The Graduate Ally Coalition (GAC), Services for International Students and Scholars (SISS) and the Office of Graduate Studies is pleased to announce the First Friends Program for graduate students. This new program is designed to assist international, domestic and undocumented graduate and professional students with integration into the UC Davis campus and U.S. academic culture by connecting entering first-year graduate students with a continuing graduate student mentor. Mentors serve as a resource and a “first friend” to entering graduate students, by answering questions, helping students understand and adapt to the UC Davis campus, and providing support, advice and friendship throughout the first year.

This program offers continuing graduate students a valuable opportunity to gain intercultural leadership skills and to understand their role in a global community. In addition to their role as mentor, “first frienders” will also participate in an Intercultural Leadership workshop in the Fall quarter. Graduate students from diverse cultural backgrounds are encouraged to apply! There are no citizenship or residency requirements.

For any questions, please contact Adebayo Akintunde (sissigsa@ucdavis.edu) or Angel Hinzo (gradassistant@ucdavis.edu)

Applications are due on Friday, June 5 by midnight. Applicants selected for an interview will be notified by mid-June.
During the program, mentors serve as:

- Pre-arrival and Post-arrival connection
- Cultural interpreter to ease students from diverse backgrounds into social and academic life in Davis
- A resource to explain and introduce new students to UC Davis services and resources

Minimum Criteria for the First Friends Program:

- Satisfactory academic progress
- Completion of one full university-level academic year (3 quarters) by July 2015
- Ability to serve a minimum of a three-quarter commitment (Fall 2015, Winter and Spring 2016)
- Dedication to service
- Experience working, living or studying in a culture that is different from your own OR a genuine willingness to learn about different cultures and people

Requirements

You must be able to commit to the following:

1. Make a one year commitment: Fall 2015 to the end of Spring 2016.

2. Attend the Intercultural Leadership Workshop and Seminar: a 2 hour training on September 9th, 2015 and another after instruction begins in Fall 2015 (half day workshop).

3. Attend a team-building activity: TBD by the group

4. Maintain regular contact with your mentees (contact will begin during the week of orientation upon their arrival in Davis).

5. Assist with the International Graduate Student Orientation on September 10th - 11th and the Week of Orientation and Welcome (WOW Week), September 14th-18th, 2015.

5. Attend monthly meetings in the Fall, Winter, and Spring Quarters.

Upon successful completion of the program, qualified mentors will receive a small stipend, estimated between $400-$500, at the end of the 2016 Winter quarter.

APPLY HERE TO BE A MENTOR
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the First Friends Program (FFP)?

The goals of this program are to:

- Introduce new graduate students to current UC Davis students for a mutual exchange of culture and friendship.
- Assist graduate and professional students, especially those from diverse backgrounds or other countries, in adjusting to life at UC Davis and the United States as smoothly as possible.
- Enhance graduate students’ satisfaction with their academic and social experience.
- Provide an excellent opportunity for students to increase their educational experience, gain cultural insight, and make new friends with people all over the world.

How do you match mentors and mentees?

Both mentor and mentee will fill out an application to be in the program. The applications will have questions that help determine the background, interests, preferences and other important information that will help us decide the best mentor-mentee match.

How do I know who my mentor-mentee will be?

You will be sent information about the student to whom you are matched via e-mail. The mentor is responsible for contacting the mentee and for arranging meetings with them.

Are there any suggestions for activities that I can do with my mentor-mentee?

Here are some suggested activities:

- Academic socialization such as exploring resources in the library, discussing writing styles and practices, attending a lecture together, etc.
- Helping new students with registration and the orientation process
- Looking around campus together
- Shopping at the grocery store
- Attending an athletic event at UC Davis
- Going to a local restaurant together
- Attending a family dinner/holiday meal
- Attending International House events
How often shall I meet with my mentor/mentee?

Both the mentor and mentee will discuss where, when and how often you want to meet and your level of involvement with one another. We strongly suggest that you meet at least three times in the first month and at least twice a month after that.

How long will the mentor-mentee relationship last?

The commitment is for one academic year or one quarter (for short-term exchange students). Nevertheless, your friendship could be life-long!

What if I don't get along with my mentor-mentee?

We will maintain regular contact with mentors and mentees in order to foster growth of the mentoring relationship and determine whether everyone’s needs are being met. If problems in the mentor-mentee relationship cannot be resolved, we will help rematch you upon the mutual agreement of both parties.