

Professional Mentoring Partner Information Sheet

International Friendships, Inc.

International students frequently come to the United States with their career plans in mind. However, few will get the opportunity to interact with Americans who already have experience in their chosen professional fields. This is a wonderful opportunity to serve a student in an area of felt need and to develop a friendship with someone from another culture.

When will I be needed?

Volunteers are often needed the most at the beginning of the fall quarter when many students sign up for activities with IFI. However, students may request professional mentoring partners throughout the year.

How will I be matched with a student?

After training and application approval, you will be contacted with the name and email address of a student who has requested a professional mentoring partner. You should then contact the student and set up a time and place to meet that is mutually agreeable. We will match you with someone with similar career choices and interests as your own. We also try our best to match you with someone of the same age, although this is not always possible. Note that it is our practice to match you with a student of the same sex. If you have a preference for any specific culture you may indicate that at the time of your application and we will do our best to honor your request. However, please keep in mind that the large majority of our students are Asian.

What if I am unable to contact the student I have been assigned?

Please remember that you are the “host” to a guest in our country and realize that it can be very intimidating for an international student to make the first contact, especially using a second language. Please do not give up after one attempt; try the student several times, and call them if your emails are not answered. If after these attempts you are still unsuccessful, please contact the IFI office (294-2434) so that we can either facilitate the contact or rematch you with another student.

How long is my commitment?

At least one quarter, or three months. Our hope is that a good friendship would be established and that you would like to continue meeting with the student. However, you may choose not to renew your commitment to the student.

What kind of time commitment is expected?

We ask that you meet with the student on an average of (at least) one hour per week. If your schedules are such that you can only meet every other week, then try to meet for a couple of hours. Or perhaps spending a half-day with each other once a month is what works best for you and your partner. If you don't meet each week, try to send the student an email just to see how he or she is doing.

Do the students speak English?

Yes, at least to some degree. They are taking classes or working in the Columbus area. Most are students taking classes at The Ohio State University. They would likely enjoy hearing about your profession and asking questions regarding their professional choices. Some may also want help practicing their conversation skills with a native speaker and having someone gently correct both their grammar and pronunciation.

Do I, as the volunteer, have to speak the student's language?

No. Because they want to learn English, it is not necessary for you to know their language.

Is there any curriculum?

No, however they may request your help with questions regarding their school work or internships.

For all students, natural conversation is encouraged. We can provide a sheet of possible conversation topics to get you started. Create your own opportunities: invite him/her to visit your work, go out for ice cream or coffee, look at photo albums and share stories about your families and life experiences, go to a park for a walk, etc. This is a friendship, as well as mentoring so feel free to have fun! If you need some further suggestions, give us a call.

What about sharing my faith?

Your commitment to the student should be that of unconditional friendship and love. Please be sensitive to the fact that the students come from many different cultural and religious backgrounds and may have little or no previous exposure to Christianity. Hopefully over time, you will build a relationship of trust which would be an appropriate context for sharing spiritually. We ask that you not force spiritual discussion but be sensitive to the student and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. In many cases, the students are very open to such discussions. It is appropriate to naturally include your faith as it relates to your life experiences.

What if I am unable to meet with the student I have been assigned?

Please contact the IFI office to let us know you will not be able to continue. Our desire is to serve the students in the best way possible. If you are unable to continue meeting your student, we would like to be able to match them with someone else so that they may still have the opportunity to meet with an American volunteer.

Can I be matched with another student if mine leaves Columbus?

Definitely yes! We hope that you have such a wonderful experience that you will want to continue with another mentoring partner.

International Friendships
195 Chittenden Ave.
Columbus, OH 43201
614-294-2434

IFI Director of Volunteer Coordination and Administration
Ben Gatling
614-294-2434
volunteers@ifipartners.org

Website
www.ifipartners.org