NICOLE KURKER-STEWART is the assistant director for international students and programs at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut. She also teaches Spanish, an interactive language lab, and a senior seminar on global citizenship at the university. Kurker-Stewart received her bachelor’s degree in history and Spanish from Quinnipiac University. She earned her master’s degree in Spanish language and linguistics from Middlebury College, and spent a year in Spain for her studies. She has worked in the field of international education for six years, and currently serves as the NAFSA state representative for Connecticut. She is also a graduate of the NAFSA Academy, Class IX.
Friendship With An
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

A Guide for Host Families of International Students

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR DECISION TO HOST AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT!

Welcoming an international student into your home is one of the most rewarding and exciting ways to learn about another culture and develop lifelong connections. You and your family, along with your student, will gain valuable insights into our global society and create solid friendships in the process. Whether you have decided to serve as a host because of your own experience overseas, or because you have never left the United States, hosting an international student will offer you a fresh perspective on your own town, as well as expand your view of the world at large and the people in it. Serving as a host is a small but essential step toward building mutual understanding and peaceful relations around the world. It is our hope that the benefits you gain from the experience will have a profoundly positive impact on you and your family and will help foster a lifelong tradition of cultural exchange.

© 2016 by NAFSA: Association of International Educators, Washington, D.C. All rights reserved.

Friendship With An International Student
People across the globe are more mobile than ever before. Consequently, the number of students attending institutions outside of their home countries is steadily on the rise, with nearly 1 million international students enrolled in U.S. academic institutions. Students come to the United States for a variety of reasons, including a personal interest in living abroad, research or training opportunities, access to quality education or technology which may not be available in their home country, and the chance to learn the language in which they plan to conduct business in the future. Regardless of the reason, the increased presence of international students on U.S. campuses and in local communities offers unique opportunities for cross-cultural learning and the development of new partnerships and ties.

**FIRST CONNECTION**

Some programs allow hosts to select a student from a particular country. If you have a certain country of interest, inquire if you can host a student from that specific region.

Once you have been notified of your student selection, you should initiate contact by following the instructions provided by your hosting organization or the international student adviser. In the correspondence with your student, be sure to provide recommendations on when and where to meet, indicate how long the meeting is expected to last, and include any relevant information regarding transportation. Typically, these first meetings include coffee or tea or often a meal to help break the ice. Don’t be surprised or upset if your guest is late; remember that your student may still be getting used to a different mindset regarding time.

Before meeting your student, try to become familiar with his/her country by researching some basic facts. A quick trip to the local library or bookstore, or a search online will give you a sense of your student’s culture and background. Knowledge of some basic reference points can spark interesting conversations and strengthen your relationship with your student.

Ask your student what name he/she prefers. It may take practice to pronounce some names correctly.