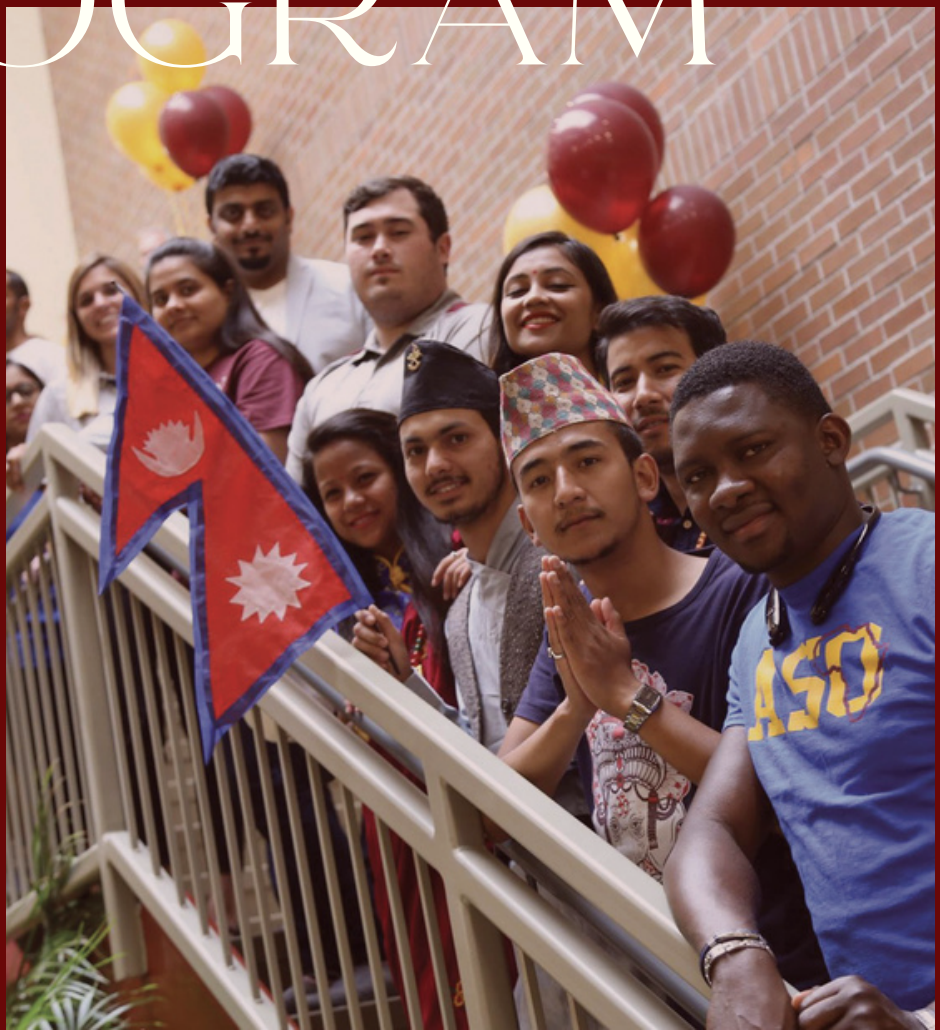


GLOBAL FRIENDSHIP PROGRAM



GANNON UNIVERSITY

Global Support And Student Engagement

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WHAT IS THE GLOBAL FRIENDSHIP PROGRAM?



Every year, hundreds of global students come to Gannon to pursue an academic program or learn English yet many of them never experience an American home. The Global Friendship Program seeks to bridge that gap by matching participating students with local community members.

Program Objectives:

- Facilitate friendship and create a sense of belonging within the Erie community for program participants.
- Promote cultural exchange and understanding by encouraging the sharing of ideas, traditions, and knowledge between people of diverse backgrounds.
- Give global students an opportunity to explore life beyond the Gannon campus and practice their English.
- Supplement OGSSE's efforts to help global students adjust to college and American culture.

The Global Friendship Program provides informal opportunities for global students to connect with volunteer community members. Students enjoy a connection to the city they might not otherwise experience. For community members, this is an exciting opportunity to learn about another culture while helping global students transition to their home away from home.

Please note that this is not a homestay program. Global students live on or around campus and join community members in activities that expose them to aspects of American culture, such as sharing a meal, going to an event, or exploring Presque Isle Peninsula (see list on page 8 for more ideas!). Community members have no financial obligation to the student or Gannon University.

OUR GLOBAL COMMUNITY



GANNON UNIVERSITY'S STUDENTS REPRESENT OVER 60 COUNTRIES.

Our students come from all over the world and range in ages from 16 to 46 years old. While some come to study for one semester, many are pursuing baccalaureate or graduate degrees.

Gannon is proud to host students from the following geographic regions:

- South Asia
- Latin America
- Africa
- Middle East/North Africa
- East Asia
- Europe
- British commonwealth countries

The Office of Global Support and Student Engagement (OGSSE) strives to foster a welcoming environment for all students and their families of diverse cultural identities. The OGSSE staff serves students on F and J visas through orientation, advocacy, resource referrals, cultural programming, and immigration advising. We invite members of the Gannon and local communities to participate in opportunities for intercultural dialogue, exchange and cultural exploration sponsored by our office and the division of Global Enrollment and Engagement.

CONNECT WITH US

Phone: (814) 871-7133

E-mail: globalsupport@gannon.edu

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GUGlobal>

Instagram: GU_OGSSE

OUR EXPECTATIONS

01 WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Community Members: Anyone over the age of 18 who wants to befriend a global student! We only ask that you live close enough to Gannon to physically meet with your student on a monthly basis.

Single individuals, couples, families with children; any religion, national origin, and sexual orientation. All are welcome to participate.

Students: Any global student at Gannon University (ESL, undergraduate and graduate levels). This includes students living on campus, off campus, as well as single students, married students, and students with children.



02 TIME COMMITMENT:

Global students and community members are initially matched for the length of one semester though many will maintain a relationship beyond this time! We suggest that you meet with your student once a month to keep your friendship growing. All participants are expected to maintain regular communication throughout the semester: return phone calls, emails, and messages in a timely manner.

03 HOW TO APPLY?

Community members complete [this](#) online application. Global students complete [this](#) online application.

*Please note, first semester students will be given priority placement in the program. Placement with a community member is not guaranteed. Additionally, not all applicants may be a good fit for this program.

04 OTHER OBLIGATIONS:

- Community members have **no financial obligation** to students or Gannon University. Additionally, students do not live with community members.
- One to two students per community member/family unless otherwise specified.
- Community members are required to attend a short **orientation** prior to participating in the Global Friendship Program.
- **Mutual respect** of each other's cultural traditions, religions, and political beliefs. Do not proselytize.
- All participants are asked to attend a **Welcome Reception** (details to be announced).
- All participants are asked to complete a **survey** at the end of the semester to provide feedback about the program and their experience.

THE MATCHING PROCESS

Community members and students are matched based on preferences indicated on their applications. Students rarely match every preference so preferences are prioritized in this order:

PREFERENCE 1	<p>Gender and family type (single, couple, with children).</p>  The illustration for Preference 1 consists of two interlocking gender symbols, a teal male symbol and a red female symbol, on the left. On the right is a colorful illustration of a family of four: a man, a woman, a young boy, and a young girl, all smiling and huddled together.
PREFERENCE 2	<p>Country of citizenship or language.</p>  The illustration for Preference 2 features a central globe surrounded by a circle of diverse hands in various colors and skin tones, symbolizing global unity. To the right is a black silhouette of an airplane flying upwards, with a dotted line trailing behind it that forms a heart shape.
PREFERENCE 3	<p>Pets, allergies, and dietary restrictions.</p>  The illustration for Preference 3 shows a brown and white dog on the left, a white and orange cat sitting in the middle, and a red bowl filled with fresh green leafy vegetables and sliced watermelon on the right.
PREFERENCE 4	<p>Length of stay, interests, and activity level.</p>  The illustration for Preference 4 depicts a teal suitcase with yellow straps and buckles on the left. On the right are three Polaroid-style travel photos: one showing a sunset over mountains, one showing a cactus, and one showing a city skyline at night.

Once a potential match has been identified, the OGSSE will email the student and the community member to provide them with each other's contact information.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Starting a conversation with someone from a different country can be a little intimidating! You might be nervous, unsure of what to say, or afraid of accidentally offending your new friend. We hope this list of suggested conversation starters will help our community members as they get to know their students. Remember, one of the goals of our program is cultural exchange and understanding. The best way to learn is to ask!

INTERESTS

- What do you like to do for fun?
- What are your favorite shows, movies, books?
- Do you listen to any podcasts?
- Do you play or watch sports?

EDUCATION

- What are you studying?
- What is your favorite subject and why?
- How is your education system back home compared to that of the U.S.?
- Are you involved in any clubs or organizations on campus?

FOOD

- What kinds of food do you like to eat?
- What foods do you miss from home?
- Do you have any dietary restrictions?
- Do you like to cook or bake?

FAMILY

- Tell me about your family.
- Do you have any siblings?
- Do you have a partner? Married? Children?

GOALS/ASPIRATIONS

- Is there anything you really want to do/visit while in the U.S.?
- What career(s) would you like to pursue or explore?
- What motivates you?

CULTURE

- What are some differences you have found between your home and the U.S.?
- What are some holidays you celebrate in your country? What is a typical celebration like?
- How do you define friendship?



ACTIVITIES

Expand your experience in the U.S. by trying new things with your community member! Look for ways to introduce them to your culture and make suggestions for what you would like to do together. **Here are some ideas:**

- CELEBRATE HOLIDAYS
- COOK A MEAL
- PLAY A BOARD GAME OR VIDEO GAME
- EXPLORE A PARK OR HIKING TRAIL
- TAKE A ROADTRIP TO SURROUNDING TOWNS
- ATTEND A SPORTING EVENT
- DO ARTS & CRAFTS
- ATTEND A FAIR, FESTIVAL, OR MARKET
- TRY A NEW RESTAURANT
- GO TO A CONCERT OR OTHER PERFORMRANCE
- GO TO THE MOVIE THEATRE
- SHOP
- PLAY MINI GOLF
- EXPLORE A MUSEUM
- CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS
- VISIT THE ZOO
- GO BOWLING
- CHECK OUT A LOCAL CAFE OR ICE CREAM SHOP
- ATTEND A CAMPUS EVENT
- DON'T FORGET ABOUT SEASONAL ACTIVITIES SUCH AS CARVING PUMPKINS, BUILDING SNOWMEN, BARBEQUES, AND ANY OTHER FAMILY TRADITIONS!



CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shapes the way people see the world around them. Culture influences many aspects of our lives, including our behaviors and traditions, but it is easy to be unaware of its tremendous impact when we are surrounded by individuals who share the same assumptions and values. "Culture shock" is a *normal process* of adapting to a new culture and refers to the feelings of uncertainty, confusion, or anxiety that people may experience when moving to a new country. This period of adjustment is temporary and is the result of being in an unfamiliar environment.



Culture shock generally moves through four different stages: honeymoon, frustration, adjustment, and acceptance. While individuals experience these stages differently, they provide a guideline of how we adapt to new cultures.

HONEYMOON

ACCEPTANCE

FRUSTRATION

ADJUSTMENT

COPING WITH CULTURE SHOCK



IF YOU'RE FEELING A LITTLE LOST, THESE STRATEGIES CAN HELP:

- Spend time listening and talking with someone from the U.S. who can explain common behaviors, language, and customs.
- Connect with other global students who are experiencing or have already experienced similar situations.
- Surround yourself with familiar things from home such as foods, music, rituals, etc.
- Keep active! By getting outside of your apartment or dorm you are able to experience what other students are doing and feel more involved in the community. Explore downtown Erie or browse upcoming campus events on EngageU.
- Finding an activity or hobby you enjoy outside of academics may dramatically reduce stress.
- Focus on developing new routines and patterns.
- Be patient and give yourself time to adjust. Culture shock is not permanent!
- Seek additional support at the Gannon Counseling Center. Many individuals in the U.S. seek counseling/therapy for help with the varied challenges of life. Counseling sessions are confidential and free to Gannon students. Contact counseling@gannon.edu



LESSONS GEARED TOWARD ENHANCING CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

"Cross-Cultural Dialogues: 74 Brief Encounters with Cultural Differences" by Craig Storti

What you think of as normal behavior may only be cultural - a lot of behavior is universal, but certainly not all. Before you project your norms on others consider that there may be more than one way to do something.

Don't assume everyone is the same.



Familiar behavior may have different meanings - smiling, for example, exists in all cultures but does not always mean the same thing.

Don't assume that what you meant was understood - you cannot always be sure of how others are interpreting your behavior.

You don't have to like or adopt a behavior that is different from yours, however, understanding where that behavior comes from can help you be respectful of any differences.

Don't assume that what you understood is what was meant. All communication is filtered through the lens of our own culture.

Most people do behave rationally; you just have to discover their rationale.

How do we go about contacting each other for the first time?

Once a potential match has been identified, the OGSSE will email the student and the community member to provide them with each other's contact information. Make contact as soon as possible, explain who you are, and express your interest in meeting up!

Do students live with their community members?

No, community members will not provide housing or any financial assistance to their students.

Can community members be matched with multiple students?

Yes! We encourage two students per community member/family if possible.

What other ways can we communicate with each other?

Phone calls, text, email, and social media are great ways to check in with your friends between meetings.

What if I no longer want to participate in the program?

That's ok – this is a voluntary program! Just let the OGSSE know that you would like to withdraw from the program so that a new match can be made with the remaining participant.

What do I do if there is a medical emergency with my student?

If it is truly an emergency, please take the student to the nearest Erie hospital. Global students are required to have health insurance however the plan most students opt for ONLY covers emergency situations (life threatening injuries, broken bones, etc.). Students have free access to the university Health Center for minor care.

What if I have other questions or concerns about my friendship match?

Please contact OGSSE; we welcome any and all questions!

CONTACT US

(814) 871-7133



globalsupport@gannon.edu

