About FIUTS

The Foundation for International Understanding Through Students (FIUTS) was founded at the University of Washington in 1948. A 501(c)3 non-profit organization, FIUTS programs create a community of people, both on and off campus, who are committed to international understanding and cross-cultural friendship.

Through homestays, friendship connections, community service, and education outreach, FIUTS connects international students with the greater Puget Sound community to build global understanding.

Friendship Connection Program

The Friendship Connection Program is an opportunity for international students to befriend a local community member upon arrival and to engage culturally with the people of Seattle. Our Friendship Connection hosts get a chance to meet and welcome international visitors without having to commit to the Homestay Program.

General Guidelines

- The relationship between our hosts and our students is a two-way cultural process. We expect our students and our hosts to be proactive in sharing information about their home country and asking about the other's.
- Keep in mind that some relationships develop faster than others. Our hosts and students have different personalities: some are outgoing and some are shy; some have had considerable experience with hosting/traveling and some do not. It may take time to get to know each other well, and we expect that you will be willing to take that time.
- The Friendship Program officially lasts for an entire school year (September to June), or for the quarters that the student is on campus.
Expectation for FIUTS Students

- FIUTS hosts are volunteering their time because they want to learn about our students’ home countries and to share their culture with you. We expect that our students to appreciate their efforts. Please don’t take their invitations for granted and be proactive in reaching out to them by email or phone. This is a unique opportunity to have a friend living in the Seattle area, but this is not a one-sided relationship.
- Ask questions about your hosts, about where to eat, where to shop, etc. There are no silly questions when it comes to settling in a foreign place, and our hosts are more than willing to help!
- Don’t be afraid to tell your hosts what you’re interested in or what you would like to see. It will guide them better in suggesting activities.
- It is your responsibility to let the FIUTS staff know if there is any problem, discomfort, or concern about your Friendship Connection match. This includes any conversations or invitations to events that you consider proselytizing in nature. To proselytize means to try to convert someone to a certain way of thinking, particularly in a religious or political manner.

Expectations For Friendship Connection Hosts

- We will try to connect you via email before the students arrive in Seattle. Take the first step and welcome them with an introductory e-mail, answer any questions they may have about packing and traveling, and provide them with information on taxis and shuttles if you are unable to pick them up from the airport.
- The first few weeks in Seattle are particularly stressful for students. Your efforts to reach out during this time will go a long way in establishing a mutually rewarding friendship, as well as ease their transition to life in Seattle. Help them learn their way around Seattle, particularly by bus.
- Past students have listed shopping trips for food, clothes, furniture, etc. as particularly helpful in the week that they arrive. For many students, big stores (K-Mart, Target, Costco, Ikea, etc.) are not easily accessible by bus. Share what you know about where to get good value for their money and orient them to American stores.
- Check in regularly with your students. They may feel like they are a burden to you or feel shy to ask what they think may be “silly” questions.
- Take your student to events that are of interest to them (music, sports, theater, etc.)
- Be open and enjoy the diversity of opinions, cultural customs, food and habits of various cultures. Ask about them and share your own!
- Help students connect with individuals, groups or organizations in their fields of interest. This could include professional interests and/or hobbies. If you have friends who work in your student’s area of study, please help them make the connection!

Please Refrain From: Proselytizing. To proselytize means to induce someone to convert to ones’ own religious faith or political views. This includes, among many others, inviting students to religious events or religious places unless the students ask about these possibilities. Proselytizing is in direct violation of NAFSA (the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors) guidelines and of the FIUTS Code of Ethics.
Some Frequently Asked Questions

More FAQs are available online at http://www.fiuts.org/students/homestays

How much does it cost?

The placement fee for this program is $35.

This fee is NOT paid to your local Friendship Connection, as all FIUTS hosts are volunteers who receive no payment for serving as hosts. Program fees are charged to your MyUW student account, and will be due with your tuition. The fee supports the administration of the program by FIUTS staff. If you are not matched with a Friendship Connection, you will not be charged.

What is the time commitment?

Students and community volunteers initially commit to getting together with one another on a regular basis (usually about once or twice a month) for at least three quarters, or about nine months. Many students and volunteers, however, choose to remain in contact and maintain their connection throughout the students’ time at the University of Washington and even beyond.

Keep in mind that some exchange students stay at the University of Washington for less than three quarters, in which case the duration of the Friendship Connection will be shorter.

Are there structured activities as part of the program?

FIUTS offers many opportunities for students and volunteers to get together at our ongoing programs and events throughout the year, and Friendship Connections program participants may choose for themselves whether they wish to attend FIUTS events together or to schedule their meetings at different times (or both).

FIUTS events include Community Potlucks, Food & Culture Nights, Wednesday Lunch, Culture Conversation Group and Film Series throughout the year. Check out the FIUTS calendar for updated information. Fall participants are also invited to the Host Appreciation Night (Reception) during Fall Orientation.

Is there a program orientation for students?

Students receive information about the program via email, but are not asked to attend any in-person orientation. We ask that students read the provided information carefully, and contact FIUTS staff with any questions.