

The ISI Approach to Ministry with International Students

ISI nationally has a code of ethics for working with international students on and off campus. All staff and volunteers need to be aware of our concern here and agree to ISI's approach and ethical standards. We desire to have a respectful and cooperative relationship with the International Student Advisor's office. Supporting the International Student Advisor and even volunteering your services to assist him or her can help bridge the gaps of misunderstanding.

We must respect internationals and never pressure them. Be aware that internationals may not indicate directly to us that they have felt pressured; they may say it by never coming back to us. Below is a good list of guidelines adapted from material presented by Dr. Jack D. Burke, International Student Advisor at the University of Houston:

- Treat international students with dignity and respect, not as museum pieces or objects to be converted.
- Focus first on physical and emotional needs of students. Spiritual needs may not surface until mutual trust and respect are established.
- Students appreciate seeing the sights of the area and being invited to cultural events by Americans. Be cautious about inviting students only to church or other religious activities. Some students say "yes" to these invitations just to be polite. (Naturally, invitations to Christian internationals to attend church and Bible studies are very appropriate.)
- When inviting international students to any kind of Christian meeting or activity, be sure your invitation includes the name of the sponsoring organization and an explanation of the nature and purpose of the activity. No surprises!
- Do not pressure international students about becoming Christians. Internationals are often "turned off" by such encounters. Whatever religion they follow, internationals may be equally devout and may resent these obvious attempts to convert them. Even if they are not religious, you may be perceived as attacking their culture. Such attempts are usually counter-productive and will only serve to damage your and ISI's image and rapport with international students. It is best for religious discussions with internationals to grow out of natural situations.
- Be aware of and respond to the spiritual needs of Christian international students. Living thousands of miles away from home, they need the prayer support and fellowship of the Christian community.
- There is no substitute for tangible expressions of love and caring concern.
- Tread sensitively on issues where political or religious differences exist. Being critical of another's ideologies, either explicitly or implicitly is not conducive to good relationships or to a loving witness.

Be a good listener to your international friends. We have much to learn. Besides, religious values are often caught, not just taught. Thus our approach is friendship evangelism, "earning the right to be heard." And always remember 1 Peter 3:15: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

Responsibilities of a Friendship Partner

A Friendship Partner befriends an international student by sharing his or her time and attention, respect, and concern for the student in order that the student may experience the love of Jesus Christ. After Receiving the Name of Your Student:

- Contact the student within one week and provide transportation for the first meeting.
- Meet with the student at least once a month and make at least one other contact (a phone call or letter) during the month.
- Participate in your church's group activities with other Friendship Partners and students.
- Report problems and prayer concerns about the student promptly and confidentially to the ISI ministry leadership.
- Pray regularly for your student and the international student ministry at your church.
- Respects the student and his or her culture, language, customs, and beliefs.
- Asks the student how to pray for him or her.
- Avoids sharing the Gospel in a manipulative, deceptive, or coercive way.
- Shares the Gospel and personal testimony gladly if the student shows genuine interest.
- Encourages the student in his or her spiritual walk if the student is a Christian.

ISI Code of Ethics for International Students

We respect the dignity of international students and will seek to understand their ideology without denigrating either the person or his/her views. We believe in their freedom of choice in making intelligent judgments concerning various philosophical and religious beliefs and practices after accurate facts are presented to them, and they have carefully investigated the evidences.

We believe in maintaining honesty, openness and sensitivity in the publicity of any activity and approaches to international students; and we are opposed to the use of manipulation, harassment, pressure, restraint, dominance by nullifying the individual's will, compulsion to listen or act by force or threat, or offering special inducements to listen or act by force or threat, or offering special inducements to affect a change in philosophical or religious beliefs and practices.