

## **BEFORE YOU GO, YOU SHOULD KNOW**

### *Volume 6: Making friends and the FLTA Network*

Forming positive relationships with people from a different culture can seem like a daunting task. Many questions may race through your mind as you take the first steps of asking a colleague to coffee or meeting students for a study group. Unfortunately, this topic is not as easy to “Google”, but we can offer some tips for reaching out to colleagues and students in the U.S.

FLTA Network!! You have joined a fantastic group of bright, young leaders in education. During the summer orientations you will have the opportunity to meet with some of the 2009-10 cohort and at the mid-year conference you will have the opportunity to meet all 416! We encourage you to exchange emails and reach out to other FLTAs. You will be an essential resource for each other as you grapple with the US academic system, adjust to US cultural norms and have life changing experiences.

### **Get involved!**

The best way to meet people and form friendships is by getting involved in campus and community clubs, organizations and activities. By having a common interest with a group of people on campus, and a reason to meet once a week or however often the club gathers, you'll have consistent opportunity to interact with potential friends.

- ◆ Find a list of clubs and organizations on your host institution's website; find some to join (Volume 1 also recommends this)
- ◆ Create a club/organization related to your language and culture! Many institutions can offer support to new clubs if presented with an organized proposal
- ◆ Say yes to invitations; attending events with students and colleagues is a great way to expose yourself to new activities and new people. It will also show the community you are excited about being there and being involved!

### **First observe, then initiate**

Before throwing yourself headlong into social situations, you may want to sit back and observe for the first few days/weeks you are there. Some things to look out for:

- ◆ How do students interact?
- ◆ How do colleagues interact?
- ◆ How do people approach you?

After taking time to sit and observe some of the social patterns, take the initiative inviting some people to attend a campus event with you, go to a local coffee shop or eat lunch with you at the cafeteria. Be mindful of the successful social cues you have observed. Students and colleagues may be intrigued by you, but may not take the first step. Do not be offended if you need to take initiative. They will appreciate it in the end!

### **\*\*\*Warning\*\*\***

Keep a balance! You will be juggling TA duties, classes, cultural initiatives and a burgeoning social life. Try to plan your time well.

### **FLTA 2009-10 Ning Site**

We have set up a professional networking site for the FLTA group of 2009-10. Please note this site is EXCLUSIVELY for FLTAs of 2009-10. Please use the site to share advice, questions, pictures and moments related to the FLTA Program:

- ◆ Teaching techniques, culture activities, stories from, questions about teaching/adjusting to U.S. life

Please use the site to create meaningful professional relationships with your fellow FLTAs. IIE staff will monitor the site. If you wish to have a more social orientated site, feel free to initiate or join your own.

You will soon receive an email inviting you to the Ning site. Please accept. It is a mandatory element of the program as we want all of you to become familiar with each other during the year.

### **Mandatory task:**

Accept the invitation and sign up for the Ning site: Please include a photo of yourself (keep it professional), the country where you are from and the zip code of your host institution.

Enjoy!

Regards,  
FLTA Staff