

## FIUTS Homestay & Friendship Program: Ethics Case Studies

FIUTS is committed to providing an environment in which international understanding and friendship can truly flourish. We hope that by sharing these examples with you we can help both local and international participants engage in a mutually rewarding cross-cultural experience. Each scenario below highlights behavior that goes against, or may be perceived to go against, the FIUTS guidelines. After each scenario, we provide suggestions for what you could do if faced with these types of situations.

### Scenario 1 - Demonstrating Awareness of Other Viewpoints

*Yuko is invited to dinner in a local home. As she and her hosts sit down for dinner, one of her hosts asks her if she would like to pray with the family. Yuko is not familiar with the religion of her hosts. She feels nervous because she does not know what to do and does not want to offend the hospitality she has received. She feels it is impolite to say no, so she participates. As a result, she feels very uncomfortable and does not respond to any of the family's subsequent invitations or phone calls. Her hosts are upset because they think they made every effort to treat her as a family member and include her in their family activities.*

#### Tips for the Host:

- Be aware that your guest may have different religious beliefs from yours.
- Be aware that in your guest's culture, it may be extremely disrespectful to say no or to turn down an invitation openly. Help explain that it is acceptable in American culture to turn down invitations if it is done politely.
- Listen and observe. There are many ways your guest may be trying to say no.
- Be clear about the expectations you have for your guest and provide him or her with real opportunities to say no. Be willing to accept no as an answer. When you start engaging with an international student or scholar, orient him or her to your family's routines. Describe the routines of your household, and introduce the things your family does together. If your family goes to the theatre every Thursday night, prays at every meal or regularly goes to a place of worship, let your guest know. Explain which activities he or she is welcome to participate in. Wait until he or she expresses an interest before you pursue their participation in any of these activities.
- Remember that this is a wonderful opportunity to learn about your guest's culture and customs.

#### Tips for the Guest:

- If you feel uncomfortable participating in a family event, remember that it is OK to say no politely, and to explain this to your host. Use this opportunity to share your own traditions and interests and to ask about theirs.
- If you want to participate but don't know how to, ask your hosts to guide you.
- Listen and observe. This is an opportunity to learn about a new culture and you can show respect to your hosts without compromising your own beliefs.

## Scenario 2 - Recognizing One's Own Cultural and Value Orientations

*A colleague of Isabel's in her department invites her to a potluck dinner at her house. New to Seattle and the USA, she arrives late and with no food. The host is irritated and perceives Isabel's behavior as rude. Isabel is unaware that her behavior has offended her hosts.*

### Tips for the Host:

- Values surrounding time, personal space, and communication may be very different from your own cultural orientations. Recognize this and try to be flexible.
- If you expect your guest to arrive on time and bring food to share, let him or her know. Be explicit about the expectations you have for your guests.
- Your guest may be puzzled by the idea of a potluck. Why would someone invite anyone for dinner and then expect him or her to prepare food? Isn't the host supposed to provide food? She may have thought she misunderstood the request to bring food. Avoid these misunderstandings by explaining the potluck tradition, or the tradition surrounding your event.
- Use this opportunity to learn about your guest's culture and customs.

### Tips for the Guest:

- Values surrounding time, personal space, and communication may be very different from those in your own culture.
- Be aware that your actions may be perceived in a different way than you intend.
- Try to find out what the cultural values are in your new host country. Ask other students, colleagues, your hosts or FIUTS for clarification.

## Scenario 3 – Discrimination

*A community member and a visiting scholar are paired together through the FIUTS Friendship Program. From very different cultures, they are excited to meet one another. They meet twice but do not immediately fall into a natural friendship. Time passes, and neither of them gets in touch with the other. Soon, it is June and the visiting scholar must leave Seattle. He doesn't understand why the community member never contacted him again and believes that he was discriminated against because of his race.*

### Tips for the Community Member:

- Your actions may be perceived in a different way than you intend. For instance, the lack of communication that the scholar interpreted as discrimination might instead reflect a host that felt too busy to put the time and effort required in a connection that 'didn't click' right away.
- Be aware that friendships take time to build. It may take time to know each other.
- Continuity and communication are important to avoid misunderstandings.
- Be clear about your commitments and follow-through. Don't wait for the international scholar to contact you first. In this case, the scholar felt snubbed and therefore did not initiate communication.

- Please let FIUTS know if for any reason you feel that you are unable to fulfill your commitments. This way we can look for someone else to pair with the international student or scholar.

#### Tips for the Student/Scholar:

- You deserve the chance to participate in all FIUTS activities without feeling discriminated against.
- If you feel uncomfortable with someone's behavior during a FIUTS activity or you feel you are being discriminated against, talk to a FIUTS staff member who can help.
- Be aware that friendships take time to build. Your match may be outgoing or shy. He or she may or may not have previous international experience. It may take time to get to know each other. Continuity and communication are important so that misunderstandings can be avoided.
- Keep in mind that your experience with one community member does not predict the experience you will have with another.

#### Scenario 4 - Proselytizing

*Jun goes to a FIUTS activity where he meets a friendly community member, Tom. After a brief conversation, Tom asks Jun for his name and email address. Later that week, Jun gets an email inviting him to an event sponsored by Tom's organization. He attends the event, and discovers that the organization specializes in political advocacy and religious outreach, and that he is expected to participate. Jun does not wish to participate but is unsure how to decline without being rude to Tom. He feels awkward because he did not realize the purpose of Tom's invitation. Jun never attends a FIUTS function again because he doesn't want to encounter Tom.*

#### Tips for the Community Member:

- Do not use FIUTS as a vehicle to recruit for religious or political purposes. Announcements and invitations to other events must be specifically pre-approved by the FIUTS staff.
- Do not take a student or scholar's information for purposes other than direct communication with them unless the student/scholar is aware of the purpose and agrees to it. Instead, give them your name and contact information so that if the student/scholar is interested in learning more he/she can contact you.
- Be aware that in the student/ scholar's culture, it may be extremely disrespectful to say no or to turn down an invitation openly. Help explain that it is acceptable in American culture to turn down invitations if it is done politely.
- Be clear about the expectations you have for the student/scholar and provide him or her with real opportunities to say no. Be willing to accept no as an answer.
- Politics and religion can be sensitive and deeply personal topics, which may be more openly discussed in relationships built over time and on trust. In order to help the student/scholar feel comfortable, we suggest that you wait to discuss these issues after you have a more established relationship.

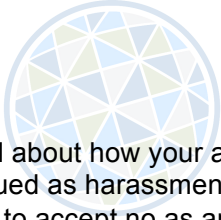
### Tips for the Student:

- Tell a FIUTS staff member or Board member if you think someone is using FIUTS to proselytize.
- Be careful about providing your contact information to people you do not know.
- If you do not wish to receive emails or phone calls, you can ask to be removed from their list.
- In the US, it is acceptable to say no. You could say “Thank you. I will contact you if I am interested.” This makes it clear that you are not obligated to follow-up unless you wish to.
- You may politely decline to talk about political or religious matters with someone else by saying “My beliefs are private and I prefer not to talk about them at this time.”

### Scenario 5 – Harassment

*During a FIUTS trip for students, Jim repeatedly asks Emily to go out with him. She does not want to go out with him, but doesn't know what to say. She laughs awkwardly and doesn't say anything. Jim's behavior makes her feel vulnerable and uncomfortable. After the trip, Jim searches her out at FIUTS events and continues to ask her out. This happens every time she sees him, and soon she starts to avoid all FIUTS activities so that she doesn't have to see Jim.*

### Tips for “Jim”:

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- FIUTS**  
local connections. global community.
- Be careful about how your actions may be perceived by others. This behavior could be construed as harassment.
  - Be willing to accept no as an answer.
  - Listen and observe. There are many ways of saying no. No response does not mean yes.
  - Be aware that in the other person's culture, it may be extremely disrespectful to say no or to turn down an invitation openly.
  - Be sensitive to cultural differences. Maybe in your culture it is OK to ask someone out numerous times but in other cultures it isn't.

### Tips for “Emily”:

- You deserve the opportunity to participate in all FIUTS activities without feeling harassed.
- Try to be as clear in your response as possible. It is OK to decline an invitation.
- If you feel uncomfortable with someone's behavior during a FIUTS activity or you feel you are being harassed, come talk to a FIUTS staff member who can help.
- Note for all scenarios: Keep in mind; whether you are an international student/scholar or a local community member, your experience with one person does not predict the experience you will have with others.