get to the point” and “Let’s lay our cards on the table” are examples of American directness. Assertiveness and honesty are highly valued, and we often tell the truth about our situation even though it may put us in an unfavorable light. Other cultures are more concerned with “saving face”, and may say something indirectly or state it more positively in order to avoid shame and embarrassment.

Source: Althen, Gary. *American Ways: A guide for foreigners in the United States*. Intercultural Press, 1998, 2003

**Thank you for your interest in the International Friendship Program.**

**We wish you the best as you begin your new friendship!**

*Some materials in this pamphlet are adapted from the  
NC State University International Friendship Program booklet.*



## Contact Information

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