Make a Friend. Be a Friend.

Thank you for your interest in the International Friendship Program (IFP) at Florida Tech. We commend your willingness to share your life, culture and personal wisdom with someone from another country and applaud your generosity of spirit. People like you confirm that Florida Tech truly is the university that offers High Tech with a Human Touch.

Before submitting your application to participate as either a Host or Student/Scholar, we ask you to familiarize yourself with all the information contained within this packet. It covers expectations and requirements of all participants and offers creative ways of making your future relationship with an international student or American host both rewarding and fun.

Please call the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) at (321) 674-8053 with any questions or concerns you may have, or e-mail us at isss@fit.edu for more information.
**OVERVIEW**

**About the International Friendship Program**
The primary purpose of the IFP is to promote and facilitate cross-cultural friendship by pairing an international student or scholar (Student) with a volunteer from the university or local community (Host) for an academic year. The Host provides an informal introduction to life in the United States via conversation and activities. Students can help their American host learn more about other cultures.

**About Our International Students and Scholars**
There are currently more than 800 international students and scholars at Florida Institute of Technology representing over 100 countries. Most of these students come from Asia, primarily India, China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan, with growing numbers hailing from the Middle East, Europe and the Caribbean. All international visitors interested in this program are excited about being placed with a host.

**About Our American Hosts**
Community participants learn about the program through word-of-mouth, newspaper and website announcements, civic organizations, neighborhood associations and Florida Tech publications. Hosts represent a wide variety of backgrounds, age groups, and races, and may be students or professionals, couples or families, religious or non-religious, lifelong Americans or foreign-born Americans.

**Joining the Program**
Everyone wishing to participate in the IFP, whether as a Host or Student, must complete an application and submit it to ISSS for processing. The spouses of international students and scholars are welcome to participate. Community Hosts may make specific requests regarding who they would like to have as their Student, but are encouraged to be open-minded and flexible.
INFORMATION FOR HOSTS

What Will Be Expected of You
We’re looking for personable, open-minded, respectful people who enjoy learning about other cultures and building new relationships. But that’s not all it takes to become a Host. We also ask that you, as a volunteer participant, agree to uphold the following responsibilities:

1. Commit to one academic year (August to May) of participation
2. Contact your assigned Student within the first week after being provided his or her name
3. Maintain regular contact (at least once a week) with your Student via phone or e-mail
4. Include your Student in at least one activity per month during the school year
5. Attend one or more social events planned by ISSS
6. Contact ISSS:
   a. When you have questions or concerns relating to your Student
   b. At the end of the year and let us know if you want to keep the same Student, be matched with someone new, or no longer wish to participate in the program
   c. If you lose touch with your Student or are no longer able to fulfill your responsibilities (regardless of the reason)
7. Complete an evaluation of the International Friendship Program at the end of the year
8. Be ethical in one’s actions and adhere to the Crimson Rule

The Crimson Rule
You will understandably have information and resources you are eager to share with your Student. There are, however, boundaries that must be maintained in order to protect the security and wellbeing of all program participants. That said, you should never offer your Student:

- Academic advisement
- Financial resources
- Housing
- Immigration information
- Job information

If your Student requests any of these things, please direct them to ISSS. That’s what we’re here for!

What You Can Expect
You can expect to build a friendship with someone who, despite being from another country, is probably a lot like you. Students tend to be easy to get along with, eager to learn, and extremely gracious. Of course, like you, they’re also unique individuals with their own interests, hobbies, dreams and fears. As such, they may surprise you. But isn’t that the fun of making new friends?

Additionally, you can expect that your Student will:

- Want to be treated with the same respect you’d expect from him or her
- Know more than you think about American culture and customs, but still require time to adjust
- Have questions that you may not be able to answer in addition to many that you can
- Like you, have a life beyond the International Friendship Program that includes his or her own friends and family
- Be aware of the Crimson Rule and take care of his or her own expenses, housing situation, academic obligations, immigration responsibilities, etc.
Once your application to participate in the International Friendship Program is accepted, ISSS will match you with a Student and supply you with his or her name and contact information.

**Getting in Touch**
Your first responsibility as a Host is to call or e-mail your Student, introduce yourself, and plan a time to meet and get acquainted. If the e-mail or phone number provided to you do not work, you can send a note to your Student at his or her local address or through his or her academic department. If after this you are still unable to contact your Student, please let ISSS know, and we will help facilitate your introduction.

**The First Meeting**
Generally, it is suggested that the first meeting take place in a public place on or near campus, such as the student union building, dining hall, library or local coffee shop. Keep it casual and friendly. If you get the impression that your Student is apprehensive or nervous, encourage him or her to bring a friend. When scheduling the meet-up, be sure to give detailed directions and a specific time. E-mail is often a good way to confirm a meeting and clarify information.

**Suggestions for Getting Together**
After your first meeting, you can continue getting together for casual on-campus chats, or you can get out and do something different. There are countless activities you can share with your Student. Here are just a few suggestions:

1. International Coffee Hours – Connect over a cup of java at one of ISSS’s International Coffee Hours
2. Family Dinner – Invite your Student to a meal with your family or friends. Ask him or her to bring pictures of home and family to share.
3. Movie – Go to a movie. Talk about it on the way home, or over an ice cream.
4. Shopping – Try a supermarket or mall. Explain the ins and outs of American retail (i.e. discount cards, store credit cards, weighing produce, where to find the best bargains, etc.)
5. Firsts – Accompany your Student to his or her first visit to the doctor or dentist in the U.S.
6. TV Night – Watch your favorite television show, sports event or news program and discuss it afterwards.
7. Panther Pride – Invite your Student to a Panthers home game and explain the rules if he or she is not familiar with the sport. Or you can both join an intramural team and play together.
8. BBQ – Have a barbeque, picnic or potluck. Ask your Student to bring a homemade dish.
9. Exercise – If you and your Student are into fitness, you can work out together at the Clemente Center, or take an evening jog once in a while.
10. Explore Melbourne – Some favorites include:
    a. Downtown Melbourne
    b. Brevard Zoo
    c. Local museums
    d. Andretti Thrill Park
    e. The beach!
11. Road Trip – Take your Student to Kennedy Space Center or Orlando to experience Florida’s greatest attractions.
Being a Better Friend
We often think of friendship as something that just happens, but there are a variety of things you can do in order to maximize your ability to build and maintain a positive, mutually enjoyable relationship with your Student.

1. Make sure your Student knows your full name, address and telephone number.
2. Familiarize yourself with the country and cultural background of your Student.
3. Learn your Student’s dietary restrictions and preferences.
4. Try not to make assumptions about your Student, including that he or she needs help; most international students are quite capable of getting by on their own in the U.S.
5. Let your Student know if you will be away or unusually busy for a long period of time; a loss of contact can cause misunderstandings.
6. Make sure when you invite your Student to your residence that he or she understands the day and time of the visit, and for how long. Provide transportation whenever possible if he or she does not have a car.
7. Encourage your Student to invite another friend on occasion if he or she wishes to do so.
8. Remember that some International students are shy and quiet; some are not as proficient as others in the English language; some like to listen more than talk about themselves.
9. Be careful about jokes; what you find humorous may be offensive to someone from another culture.
10. Understand that your Student’s academic schedule may at times prevent acceptance of your invitation; be aware international students tend to be very dedicated and generally do not socialize during exam week or the time prior to a major test or paper.
11. Be aware of your Student’s non-verbal gestures and cultural moves; if you have questions, contact ISSS.
12. Remember that the purpose of the program is for cross-cultural friendship and exchange; your friendship should be a two-way street.
13. Be open, be yourself, feel free to ask questions, and most of all enjoy the experience of getting to know someone from another culture.
Getting the Conversation Going
It can be hard to start a conversation with a complete stranger, particularly one whose cultural experience may be extremely different than your own. To help you get started, here are some questions you can use to break the ice and get to know your Student and his or her culture better.

Relationships
1. How do you define friendship?
2. What are your expectations for friendship?
3. How do young men and women where you’re from meet and choose husbands and wives?
4. At what age do couples typically marry in your country?

Family
1. In your country, what responsibilities do different family members have in the home?
2. How common is it for married women to work outside the home in your country?
3. How does your family celebrate special holidays? What do these holidays celebrate or represent?
4. Describe your extended family?

Food
1. What dietary restrictions do you have? Are there special reasons for them?
2. What is the main meal of the day in your culture?
3. Is mealtime a time when your family gathers together?
4. What is your favorite meal, and how do you make it?

Daily Life
1. What is an average workday like where you’re from?
2. How do you travel to work? How long does it take?
3. How often do people in your country go to the shopping mall or grocery market?
4. What do people in your country typically do after a long day at work or school?

Education
1. What is the educational system like in your country?
2. What languages are you required to learn in school?
3. Describe a typical day at school; how is it scheduled?
4. 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 leisure activities do families enjoy?
3. What hobbies do you enjoy? Do you play a musical instrument?
4. Does your family go somewhere special on vacation?
The International Friendship Program aims to increase friendship and cultural exchange between international students, scholars and community members. The ISSS is committed to the policies set forth by NAFSA: Association of International Educators, our guiding professional organization. Those who participate in the IFP are bound by the same policies and are expected to adhere to the same ethical standards.

**Respect for Political/Religious Difference**
The following is excerpted from NAFSA's Standards and Responsibilities in International Educational Interchange for your information: “Community workers related to religious and political groups must recognize that the religious and political beliefs of any foreign people in the United States are important parts of their culture and merit the respect of Americans and the effort by Americans to learn about and understand them. Religious and political groups can perform a service by providing opportunities for foreign students and scholars to observe and join in mutual inquiry into beliefs and practices. However, there must never be any attempt to proselytize, and any information to a foreign student or scholar to an event sponsored by a religious or political group should clearly indicate the nature of the event and its sponsorship.” While it is acceptable to discuss religious concepts if the international student/scholar wishes to do so, arguing or proselytizing is absolutely not acceptable.

**Drugs**
The use of non-medical drugs is illegal in United States, although such use may be legal in certain foreign countries. You should not offer or encourage your Student to indulge in any form of illegal drug use, i.e. smoking marijuana, nor should you use any type of illegal drugs in their presence.

**Alcohol**
Many of our international students do not use alcohol because of religious beliefs. As a Host, you should respect and honor these beliefs by not offering alcoholic drinks to your student when you entertain him or her. Also, you should not offer alcohol to a student less than 21 years of age. If your student is over 21, you should not allow him or her to drink excessively in your home and then drive a car.

**Gender**
Hosts may be single individuals or part of a couple or family with children. When an application is received from a young single Student, it is our policy to assign a Host of the same sex to him or her. This policy has been established out of consideration and respect for different cultural beliefs concerning gender. In order not to embarrass visitors with discussions of sexual matters, Hosts should first make themselves aware of their Student’s country’s beliefs in this area. Finally, this is not a dating service and should not be used as such.
What Will Be Expected of You
As a Student, you will be expected to show the same enthusiasm for cross-cultural learning and friendship as your Host, though in a different way. While he or she is planning activities for you to do together, you can focus on adjusting to American customs and learning about American culture. We also ask that you commit to:

1. Answer your Host’s e-mail and/or phone messages within 24 hours of receiving them
2. Notify both ISSS and your Host of any changes to your contact information or living arrangements
3. Attend one or more social events planned by ISSS, whether or not your Host can attend
4. Contact ISSS:
   a. When you have questions or concerns related to your Host
   b. At the end of the year and let us know if you want to keep the same Host, be matched with someone new, or no longer wish to participate in the program
   c. If you lose touch with your Host or no longer wish to participate in the program (regardless of the reason)
5. Agree never to ask your Host for academic advisement, financial resources, housing, immigration information, or job information

What You Can Expect
You can expect to build a friendship with someone who, despite being from another country, is probably a lot like you. Hosts tend to be friendly, generous and interested in learning. Of course, like you, they’re also unique individuals with their own interests, hobbies, dreams and fears.

Additionally, you can expect that your Host will:

• Want to be treated with the same respect you’d expect from him or her
• Know a little about your home country, but have many questions as well
• Involve you in numerous activities throughout the year
• Like you, have a life beyond the International Friendship Program that includes his or her own friends and family
• Want to help you in whatever ways possible but also be cognizant of certain boundaries and limitations
CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Being new to American culture and values, you may be presented with attitudes and customs that you find challenging or confusing. You may not. Either way, you should be aware that misunderstandings are common between new friends from different countries, and that's just part of the learning process. To better understand your Host and American culture in general, consider the following.

Culture Shock
Most people who travel to another country to work or study for a significant period of time go through an adjustment period. The amount of disorientation one feels in the new situation depends on one's own background and experiences, so not every one will experience “culture shock,” but you should know what it is and what you can do about it. Culture shock is the abrupt loss of the familiar, which leads to a sense of isolation and diminished self-importance. Culture shock is brought on by the anxiety that results from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social interaction. These signs or cues include the thousands of ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life, so when they disappear or change, we react not only emotionally, but also physically and psychologically. When you first arrive in a new culture, you may feel a sense of excitement and anticipation. Later, you may feel that the differences between your home country and the country you are visiting are overwhelming and frustrating. You may experience sleep loss, loss of appetite, anxiety, and even depression. It is important to remember that this is a normal reaction to sudden changes and is something that passes as you spend more time in the second culture. If you experience any of these symptoms for an extended period of time, it is important to talk to someone about it—friends, family, your adviser, or someone you trust or with whom you feel comfortable. The staff at ISSS is always available to talk with you about your experiences as you adjust to life in the U.S.

Friendliness Versus Friendship
It is important for international visitors to understand the difference between “friendliness” and the concept of “friendship” in the United States. Often, international visitors are excited and gladdened by the overall friendliness of Americans, only to later find themselves hurt or disappointed when a friendship doesn’t blossom beyond the initial politeness. Although many Americans are warm and approachable at first, it may be difficult to get beyond the surface and establish a close personal friendship with some of them.

The Meanings of “Friend”
In the United States, the single term “friend” may be used to introduce a classmate, an acquaintance, a love interest or a true close friend. Americans have different types of friends: casual friends with whom they share an interest (classmate, teammate, someone from a club), close friends, and best friends. In the U.S., friends are not expected to do everything together, exclusively. In some countries, people reserve the word “friend” for a few people whom they are very close. Hence, your understanding of what “friend” means may be different from the way your Host defines it.

Independence and Self-Reliance
Two important U.S. values are independence and self-reliance. Thus, people in the U.S. may prefer to do something themselves rather than ask for help, as they do not want to impose on another person. They may also expect others to do the same. This can create a misunderstanding with people from societies with more interdependent relationships, as they may expect more from friends. Also, Americans might feel uncomfortable if someone seems too needy, calls too often, or wants to get together every day. It is important to let your Host have his or her space; he or she will likely assume you want your independence too.
Seven Lessons Towards Cross-Cultural Understanding

1. Don’t assume everyone is the same.
2. What you think of as normal behavior may only be cultural.
3. Familiar behaviors may have different meanings. Just because you’ve recognized a given behavior, don’t assume that you have understood it.
4. Don’t assume that what you meant is what was understood. Check for signs that the other person did or did not understand you. When in doubt, ask.
5. Don’t assume that what you understood is what was meant. You hear what others say through the medium of your own experience. You know what those words mean to you, but what do they mean to the person speaking?
6. You don’t have to like or accept “different” behavior, but understanding where it comes from may help you not react too strongly.
7. Most people do not behave rationally; it is up to you to discover the rationale.
I have read and completely understand the International Friendship Program Participant Handbook.

HOST
Print First and Last Name: ____________________________________________________________
Signature: ___________________________________________ Date: _________________________

STUDENT/SCHOLAR
Print First and Last Name: ____________________________________________________________
Signature: ___________________________________________ Date: _________________________

ISSS ADVISOR
Print First and Last Name: ____________________________________________________________
Signature: ___________________________________________ Date: _________________________

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