



Friendship Family

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *Who can be a friendship family?*

Anyone who loves being around students and learning about other cultures can be a friendship parent. Volunteer friendship families provide a variety of experiences and the students will have a family type atmosphere for support, as they are a long way from home.

2. *How can I become a friendship family?*

All you have to do is simply contact the International Student Programming office at 319-352-8745 and speak with Wendy Mohlis.

3. *What should be expected of me and my family?*

Nothing is mandatory or expected of you, just keep in touch or contact your student on occasion to see how they are doing. You may attend the friendship family events in the fall and spring, or simply invite them to do something with you or your family.

4. *What should we do with our student?*

Anything you wish to do or that you think the student may enjoy doing. Invite them over for dinner, but keep in mind of dietary restrictions to make them feel comfortable. Take them to a movie, hockey game or other sporting events, a waterpark, or maybe a bike ride or a treat at the local ice cream shop. You may take them to your town or surrounding areas, or, simply have them over to your home to relax and have casual conversation.

The main thing is to have fun with and enjoy your student. With little effort on both of your parts, this can be an extremely rewarding experience for you, your family, and your student. Don't be shy. Remember, you are the "elder" and you are in the "friendship" role, so be proactive and make the first move. Many students will be shy or intimidated to make the first call or reach out to you. If you show you are interested and willing to spend time with your student, he/she will feel more comfortable reaching out to you when he/she needs you most.

5. *What do I have to pay for?*

You are certainly not required to pay for anything. It may be a good idea to check with the International Student Programming office to see if they are aware of financial restrictions of a student. Some students will have the funds to pay for casual outings, and others may be very restricted. You are welcome as a friendship parent to pay for costs of outings with your student; however, you may also find free or low cost options in spending time with them as well.

6. *What countries do students come from?*

Students come from various countries from all over the world. Most have different cultural requirements, religions, dietary restrictions, etc. You may wish to become educated on the country your student comes from to help understand their culture, which in turn will make them feel more

comfortable. They may be pleasantly surprised how much you know about their country and appreciate the time you spent to do a bit of research. Some families seek out information about news and current events in the student's home country. The internet makes accessing this information quite feasible through Google searches at www.google.com. That information can provide opportunities for lively discussion and sharing. Again, this is not required, but only helpful if you wish to do so.

7. What if I have questions about adjusting to my student? Who do I contact?

Always feel free to contact the International Student Programming office and speak with Wendy Mohlis at 319-352-8745. We are happy to help you and your student become acquainted or answer any questions you may have.

8. What am I not allowed to do with my student?

Typically, it is illegal for you to employ your student to babysit, clean and do other jobs (since most of our students hold F, J, or H Visas and may not be approved to work off campus). It is also important that we abide by state alcohol laws, even though students may come from countries where there is no age barrier for drinking. Common sense should lead you to make good decisions. You may also call our office if you have specific questions.

9. How might I talk with my student about world events?

Since many people have very strong opinions about this topic, it is best to take an unbiased approach. Ask your student how he/she feels about the events so you know what perspective he/she is coming from. Ask open-ended questions like, "What do you think of.....?" When voicing your own opinions, of course, you can be honest, but to take a very strong position either way may be offensive to your student or may cause problems in your relationship. Your international student will help you see world events from a new light. We may not agree with everything our students believe, but we can learn from our differences. Religious beliefs and traditions can be addressed in a similar way – from the perspective that we can learn and grow from knowing more about one another.

10. What happens over college breaks?

Some students may choose or can afford to go home during the summer; however, some will remain in Waverly. Many students will remain on campus during shorter breaks during the academic year, ex. Fall break, Christmas break, Winter break, Tour week. Some may participate in service trips offered through Wartburg. It is good to keep in touch with your student to find out if they have plans or if they will be alone during these times. Many may enjoy having the companionship with your family during this time when they may be missing home and their families. Please use this link to view the current academic calendar. <https://info.wartburg.edu/Academics/Academic-Calendar>

11. How can we create a closer relationship?

Frequent contact (in person, phone, email, mail, text) is the best way. Once the "getting to know you" details are attended to, you may feel like you and your student are drifting apart. This may be that the student is busy with classes, activities, and getting more involved on campus. Students use email the most, so get your student's email address. Students should be in the habit of using their Wartburg email account. If they have a cell phone, ask them if you may have the number to help stay in touch.

Also, campus life is active – but most students like to get off campus for a break. Invite them to your home to relax, go for a hike, or eat out – a welcome break for a college student. Once you get to know your student better, little extras like celebrating their birthday or special holidays they recognize, or alerting them to events of interest to them can really help establish your friendship.

In addition, having conversations about various academic paths and the possible professions that one may choose can be valuable or show a mutual interest. The beauty of attending Wartburg College is that students have the opportunity to take classes in a wide array of subjects. Sharing your life experiences, whether you have gone to college or not, can help a student gain a sense of the options and provide a much needed perspective.

Finally, if your student is involved in activities, it is important to show your support if possible. Remember, it isn't likely that their "real" family will be able to be at special events, so you are often their only form of family support. Example of events you may attend: friendship family events, culture week activities, music/athletic events, graduation, etc.

12. I'm ready to be a friendship family, how do I get started?

Contact the International Student Programming office at 319-352-8745 and speak to Wendy Mohlis. We will be happy to get you started and answer any questions you may have. You will also be added to our list of friendship families and begin receiving a newsletter with relevant information, events, and activities you may wish to be aware of.

For more college events, see www.wartburg.edu/cal