



APPALACHIAN  
STATE  
UNIVERSITY

## INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

**Information for new families**

Presented by the  
Office of International Education and  
Development  
I.G. Greer Hall  
(828)262-2046

## **What is the International Connections Program?**

The International Connections Program aims to establish thousands of rich cross-cultural friendships through years. Organized by the Office of International Education and Development, the program hopes to build long lasting relations between American families and international students.

The primary purpose of the International Connections Program is to promote and facilitate cross-cultural friendship. The cornerstone of any friendship is respect, so please respect each other's religious, cultural and political beliefs and refrain from trying to change any of them.

## **How does it work?**

International students are paired with a local friend from the community (a family, couple, or individual) for a semester or an academic year. The friendship families provide an informal introduction to life in the United States. Students can also help their American families learn more about other cultures. A successful friendship family-student relationship is dependent on a shared effort between the family and the student.

Both American and international friends must go through the same application process. International students, scholars and spouses may apply to participate. Community friends may make specific requests about who they would like to have as an international friend, but an important part of the program is open-mindedness and flexibility. Thus, if requests cannot be fulfilled, community friends are still asked to be flexible about their match. This year, the focus is to match as many new international students as possible. Matching is based on hobbies, special interests, etc. that students and families might have in common based on their application forms. If the matches don't work out for any reason, the participants may need to be reassigned.

**IF YOU HAVE NOT YET COMPLETED AN APPLICATION, BUT WOULD LIKE TO DO SO, PLEASE GO TO ([www.international.appstate.edu/outreach/connections.html](http://www.international.appstate.edu/outreach/connections.html)).**

## **About our International Students and Scholars**

There are currently more than 100 international students at Appalachian State University, representing more than 40 countries. All students interested in this program are excited about being placed with a friendship family. Internationals may be matched with someone who may not necessarily match their stereotypical image of an "American." This is truly the heart of this program – shattering stereotypes and developing true friendships.

## **Friendship Expectations**

Responsibilities/Expectations of American friends

1. Read this information packet.
2. Contact student/scholar within first week of receiving your student's name.
3. Maintain regular contact with your international friend via phone and email.

4. Plan to include student/scholar in at least one activity per month during the school year.
5. Attend one or more social events planned by the Office of International Education and Development.
6. Contact the International Connections Coordinator, Natalie Best , at bestne@appstate.edu or 828-262-2815, when you have questions, or if you don't feel comfortable in your friendship.
7. Notify Natalie Best at the end of the semester as to whether you want to keep the same student, be matched with a new student, or no longer want to participate in the program.
8. Contact Natalie Best if you lose touch with your international friend.
9. Complete an evaluation at the end of the semester.
10. Respect international student's religion, beliefs, values and customs.
11. Be open to cultural differences and appreciate cultural diversity.
12. Be committed to developing a cross-cultural friendship.
13. Be respectful of students by not expecting or engaging in behavior that might be perceived as sexual. Of course, International Connections is not a dating service.

You are not expected to provide the following:

1. Housing to your international student
2. Immigration information
3. Financial resources
4. Job information
5. Academic advising

## FIRST MEETING



**Welcome Potluck:** Junaluska Park Tuesday, August 18, 6:00 p.m.- dusk

The Welcome Potluck gives the community friends and international students an opportunity to meet with each other along with other students and families in the program. Please bring a dish to share and if possible, include a recipe card in front of the dish. Also, please arrange to transport your student from the dorm to the park. If transporting your student is not possible, please notify Natalie Best.

What if your international friend does not attend the welcome potluck?

If for any reason, your international friend does not attend the welcome potluck, we suggest that you contact the student within the week of August 17<sup>th</sup> and schedule a first meeting.

Generally, it is suggested that the first meeting take place in a public place near campus. If you will not pick the student up in your car, be sure to give the student explicit directions and a clear time. Email is often a good way to confirm a meeting and clarify information. If you feel your international student is uncomfortable meeting you for the first time, encourage him/her to bring a friend.

If the student's local number is incorrect or unavailable, contact Natalie Best, and ask for your student/scholar's telephone number and/or address.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING TOGETHER

General ideas

1. Invite your international friend for dinner with your whole family. Ask him/her to bring pictures of home and family to share with you.
2. Take your international friend to visit your grandparents or extended family, if it is possible. Explain about family relationships in our country. Ask how elderly are regarded in his/her country.
3. Invite your international friend to watch a favorite TV show and discuss it afterwards. During this election year, you may want to invite your international friend to watch the election results with you.
4. Go for a movie. Talk about it on the way home or over ice cream.
5. Go shopping! Try a the farmers market and 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.

6. If possible, go with your international friend on the first trip to the doctor or dentist in this country.
7. Take your international friend on one of the many outdoor excursions available in the mountains.
8. If you belong to a swim or racquet club, treat your international friend to a game of tennis or a day of swimming.
9. If your international friend enjoys sports, invite him/her to a game. (You can even take him/her to your children's games). Watch a big game on TV and explain what is happening if your international friend is not familiar with the sport. Tailgate in the parking lot.
10. Show your international friend around your children's or neighbor's school. Explain our school system.
11. Stop by the local police station, courthouse, etc. Explain the difference between town, city, county, and state governments.
12. Get together for major annual events held across the state and for major holidays.
13. Cook meals together. Ask your international friend to teach you about his/her national foods.

#### ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

- Backyard Barbecue
- Bike rides
- Board Games
- Book stores
- Coffee/tea
- Concerts
- Drives in the country
- Eating at cafeterias, Buffets
- Ethnic food stores (Indian, Vietnamese etc)
- Farm visits
- Fishing
- Flea market/garage/yard sales
- Hiking
- Horseback riding
- Hunting
- Ice-Skating
- Lakes/parks
- Picnics
- Potlucks
- Skiing
- Visiting other cities
- Social / civic groups



## CONVERSATION STARTERS

### Relationships

1. How do you define a friend and what do you generally expect from a friend?
2. How do young men and women meet and choose wives and husbands?
3. At what age do couples typically marry?

### Families

1. What responsibilities do different family members have at home?
2. How common it is for married women to work outside of home?
3. How does your family celebrate special holidays? What does the holiday represent?

### Food

1. What dietary restrictions do you have? What is the main meal of the day?
2. Is the meal time a time when your family is together?
3. Can you explain how to make one of your favorite meals?

### Daily Routine

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

### Education

1. What is education like in your country?
2. What languages are you required to study? Describe a typical day at school.
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 go somewhere on vacations?

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Respect

The Friends of Internationals Program aims to increase friendships and cultural exchange between international students/scholars and community members. We who work with international students are committed to the policies set forward by NAFSA: Association of International Educators, our professional organization. Those who become volunteer friends in the international connections program are bound the same policies. The following is excerpted from NAFSA's Standards and Responsibilities in International Educational Exchange 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 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 the United States, although such use may be legal in certain foreign countries. You should not offer or encourage students 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 friend, you should respect and honor these beliefs by not offering alcoholic drinks to these students when you entertain them. For other students, you should not offer alcohol to a student less than 21 years of age. If your student is over 21, you should not allow his/her to drink excessively in your home and then drive a car.

### Gender

International Connections includes single friends as well as couples and families with children. When an application is received from a young single female/male, it is the policy of International Connections to assign students of the same sex to that friend. This policy has been established as the result and consideration of different cultural beliefs concerning gender issues. As a community friend, you should be sensitive to a culture's sexual morals. In order not to embarrass your students with discussions of sexual matter, you should first make yourself aware of his/her country's beliefs in this area. Finally, this is not a dating service and should not be used as such.

## FRIENDSHIP SCENARIOS

### Situations to think about

Imagine the following situations with your international students. What would you do? How would you go about trying to solve or respond to the situation? If you want to talk more about these dilemmas, contact Natalie Best, the Assistant Director of International Student and Scholar Services at A.S.U.

1. Your student appears to be suffering from homesickness - he/she often talks about his home country and how much he/she misses his/her family and friends. It seems to be interfering with his/her studies and his/her overall general health and mood.
2. You have invited your student over to dinner or to attend a social function with you on several occasions. Each time your student has been very polite but has declined an invitation. You have inquired what his/her schedule is, so you can try to work something out but he/she seems to be “too busy” studying or meeting with his/her friends to ever meet with you.
3. You invite a student over for dinner at 6 p.m., but he arrives at 7 p.m. with no explanation for his late arrival. On another occasion, you make arrangements to meet at local park at 2 p.m., but he/she arrives at 2.45 p.m. with no explanation.
4. You notice that your student friend is having great difficulty with English. You try to speak slowly, but there still seems to be some confusion on the student’s part as to what you are saying. You also do not understand a lot of what they are trying to say. Phone conversations are nearly impossible.
5. Your student mentions that he/she is looking for a part-time job to make money. He asks if you could recommend any companies or stores where he/she can apply for a position.
6. The wife of your student knocks on your door late at night. She is crying and upset. She says that her husband is hitting her, and she asks to stay at your place.
7. You invite your student over for lunch and notice that he/she has a strong body odor, to the point where it is making you quite uncomfortable
8. One Saturday your student invites you to go bowling, but you do not like bowling.
9. Your babysitter cancels at the last moment. Your student is there when you find out and offers to babysit.
10. You invite your student to attend church with you. She doesn’t seem very interested and replies by saying “I will think about it”.
11. Your student is very eager to share practices and beliefs of Islam.
12. Your student asks you to teach her how to drive and/or asks to borrow your car.

\*For more information about hosting your international friend contact:  
Natalie Best (828) 262-2815  
bestne@appstate.edu