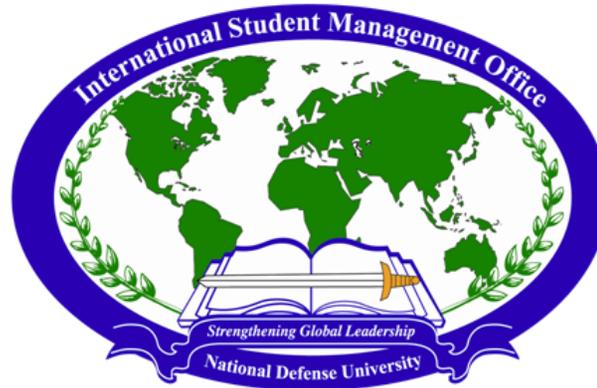




*“The most impressive thing about the sponsorship program is the selflessness seen in the volunteers. They have incredible spirit.*

*- International Fellow Class of 2016*



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## **CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS**

**Fall 2016**

**NDU Sponsorship Program**



## Social Norms

Part of being a sponsor is accepting that in communication, you may experience things that are outside what you would consider to be a social norm. It may be worthwhile to learn more about the social customs of the country of the International Fellow before their arrival. However, remember that every individual is different, and they may not necessarily fit that mold.

Some common social differences between Americans and internationals are:

- Concept of time, arriving late or early
- Different concept of “personal space”
- Importance of gift –giving
- Romantic gestures vs. friendly gestures
- Etiquette when eating
- Nonverbal communication

**Certain cultures perceive dogs to be dirty, and may be uncomfortable in a house with a pet dog. Consider putting your dog outside during the first visit if you’re sponsoring an IF from a culture with different beliefs.**

## Language Barriers

It is important to remember that the English language could be a second, third, or even fourth language for the International Fellow. Many of the International Fellows understand our language quite well, others only moderately so.

While an IF may smile and nod, they may not actually be understanding what you are saying. If you perceive that you are not getting through to your guest (and it is not always easy to tell by their expression), try to speak slowly and clearly without distorting your speech. Remember that speaking loudly does not aid comprehension.

Keep in mind that slang, idioms, and figures of speech may be very confusing to the International Fellow. Be conscious of the vocabulary you are using in conversation, and put yourself in the shoes of a non-native English speaker. This does not mean avoid the expressions altogether– but be prepared to explain the meaning of the saying to the International Fellow.

If the IF is accompanied by a spouse or children, there are no language requirements placed on the dependents. This means that the spouse and children may not speak any English at all. The relationship between you and the IF will be even stronger if you do your best to include family members in your activities. Offer support when you are able to, and try to find an activity that everyone can enjoy.



## Home Diplomacy

Too much stress cannot be placed on your importance as a “hearthside diplomat” and interpreter of the United States to those who may have a distorted or incomplete picture of this country.

For some International Fellows, this will be their first trip to the United States. They are looking for answers to many questions about our country and our society.

Good diplomacy on any level requires tact, forbearance, and understanding. Don’t feel that you have to be an expert in international relations to do a good job as a sponsor.

Your frank, sincere expression of opinions, based on your knowledge as a resident of the United States, is what counts.

We will not ask you to avoid hot button issues such as politics and religion. However, any conversations on such topics should be conducted with respect for differences in opinion. It is recommended that you let the International Fellow initiate conversations on such topics.