Responsibilities & Expectations of the Family

The family is expected to take the initiative in building a relationship with the student. International students are in a new country and culture, and may not feel comfortable reaching out at first. Families and students are expected to meet at least once a month. The family is NOT expected to provide any form of financial support or transportation; nor does the student live with the family. If, for any reason, the family is no longer able to participate in the program, please inform the Friendship Family Coordinator (FFC).

Responsibilities & Expectations of the Student

Students are expected to meet with their families at least once a month and to maintain consistent communication with them. Students should NOT ask their families for financial support, nor should students ask to live with their families. If, for any reason, a student is no longer able to participate in the program, please inform the Friendship Family Coordinator (FFC).
Mission Statement

The Friendship Family Program at Ball State University exists to match international students with host families in the community to promote cross-cultural understanding and awareness, as well as provide a healthy support system for students while they are away from their home countries.

What is the Friendship Family Program?

The Friendship Family Program at Ball State University (BSU) exists to promote cross-cultural understanding and awareness by matching international students at BSU with a host family in the community. This serves the dual purpose of helping students adjust and learn about American culture, as well as introducing the friendship family to other cultures. The friendship family provides a warm, supportive environment that fosters a mutual exchange of cultures and a respect of cultural differences. The program helps students build a support system while they are away from their home countries.
Who Can Join?

Families:

We only ask that you live close enough to Ball State to physically meet with your student on a monthly basis, and that you approach this relationship with an open mind and heart.

Families could include:

- Married couple
- Unmarried couples
- Single Person
- Family with children
- Same-sex couple
- Families of any religion
- Families originally from the U.S.
- Families originally from other countries
- Anyone over the age of 18 who wants to befriend an international student!

Students:

Any international student at Ball State can join the program. This includes students living on campus, off campus, as well as single students, married students, and students with children.

Online Family Application:

http://forms.bsu.edu/forms/rinker_center_friendship_family

How to Apply

Families:

- Complete a Friendship Family application. In addition to the application, you will be asked for a non-relative who can be a reference for you, and you will also be asked to sign a waiver of liability.

- Attend an orientation meeting for new families.

Once the Rinker Center has your completed application, waiver, reference material, and have attended an orientation, then you are ready to be matched!
Families and students are matched based on preferences indicated on the family application. Students rarely match every preference, so preferences are prioritized in this order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREFERENCE 1</th>
<th>Gender and family preferences (single, couple, family)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Gender options" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREFERENCE 2</th>
<th>Country or language preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Language and country options" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREFERENCE 3</th>
<th>Diet restrictions, pet preferences, and smoking preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Diet and smoking options" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREFERENCE 4</th>
<th>Length of stay and interests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Length of stay options" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once a potential match has been identified, the FFC emails a description of the friendship family to the student. If the student is interested in the match, the FFC then emails the student and family to inform them of the match and provide them with one another’s contact information. In the event that a specific request or preference cannot be fulfilled, the FFC will contact the family and/or student to explore other options.
FAMILIES: CONVERSATION STARTERS

Starting a conversation with someone from a different country can be a little overwhelming! You might be scared, nervous, unsure of appropriateness, or afraid of accidentally offending. We have provided the following list of conversation starters that can help. One of the purposes of the Friendship Family Program is for you and your student to learn about each other’s cultures, so ask away! The best way to learn is to ask!

**Relationships**
- Have you made friends in America?
- How do you define “friend?”
- What activities do you do with your friends in your home country?

**Family**
- What is your role in your family?
- What kinds of activities do families do together in your culture?
- Do you have any siblings?
- Do you have a boyfriend or girlfriend? Husband or wife? Children?

**Food**
- What kinds of food do you like to eat?
- Is food an important part of your culture?
- What foods do you miss from home?

**Goals and Aspirations**
- What would you like to accomplish in your lifetime?
- How close are you to accomplishing your goals?
- What is your motivation to accomplish your goals?

**Interests and Hobbies**
- What do you do in your spare time?
- What are your favorite movies, books, sports, and types of music?
- Are you involved in any campus clubs or organizations?

**Goals and Aspirations**
- What would you like to accomplish in your lifetime?
- What career would you like to pursue? Why?
- What goals do you have in America?

**Education and Work**
- What is your major?
- What is your favorite subject?
- Do you currently work?
- What is your favorite part of your job?

**Experience**
- How do you feel about being away from home? What do you miss most?
- Do you need help finding information or resources?
- What are some differences that you have found between your home and America?
- How do you celebrate holidays in your culture?
- Is there anything you want to do or see in the U.S.?

1 Adapted from James Madison University LIFE Handbook: no longer available online; Hampshire College International Friends and Family Program: Retrieved from https://www.hampshire.edu/cultural-center/hampshires-international-friends-and-family-program
FAMILIES: ACTIVITY IDEAS

Expand your student’s experience in America by discovering their interests and introducing them to new things!

Here are some ideas:

- Celebrate holidays
- Cook for them
- Go to the theatre
- Travel to surrounding towns
- Bike rides
- Attending sporting events
- Fairs
- Crafts
- Play board games
- Road trip
- Go fishing
- Roller skating
- Sledding
- Go to a restaurant
- Watch movies
- Go to a concert
- Shop
- Play sports
- Museums
- Celebrate birthdays
- Go swimming
- Visit the zoo
- Bowling
- Attend their activities

In many cases, this is the first time our international students have been to the United States. They have left the comfort of their homes to begin an exciting and overwhelming journey. When they first arrive, they may face challenges adjusting to American culture. They may experience culture shock, which is a feeling of disorientation or confusion that often occurs when a person leaves a familiar place and moves to an unfamilier one. When your student arrives in Muncie, they will likely experience a multitude of different things: buildings, stores, nature, food, and even smells.

If students are not proficient in English, it might be hard to express their wants, needs, and personalities to Americans. This can result in feelings of discomfort and isolation, leading them to withdraw or even doubt their decision to come to America. *Some students may be more affected by culture shock than others.*

---

Symptoms of Culture Shock

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nervousness</th>
<th>Depression</th>
<th>Irritability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>Loss of Appetite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>Physical Illness</td>
<td>Lethargy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Sleep</td>
<td>Uneasiness</td>
<td>Insomnia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>Homesickness</td>
<td>Headaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Unhappiness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ways to Help

If your student seems to be experiencing culture shock, here are a few suggestions you can offer them:

- Encourage students to interact with others. Focusing on someone outside of themselves can help relieve feelings of discomfort and loneliness.
- Suggest that they surround themselves with familiar things from home (food, music, TV shows, etc.).
- Help them slow down and relax to allow their emotions to catch up with the newness around them.
- Help them develop patterns and daily routines.
- Encourage them to call or Skype friends and family in their home country.
- Encourage them to express themselves! Let them know it is okay to laugh, cry, sing, pray, draw, etc.
- Practice English skills together.
- Let them know that you want to be a support and are open to talking through anything with them.
- Encourage students to be patient, and assure them that culture shock does eventually pass.
- Encourage students to care for themselves by eating well, getting enough rest, and exercising to prevent physical illness for exhaustion.

**Model of Cultural Adjustment**

Below is an outline of what the adjustment process to a new country often looks like. Remember that your student may not go through each stage, and they may not experience the stages in the exact order depicted here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-departure Anxiety</th>
<th>There is a lot to do before going to another country! Students often become overwhelmed with details and are nervous about leaving family and friends for so long. Boarding the airplane can bring enthusiasm back.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“The Honeymoon”</strong></td>
<td>Just like a new relationship, the first reaction to a new culture is often euphoric. Your student has finally arrived after months - maybe years - of planning. The differences in scenery, food, language, or customs can be exhilarating!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Culture Shock</td>
<td>This is where the initial excitement turns into frustration. For some, the shock might come at the first meal in which familiar foods are nowhere to be found. For others, it might be the realization that speaking a second language all day long is both frustrating and exhausting. For others, the initial shock might be an accumulation of many factors; including homesickness and unfamiliarity with the new culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface Adjustment</td>
<td>Your student has settled into a routine by now. Maybe they successfully registered and made it to their classes. Perhaps your student has met some people in their classes that seem like they will become friends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Culture Shock

This is when the novelty wears off and deeper differences between cultures are revealed. There may be unresolved cultural conflicts in the classroom, with friends, or with society in general.

Places of True Cultural Learning

Moving out of culture shock and into adaptation and adjustment is not simply a matter of feeling better. It requires that students understand the reasons for their culture shock and develop personal strategies for dealing with cultural differences. Most sojourners cannot do this alone, so encourage your student to get help from international friends, or the Rinker Center for International Programs. These resources can help your student understand U.S. culture and find appropriate coping strategies.

Adaptation and Adjustment

It takes time for your student to adapt to their new environment. Adjusting to a new culture requires students to know themselves well, and also learn the ways of the new culture.

Re-entry Shock or Adjustment

When students return to their home country, they do not expect it to be difficult. But no matter how excited your student is to see family and friends, they will face challenges in making sense of their experience in the U.S. This is especially difficult if students must immediately find a job or return to their studies. Encourage your student to take their time in adjusting to their home country again. Encourage them to look for opportunities to use the skills they gained while studying abroad and to stay connected with friends from Ball State.

FAMILIES: THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

Weather
If your student is from a warmer climate, Indiana winters may be challenging! Offer suggestions about suitable clothing to help them stay warm.

Language
Many friendship family students are enrolled in the Intensive English Institute (IEI) and may still be learning English. Many of them are hoping to practice English with their friendship family. Don’t let language barriers scare you – with lots of practice it will get easier.

Religion
Religion is an important part of American culture for some families. It is okay to invite your student to religious activities as a way of experiencing American culture. Just be sure to clearly state the nature of the event, and allow your student to choose whether or not they wish to participate. Do not proselytize.

Timeliness
Many cultures do not value timeliness the same way the U.S. does! Keep this in mind when meeting with your student. Don’t be surprised if they are late and don’t interpret it as a sign of disrespect.

Gifts
If you offer a gift/food/refreshments/etc. to your student and they refuse the first time, you may want to offer a few more times. In some cultures, it is considered polite to refuse an offer 2 or 3 times before accepting.

Paying
If you would like to pay for your student’s meal or ticket, great! However, you are in no way obligated to pay for them, and the expectation is that students will cover their own costs. If you invite your student to an activity that they will need to pay for, it is a good idea to let them know the cost ahead of time.

Pets
Some international students may not be used to having pets. Be sure to introduce your pets slowly, and give students tips on how to handle your pet.

Firsts
This may not be your student’s first time in the U.S. They may have transferred from another college or been here during a previous time in their lives. Be sure to ask them if this is their first time in our country. If it is not, ask them about their previous experience(s) and what they liked and disliked.
Seven Lessons Toward Cross-Cultural Understanding

Communicating with someone from a different culture can bring about feelings of nervousness and apprehensiveness. You may wonder what you should or should not talk about, what activities are acceptable to do together and how to begin a conversation. These seven steps can help!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>Lesson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>Don’t assume everyone is the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Don’t assume behaviors mean the same thing in every culture. For example, giving someone a “thumbs up” in America indicates approval, but in other countries, the gesture is insulting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Don’t assume that what you think is “normal behavior” is normal in every culture. A lot of behavior is universal, but certainly not all of it!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>Don’t assume that what you meant is what was understood. Check for signs like body language or facial expressions to ensure the other person understood you correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td>Don’t assume that you understand what the student meant. You hear others’ words through the medium of your own culture. You know what those words mean to you, but they may mean something different to the person speaking them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td>You don’t have to like “different” behavior, but understanding where it comes from may help you respond with more sensitivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>Most people do behave rationally; you just have to discover the rationale!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

FAMILIES: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How do I go about contacting my student for the first time?
A: Once you receive your student’s information via email from the FFC, contact them as soon as possible. Explain who you are and express your interest in meeting them. If you have any problems making contact, please inform the FFC as soon as possible so that we can help.

Q: What if I invite my student and he/she declines the invitation?
A: Ask again! It is important to remember that your student’s primary responsibility is to their academic studies and may be very busy. Don’t give up after the first attempt, but continue to invite them to meet with you.

Q: What if my student continually declines or does not respond to my invitations?
A: Please contact the FFC so they can help. There may be reasons for refusing an invitation, and it may not necessarily indicate a lack of interest on the student’s part. If the FFC is unable to resolve the issue, we will happily match you with a new student. You should be benefitting from this program too!

Q: How often do I meet with my student(s)?
A: At least once a month.

Q: Does my student live with me?
A: No, they do not live with you, nor do you provide any financial assistance.

Q: Am I responsible for providing transportation for the student?
A: No. It is okay to provide your student with transportation, but it is not required. If your student does not have transportation, you will need to take that into consideration when planning activities.

Q: What other ways can I communicate with my student?
A: Call, text, email, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, etc. These are great ways to check in with your student between meetings.

Q: Can I host multiple students at a time?
A: Yes! We actually encourage this, as it can relieve some of the awkwardness as you first get to know each other.

Q: If I host more than one student, do all of our activities have to include each student?
A: No. Some students may like different activities, so you may prefer not to do every activity together. That is up to you and your students!

Q: What do I do if there is an emergency with my student?
A: If it is a serious emergency, please call “911”. During orientation, students are provided with local emergency phone numbers, but feel free to go over these with them to check their understanding. Each student is required to have health insurance, so this should be of no concern.

Q: What if I no longer wish to participate in the program?
A: That’s okay, this is a voluntary program! Just let the FFC know that you would like to withdraw from the program so they can match your student with a new family.

Q: What if I have a question or concern about my student?
A: Email the FFC at friendship@bsu.edu or call the Rinker Center for International Programs at 765-285-5422. We welcome any and all questions, and we would love to assist you!

6 Adapted from Norwich University Friendship Family Program FAQ: Retrieved from http://international.norwich.edu/events-activities-programs/friendship-family-program/
Pittsburg State University International Friends Program: No longer available online.
Annual Events in Muncie

Here is a list of annual events that take place in Muncie. You will receive periodic email messages regarding events you may wish to take your student. In addition, the [Rinker Center for International Programs](#) hosts at least one Friendship Family event each semester.

### Downtown
- First Thursday Gallery Walk
- St. Patty’s Day Parade
- Free Friday Movie Night (June, July, August)
- Fourth of July Parade & Fireworks
- Rib Fest
- New Year’s Eve Unity Walk and Ball Drop

### Cardinal Greenway
- 5K Run/Walk and Kids Fun Run
- Great Greenway Tour
- Walk Indiana
- Turkey Trot
- Polar Express

### Minnetrista
- Enchanted Luminaria Walk

---

Contact Us

The Friendship Family Program would like to thank you for your participation! The program has been very beneficial to many students and families over the years and we hope this continues.

Feel free to email the FFC with suggestions for program improvement or to share any comments or concerns you may have. We want you to get the best experience from our program.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Address:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Website:</strong> <a href="http://www.bsu.edu/international/friendship">www.bsu.edu/international/friendship</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ball State University</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:friendship@bsu.edu">friendship@bsu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.A. Pittenger Student Center</td>
<td>Phone: 765–285–5422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room 102</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muncie, IN 47306</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>