

California State University, Chico International Friendship Program

Participant Handbook



International Friendship Program Coordinators:

Cindy McKay, International Student Advisor

cjmckay@csuchico.edu

Tasha Alexander, International Student & Scholar Advisor

tmalexander@csuchico.edu

Office of International Education & Global Engagement

Student Services Center 440

(530) 898-5415

Program Overview

What is the International Friendship Program (IFP)?

The primary purpose of the IFP is to promote cross-cultural friendships. The Office of International Education & Global Engagement (IEGE) does this by connecting international student and university staff/faculty volunteers. The IFP has a number of activities in which program participants may participate. Pairs are also encouraged to meet outside of program events to deepen connections and get to know each other better. Mentors provide an informal introduction to life in the United States through conversations and activities. And students help their mentors learn more about the cultures of their home countries. The program operates on a semester basis.

How does the program work?

All participants must complete an application and submit it to IEGE for processing. IEGE will match students and hosts based on their indicated interests and preferences. Open-mindedness and flexibility are expected from all program participants, and students or hosts may request reassignment as needed.

Guidelines for ALL participants:

- 1) Read all program materials provided and attend IFP orientation.
- 2) Be respectful of cultural differences and commit to developing a cross-cultural friendship. Respect your match's religion, beliefs, values, and customs. No proselytizing is allowed.
- 3) Because this is not a childcare, tutoring, or maid service, it would be highly inappropriate to ask your international friend to do any of the aforementioned activities.
- 4) All participants should feel safe and at ease with meeting locations. **Your initial friendship meeting should be in a public place.** Comfort levels for meeting in the home of the host will vary from student to student. Please have an open discussion about this topic and perhaps revisit comfort levels before planning the next friendship activity. You may want to consider allowing your student to invite along a friend for visits to your home.
- 5) Contact an IFP Coordinator if you have any questions, issues, or concerns.
- 6) Abide by all state and federal laws, and IFP guidelines. Conduct violations will result in immediate dismissal from the Program.

Meeting Your New Friend

Cross-cultural friendships can bring about many, "Wow! and Really?" moments. These new experiences cause us to become more aware of our own culture as well as learn new things about others' ways of living. We encourage you to come to this experience with the motto,

“Different isn’t bad or good. It is just different.” Respect and tolerance are keys to making your new friendship a successful one.

Information for Mentors

At IFP orientation, IEGE will provide you with a *“Friendship with an International Student Guide.”* This brief but comprehensive brochure, published by NAFSA, the Association of International Educators, will provide you with basic information about how American culture may differ from other cultures. It also has some great tips for how to take the first steps toward building your new cross-cultural friendship.

After the application deadline, IEGE will match you with a student and supply you with his or her name and contact information. This will happen late in the second week of the semester. **Your first responsibility as a mentor is to e-mail or text your student, introduce yourself, and plan a time to meet and get acquainted.** Please contact your student within one week of receiving his/her information, and please don’t be discouraged if you do not immediately hear back. Sometimes setting up initial meetings across different linguistic and cultural backgrounds can be a challenge.

Information for Students

Meeting and interacting with Americans is likely one of the reasons you decided to study in the U.S. Your studies are of primary importance, but the experiences you have and the people you meet outside of the classroom will likely help you form the memories you will hold dear forever.

At orientation the IFP will provide you with a brochure, *“Friendship with Your American Host.”* This brief but comprehensive pamphlet, published by NAFSA, the Association of International Educators, offers basic information about American culture, values, and some social customs. Around the end of the second week of classes, your American mentor will contact you via email or phone to set-up a day and time to meet you, **please respond promptly.**

This program is about **cultural exchange**. Exchange means **giving and receiving**. In some cultures, asking someone questions about themselves may be considered too forward or even impolite. In the U.S., asking someone questions about themselves, especially in the context of friendship, is expected. It is a way to show that you are interested and that you care to learn more about a person. To have a successful friendship, you must be willing to share information about yourself and ask your host to share information about him/herself.

Learn More About Each Other

Conversation starters:

Relationships

- 1) What's your definition of friendship and what do you generally expect from a friend? Is it typical to have many friends or just a few that you know very well?
- 2) When you socialize with friends, do you invite them to your home for activities or do you usually do things outside of your home? (Come over for a movie or go out to see a movie?)
- 3) What do you and your friends do for fun?
- 4) At what age do couples typically marry? How do people meet their spouses?

Family

- 1) How does your family celebrate special holidays? What does the holiday represent?
- 2) Who lives in your household? Just you, your parents, and siblings or does your extended family live with you?
- 3) How often do you see relatives that don't live with you?
- 4) Does your name have a special meaning? Share the story of how you got your name.

Food

- 1) Are there any foods that you do not eat?
- 2) In your country, what is considered the main meal of the day? Does your family sit together at meal time?
- 3) What are your favorite foods? Can you explain how to make one of your favorite meals?
- 4) What do you like/dislike about food in the US?

Daily Routine

- 1) Talk about what you might do on a typical day in your home country (weekday/weekend).
- 2) What is transportation like? How do people travel to work? How do children travel to school?
- 3) How often do people go to the 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) Are there any new activities that you'd like to try or new places you'd like to visit while you are here in the U.S.?

Enjoy Your Time Together 😊