Friendship Family
Information Packet
Welcome Friendship Families!

Located in the beautiful city of Helena, Montana, Carroll College is a private, Diocesan, Catholic liberal arts college that welcomes students from around the world. As a Catholic institution, some of our guiding principles are:

- Call to Family, Community and Participation
- Solidarity
- Care for all Creation
- The Worldwide Human Family
- Hospitality
- Social Justice

We hope you will agree that to value these principles, you do not have to be Catholic! We are pleased you have decided to join us -- in the service of our international students -- in working toward these goals.

In the following pages, you will find helpful tips on how best to welcome, support, and befriend your student. If you have questions or concerns, always feel free to call or email me and we can talk it through together, or meet to brainstorm ideas.

I sincerely look forward to working with you to build a sense of family, community and participation for Carroll College’s in-coming international students, through solidarity and hospitality!

Sincerely,

Cheri Long
Director, Artaza Center for Excellence in Global Education
Carroll College
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Expectations and Guidelines

**Friendship Families are:**

- Local individuals, couples, or parent/children groups who wish to befriend an international student, and to help them engage in the Helena Community
- Committed to helping international students to learn more about themselves, the community, Montana, and the United States
- Committed to having open minds and hearts, and to actively learning about the culture and customs of their international student
- Excited to meet their new friend, and to involve him/her in Helena life outside the Carroll campus
- Always respectful of their students’ religious and political beliefs, even if they do not always agree
- Willing to be flexible and understand that their international student is here first and foremost to be a full-time student, to be engaged in the Carroll experience, and to learn
- Aware that their student may be shy, nervous, and anxious about meeting a new family so far from their home
- Helpful and kind – but not expected to provide housing, frequent transportation, or financial assistance for their student

**International Students who request a Friendship Family are:**

- Willing to meet fairly regularly with their off-campus family
- Excited to learn more about the American culture, through direct engagement with the off-campus community
- Looking forward to sharing some of their own family, background, culture and traditions with their new friends
- Flexible and open-minded in their perception of the new culture in which they are living
- Always respectful of their Friendship Family’s religious and political beliefs, even if they do not always agree
- Aware that their Friendship Family is eager to know them, and may present themselves in a manner that is different from home. For example, they may talk quickly and loudly, they may hug their student, they will very likely be informal in their home, and invite their student to be informal as well.
- Aware that their Friendship Family has volunteered to welcome and befriend them, but not to provide housing, frequent transportation or financial support for them.
What Should We Do Together?

Arts and Music:

- Attend a music concert together, such as the Helena Symphony, Alive at Five, or a performance at the Myrna Loy Center
- Visit an Art Museum such as the Holter, the Archie Bray Foundation, or one of the galleries downtown
- Attend a Theater production at the Grandstreet, the Civic Center, the Myrna Loy Center, or the Carroll College Theater
- Join a choir together!
- Attend a child’s recital or school performance

Holiday Celebrations:

- Participate in Halloween festivities such as trick-or-treat, bobbing for apples and pumpkin carving
- Attend a Thanksgiving dinner
- Participate in charitable activities associated with a Fall Holiday – help children trick-or-treat, collect food for Thanksgiving Food Drive, or distribute Thanksgiving Meals through local food bank
- Attend services or participate in family or community celebrations of a religious holiday such as Ramadan, Rosh Hashanah, Christmas or Kwanza
- Participate in Easter or Passover celebrations with family or community. This could include religious services for Holy Week, or community events such as Easter-Egg Hunts.

Sports and Leisure:

- Join an intramural or community sports team
- Attend a sporting event in the community – amateur or professional!
- Go bowling, ice skating, or miniature golfing
- Play a board game
- Join a book group
- Visit a local amusement park, carnival, street festival or parade
- Go for a walk or a hike (up Mount Helena?)
- Rent equipment from CAMP and snowshoe, ski, kayak, rock climb, etc!

Community Life:

- Read the local newspaper together and talk about current events
- Observe a trial
- Observe the State Legislature in action – we might even be able to have you introduced from the floor!
- Visit a political campaign office
- Attend a town hall or city council meeting
- Meet and/or interview a government representative
- Go to the local farmers’ market
- Visit a rural community such as Augusta or Choteau
- Visit a local working cattle ranch
- Visit a Hutterite Colony
- Participate in an event at the Helena Indian Alliance
- Visit the local animal shelter
- Play Chess on the Walking Mall!
- Visit a municipal services facility, such as a police station or fire hall
Daily Life:

- Go shopping for groceries!
- Cook an American meal together – make an apple pie!
- Cook your favorite meal from your country, together
- Shadow a member of your Friendship Family for a day at work
- Enjoy a cup of coffee or tea at one of the many local coffee shops

Local Pride:

- Visit a “Made in Montana” display and talk about the products
- Gates of the Mountains Boat Ride and Tour
- The Governor’s Mansion
- Take the Tour Train of Helena
- Walk through the Mansion District
- Visit the Montana Historical Society Museum and Archives
- Attend a First-People’s Pow-Wow
- Go to Yellowstone or Glacier National Parks
- Get a tour of the Cathedral of St. Helena
- Sample a local delicacy that is a specialty of the town or region (Huckleberry, wild game, etc.)
- Meet a local hero

Keep in mind:

Your meetings do not have to be formal or involve spending a lot of time or money. Our students want to learn what a typical American family does for fun, so act as you normally would and invite them to join you! And our Friendship Families want to form authentic friendships with people who are new to Helena – be yourself!
Program Details

Initial Matching:

Not every new international student arriving at Carroll College will choose to have a Friendship Family. If your family is not “matched” the first time – please know that we would love to keep your application on file and match you with the best student for you, even if that means waiting!

- If you are matched with an in-coming student, you will receive a brief introduction to your student before the start of the semester (via email from the Artaza Center).
- Once you have received your student introduction, write an email to your student, introducing yourself and the members of the Friendship Family.
- Feel free to ask about arrival dates, but keep in mind that Carroll College will pick the student up at the airport, and their first week on campus is quite hectic with move-in, orientation, etc.
- Work with the Artaza Center to coordinate any plans made for the first week of school!

First Meeting:

Meeting for the first time may be an anxiety-inducing moment – for all parties involved! Some students and families may be extremely out-going and open, while others may be more reserved during your first meeting. Remember, for many international students – and some Friendship Families -- English may not be their first language. Everyone should make an effort to be patient, listen actively, and speak slowly and clearly!

Here are some suggested conversation starters to help you in the beginning, as you get to know each other.

Introductions:

- Members of your family – names, ages, interests, etc.
- Ask students to share photos of their home, their school, their friends, etc.
- Families could share photo albums or slide shows of their own family

Studies:

- What are the differences and similarities between the student’s education system back home and the education system here in the US, Montana, Helena, etc.
- What subjects does everyone most enjoy learning? Has the student declared a major? Are there any shared interests or things you might learn from one another?
- What did parents/siblings study? What do they do for a living?
Relationships:

- What is the make-up of the Friendship Family?
- What is the make-up of the student’s family back home?
- What are typical gender roles in your two cultures? How do they compare?
- What are marriage expectations in your two cultures? How do they compare?
- What does the student wish for, in the Friendship Family?
- What does the Friendship Family wish for, in this new relationship?

Activities:

- What does each person like to do for fun?
- Does anyone participate in sports? Which ones?
- Does anyone watch sports? Which ones?
- Is the Friendship Family partial to a specific sports team? If so, explain to the international student why! Invite him/her to come over for a game night.
- Are there things the student really wants to do while in the US?
- Are there activities the Friendship Family really wants to share?

Food:

- Are there any food restrictions or allergies?
- How willing is everyone to try new foods?
- What is a favorite meal?
- Do you like to cook?

First Few Weeks:

Arrival:

- International students should be encouraged to call or email home and/or contact family and friends in other places. This will help the overall adjustment to a new place.
- For those who have traveled abroad, you know what jet lag can do to a person! Be flexible while the student adjusts to jet lag – especially during the first week.
- Many international students speak a number of other languages. English may not be their first – or even second or third – language. They may experience “English Fatigue,” getting tired from listening and speaking English exclusively.
- The local diet will be quite different from that to which your international student is accustomed. Share food preferences and be flexible while everyone learns about the foods from other cultures!
- Relationships take time to build. Both sides of this relationship want for it to happen, but it cannot happen overnight. Be patient in getting to know each other, and always let our office know if you have any issues.
Establishing a Sense of Place:

- One of the main goals of the Friendship Family program is to help our international students fully engage in the local community – and develop a sense of belonging in this new place.
- In your opinion, why do we call Montana “The Last, Best Place”?
- Take a tour of the neighborhood where you live
- Take a drive in the surrounding countryside (your student will likely not get off campus much, and probably will not have a car)
- Discuss the transportation system (walking, bus, taxis, etc.) Unlike many of the places where our international students are from, Helena has very limited public transport. We are a “Car Culture.”
- Understand that the international student lives on campus – what is residence hall life like? Most other countries do not have residential campuses like we do in the USA!
- How is life with a college roommate?
- Listen to each other, to find out questions or concerns

First Few Outings:

- Shopping: groceries, supplies for dorm room, souvenirs
- Local restaurants (there is no expectation that the Friendship Family should pay for the student’s meal – discuss this openly at the beginning to prevent misunderstandings!)
- City landmarks – maybe a walking tour of selfie-spots – take group selfies to send back to the students’ family at home!
# International College Students’ Stress Cycles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Homesickness</td>
<td>- Realization that college is not as perfect</td>
<td>- Academic pressure begins to mount</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Honeymoon stage</td>
<td>- led to believe by parents, teachers,</td>
<td>because of procrastination and/or difficulty</td>
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<td>- students find</td>
<td>counselors</td>
<td>of work</td>
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<td>- cultural</td>
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<td>- differences</td>
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<tr>
<td>- intriguing</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Value crisis</td>
<td>- Loneliness due to not finding a group or</td>
<td>- Some anxiety due to feeling one should be</td>
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<tr>
<td>- students are</td>
<td>not being selected by one</td>
<td>adjusted to college by now</td>
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<tr>
<td>- confronted with</td>
<td>- Mid-term load pressures followed by</td>
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<tr>
<td>- questions of</td>
<td>- feelings of failure and low self-esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td>- conscience over</td>
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<tr>
<td>- values and social expectations</td>
<td>- Negative outlook on ability to succeed in</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Feelings of</td>
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<td>new setting – often due to English skills</td>
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<td>- inadequacy and</td>
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<td>- difference in</td>
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<td>- high school and</td>
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<td>- Confusion and</td>
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<td>- vulnerability</td>
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<th>December</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Extracurricular</td>
<td>- Winter Break!</td>
<td>- Deep, dark, Montana winter</td>
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<tr>
<td>- time strain,</td>
<td>- Students realize time is running out</td>
<td>- Cold</td>
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<tr>
<td>- seasonal parties</td>
<td>- Getting re-settled into campus life</td>
<td>- Activity level is low</td>
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<td>- and travel plans</td>
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<td>- Does the student have warm winter clothes</td>
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<td>- Fear about</td>
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<td>and blankets?</td>
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<td>- final exams</td>
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<td>- Pre-Holiday</td>
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<td>- depression for</td>
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<td>- those without</td>
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<td>- Concern by</td>
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<td>- students who</td>
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<td>- do not celebrate</td>
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<td>- Christmas</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Financial stress</td>
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<td>- due to holiday</td>
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<td>- gifts and travel</td>
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<td>- costs</td>
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<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Academic pressure</td>
<td>- Lots of outside distractions as the</td>
<td>- If the student was only at Carroll for the</td>
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<tr>
<td>- increases</td>
<td>- semester winds down</td>
<td>year (or semester) then anxiety over leaving</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Spring Break</td>
<td>- Some international students' families</td>
<td>- Making sense of new culture versus home</td>
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<td>- causes some</td>
<td>begin to plan visits</td>
<td>culture</td>
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<td>- stress – where</td>
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<td>- to go? With whom?</td>
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<td>- Costs?</td>
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<td>- Existential</td>
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<td>- crisis for</td>
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<td>- Seniors – what</td>
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<td>- happens after</td>
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<td>- graduation?</td>
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