

Meeting Needs & Setting Boundaries with International Students

Ray Cotton, ISI Staff, University of Texas at Dallas

Meeting Needs

1. Practical Needs

- Airport Pick-up: Being available to go to the airport to pick up arriving students or to take a student to the airport. Best for a retired person or a person in control of their work schedule.
- Temporary Housing: Making your home available for a student to stay in while they are looking for permanent campus housing. May require getting them to the campus and back to your home each day. Usually from a couple days to a clearly communicated limit of a couple weeks.
- Furniture: Helping new students find furniture, bedding, kitchen items, etc., or helping with a local ministry's Garage Giveaway for newly arrived students.
- Shopping assistance: Providing transportation for students to go shopping, as a weekly service or as a special event for newly arrived students.

2. Educational Needs

- Editing: Helping students by checking their papers for grammar and spelling errors. Note: Need to be aware of school policy concerning students receiving help on their papers.
- Teaching ESL or English Conversation Classes: Conducting weekly classes to help students learn English or to practice their English conversation skills.
- English Conversation Partner: Meeting weekly with one or more students so they can practice their English.
- Mentoring within your profession: Meet regularly with a student who is studying to go into the same field as your profession. Helping prepare the student for getting a job and succeeding in the work force.

3. Social Needs

- Friendship Partner: Being a friend to an international student. Contacting by phone or e-mail an assigned student weekly to see how they are doing and to answer any questions, then getting together with them at least monthly for fun activities and events. Having students in your home.
- Food & Hospitality: Help a local international student ministry by providing some of the food for their regular dinners or making your home available for meetings and special events such as a Christmas progressive dinner.
- Campus Volunteer: Aiding a local international student ministry by helping as needed with food, meeting students, leading discussion groups, giving presentations, inviting and taking students to various events and activities.
- Transportation: Helping a local ministry by being available to take students to retreats, conferences, and special events.
- Facility Provider: Making one's home, lake house, ranch, camping equipment, etc. available to a local ministry to use for regular or special event.

4. Spiritual Needs

- Bible study leader: Be available to lead a small group Bible study at an International Christian Fellowship (ICF) meetings, Intl. Student Fellowship (ISF), or during the week.

- Speaker: Give a presentation or talk on a Biblical or apologetic topic at an ICF or ISF.
- Discippler: Meet regularly with a Christian student to help him/her in their Christian growth by praying with them, working on scripture memory, studying the Bible, etc.
- Church Host: Picking up one or more students on campus and bringing them to your church, helping them to understand the church culture and finding the right Sunday school class, etc.
- Prayer Partner: Meeting regularly with another volunteer, ministry staff or Christian student to pray for each other and for the needs of the ministry.

5. Financial Needs

- Ministry supporter: Give regularly funds to help with ministry expenses that a local ministry incurs in reaching out to international students.
- Staff supporter: Give regular financial support to a local ministry staff person so they can devote their full time to ministering to students.
- Scholarships: Provide funds to needy students in order for them to attend ministry retreats, conferences, training seminars, etc.

6. Organizational Needs

- Telephone Ministry: Using your home phone or assisting at the ministry for maintaining contact and follow up with students and volunteers.
- Computer Ministry: Using your computer skills to help the ministry in maintaining, updating and problem solving various computer issues.
- Pickup or Van Ministry: Assist with ministry needs by hauling furniture, transporting students, etc. for various events and activities such as Garage Giveaways, picnics, camping trips, etc.

Setting Boundaries

1. Code of Ethics

- There is a national network of evangelical ministries reaching out to minister to international students, called the Association of Christian Ministries among Internationals (ACMI). This Christian umbrella organization has established a Code of Ethics, i.e. guidelines for relationships with international students which is attached to this handout. Following these guidelines protects the local ministry from criticism and even legal action by keeping all relationships at an agreed upon arrangement.
- Using care to stay within the guidelines established by ACMI will not only protect you from losing the privilege to minister among internationals, but also any ministry organization or church which you are working under.

2. Ethical considerations

- Be very sensitive to gender issues in international relationships. Do not send a male to pick up a female student or a female to pick up a male student.
- Volunteers must not have romantic relationships with students involved in the ministry.
- Be aware of proper behavior within the culture of the student to whom you have a relationship. Various cultures treat personal space differently. Chinese culture is basically a no touch culture.
- Do not become involved in legal or financial arrangements with students, i.e. loans, etc. There are offices on campus where they should go to deal with any of these types of issues.