

The International Friends Program (IFP)



The International Friends Program is the successor to our International Peer Mentoring Program that began in 2010-2011 as a program to assist incoming international students (undergraduate and graduate) in their transition to FAU. The name and focus of the program has changed slightly to be more accessible to all newly admitted international students as well as to incorporate more involvement from already enrolled FAU students. The main purpose of the program however has not changed.

What is the IFP?

For international students, coming to the U.S. to study is an exciting opportunity. At the same time, separation from family and home culture while trying to navigate the university setting can be a difficult and frustrating experience at times. In an effort to create a welcoming environment for international students at FAU, The Office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) has initiated this program to help international students transition to life in the U.S. The purpose of the International Friends Program (IFP) is to promote friendship and cultural exchange by matching new international students with other members of the FAU community. This program is funded by the FAU Student Government.

How does the IFP work?

The International Friends Program facilitates matching current FAU students with new, incoming international students in order to help them adjust to life at FAU more easily. Prior to the start of the Fall semester, new international students are given contact information with a brief bio of available peer friends and they will then choose a peer who they can contact and form a peer friendship with. The peer friends serve as important resources for new international students who usually have many questions and concerns when they just arrive to the U.S. as well as during their transition to FAU.

What are IFP peer friends expected to do?

- Complete a one-day training (Usually held the week prior to Orientation at the beginning of the Fall semester)
- Be available for a minimum of 12 service hours
- Participate in the Weeks of Welcome events with the international students and assist with immigration orientation session. Set up an executive board who will serve as liaisons between the ISSS contact and the international students.
- Maintain appropriate contact with the new international students who you are paired with. Be sure to introduce yourself, explain the purpose of the program as well as your role in linking the students with

the FAU community. You can send emails, do Facebook, chat online or call one another on the phone. This is a good time to share the “Things I wish I knew before coming to FAU”

- Help international students get around campus, visiting various offices to remove holds and solve administrative issues, explaining the online registration process, helping read the course schedule and participating in fun events at FAU
- Participate in the Fall Student Leadership Conference

What are the benefits/rewards for the peer friends?

Peer friends will have the invaluable opportunity to meet and become acquainted with new international students and will benefit from being involved in this program in the following ways:

- Learn more about other cultures, and in some cases, practice a foreign language
- Be a conversation partner for someone who wants to practice spoken English
- Participate in leadership training opportunities
- Become familiar with the University administrative units and their interactions with students
- Shape the direction of this relatively new program and contribute to its success
- Earn volunteer hours and a really cool IFP t-shirt!!
- Special invitations to ISSS events to have fun, enjoy performances (and occasionally free food!)

How are IFP peer friends Chosen?

This year, information will be sent to a core group of students who have expressed an interest in the program. Invitations will also be sent to other student groups who are potentially interested in this type of opportunity. An announcement will be submitted through MyFAU as well. A committee of ISSS staff in Boca and partner campus liaisons as well as students will review applications and select the IFP peer friends this year

I am interested and excited about participating in this program, now what??

Interested students who would like to join the International Friends Program can receive an Application Form from ISSS. Please contact the ISSS graduate assistant, Nadja Johnson at njohns38@fau.edu for an application form. The intent is to begin matching current students and new international students before the start of the Fall 2012 semester. However, we ask that you wait until the end of the spring 2012 semester to express your interest.