

FIUTS Friendship Connection Guidelines

The Foundation for International Understanding Through Students (FIUTS) was founded at the University of Washington in 1948. FIUTS programs create a community of people, both on and off campus, who are committed to international understanding and cross-cultural friendship. A 501(c) 3 non-profit organization, FIUTS connects international students with the greater Puget Sound community through homestay, community service, and education outreach programs. FIUTS' mission is to inspire engagement through experiences that build global understanding.

An important part of the FIUTS mission to build global understanding is the Friendship Connection Program. Friendship Connections (FCs) are individuals or families who want to welcome incoming international students and scholars, and get to know them during the school year to promote international understanding. This packet contains guidelines for a successful Friendship Connection, which can help make the most of these cross-cultural relationships. Please let us know if you have any questions or feedback about the program at any time.

Thank you for participating!

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

- We see the relationship between Friendship Connections and students as a two-way process in which both have much to offer each other in terms of cultural knowledge and exchange. We expect that you would be willing to share basic cultural information about your home country, acting as a de facto cultural ambassador. Similarly, we expect that you will ask and learn from your Friendship Connection about his or her culture.
- Some relationships develop faster than others. Friendship Connection volunteers, like students, have different personalities. Some will be outgoing and some shy. Some may have had considerable experience with FIUTS and for some this may be their first FC experience. Some will have had a tremendous amount of international experience and others will have less experience. It may take time to get to know your FC well, and we hope you will be willing to take that time.
- Friendship Connections are volunteering their time. They have contacted FIUTS because they want to learn more about someone else's world and share their world in hopes of creating greater understanding between people. We expect that you will appreciate their efforts. Please don't take their invitations for granted, or make this relationship one-sided. While they are making an effort to help you adjust to your school year, they are primarily involved in the program to promote greater understanding among people.
- It is your responsibility to let the FIUTS staff know if there is any problem, discomfort, or concern about your FC 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. This goes against the spirit of FIUTS, and we expect you to let us know immediately if you perceive this to be happening.

FIUTS Friendship Connection Guidelines

WHAT FIUTS ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO DO

- Ask questions of your FC. Don't be shy. You will likely have many questions about Seattle, about the US, about life and people here in general.
- Share your interests, hobbies, and professional fields of expertise – at the same time, be open to trying something completely new.
- Be open-minded and enjoy the diversity of opinions, cultural customs, food, and habits in the United States. Ask questions. Engage your FC in conversation. Share your life and ask your FC to share his or hers.
- Learn your way around Seattle, particularly by bus. What do you want to see? Go with your FC. If it's a place you want to return to, ask your FC about bus routes there. One of the ways to gain a sense of comfort in a new place is to be able to get to different parts of town on one's own.

GUIDELINES FOR FRIENDSHIP CONNECTION HOSTS

- Our goal through the FC program is to build international understanding. We see the relationship between Friendship Connections and students as a two-way process in which both have much to offer each other in terms of cultural knowledge and exchange. We expect that you would be willing to share basic cultural information, acting as a de facto cultural ambassador. Similarly, we expect that you will ask and learn from your student about his or her culture.
- Imagine what it's like to leave your friends and family for months or even years. When was the last time you were in a new place for an extended period of time? What was a help to you? We suggest you talk about this together with your student.
- Some relationships develop faster than others. Students, like Friendship Connection volunteers, have different personalities. Some will be outgoing and some shy. Some may have had considerable experience in the US and for some this may be their first stay. It may take time to get to know your student well and we hope you will be willing to take that time.

We connect you via email before students arrive in Seattle. Take the first step and welcome them with an introductory e-mail. Give them 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 and important for students. Your efforts to reach out in helpful ways during this time will go a long way in establishing a mutually rewarding friendship, as well as ease their transition to life in Seattle.

Helpful activities past students have mentioned include shopping for food, clothes, or whatever they need to get them set up. For many students, big stores (Target, Costco, etc.) are not easily accessible by bus, so they may welcome a shopping excursion. Share what you know about where to go to get good value for their money.

It's your responsibility to let FIUTS staff know if there is any problem, discomfort, or concern about your FC match. If for any reason you choose to discontinue being a FIUTS FC, please let us know immediately.

WHAT FIUTS ENCOURAGES YOU TO DO

- Check in regularly with your student. They may feel shy to ask what they think may be “silly” questions, about Seattle, about the US, and life here in general.
- Help students learn their way around Seattle, particularly by bus. What do they want to see? Is there a bus that they could take on their own once they have been there with you? One of the ways to gain a sense of comfort in a new place is to be able to get to different parts of town on ones’ own.
- Take your student to an event that is of interest to them (music, sports, theatre, etc). This will be something they enjoy that helps orient them more quickly, and it will also encourage them to do activities again on their own or with others.
- Be open and enjoy the diversity of opinions, cultural customs, food and habits. Ask about them. You may be surprised by your reactions to some of them. Ask if the students are ever surprised by anything here in Seattle.
- Help students connect with individuals, groups or organizations in their related fields of interest. This could include professional interests and/or hobbies. If you have friends who work in your student’s area of study, help them with making connections!

FIUTS ASKS THAT YOU PLEASE REFRAIN FROM

- Inviting students to religious events or religious places unless the student asks about these possibilities. This sort of thing can make students feel very uncomfortable – so uncomfortable that they stop wanting to have contact.
- Proselytizing: to proselytize means to induce or attempt to induce someone to convert to ones’ own religious faith or political views. Sometimes this is overtly done; sometimes it can be very subtle. In the past, some FC have confused the purpose of their involvement with FIUTS with the purpose of their religious beliefs. This is in direct conflict with NAFSA (the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors) guidelines for interaction with international students and with the FIUTS Code of Ethics.

Thank you for doing your part to make FIUTS Friendship Programs a success!