International Student & Scholar Services

2026

Buddy Program Handbook

https://isss.emory.edu/

Table Of Contents

Getting Started 04

Program Requirements 06

Code of Conduct 08

Conversation Starters 09

Table Of Contents

Activity Checklist 11

Navigating Differences 16

Additional Resources 19

Emergency Contact Information 20

Getting Started

Program Description

The ISSS Buddy Program aims to connect international students with local peers, foster a sense of belonging, and encourage cultural exchange to enrich the Emory campus community.

During this semester together, you will have an opportunity to:

- Foster an environment of cultural sharing and exchange
- Find a stronger sense of belonging and make lasting connections with your peers
- Navigate new challenges and questions together
- Breach the “Emory bubble” and encourage engagement in the wider community

Roles and Responsibilities

- Be an excellent buddy - A good buddy actively listens and supports their mentee in various experiences. Both the mentor and mentee should mutually contribute to the partnership.
- Have curiosity and respect - Embracing each other's cultures fosters understanding and enriches the buddy experience.
- Be an active participant - Buddies should engage in events and activities to strengthen their connection and network.

What is the **Buddy Program**

Buddy Program is...

- A great way to make friends and expand your social engagement
- An avenue for exploring Emory and the wider community
- An opportunity for cultural exchange and increasing intercultural awareness

Buddy Program is not...

- An immigration advising service
- A tutor/editor/academic advisor
- A spiritual conversion tool
- A taxi service
- A dating service
- A therapist service
- An ATM

Buddy Program Requirements

1

Attend the Program Orientation, Meet & Greet Social, and Wrap-Up Social

- Orientation and Meet & Greet Social – September 9, 2026
- Wrap-Up Social: December 4, 2026

2

Meet with your Buddy

- Buddies are expected to meet at least 2 times a week during the semester-long program.

3

Complete at least 3 activities together

Buddy Program **Requirements**

4

Maintain Communication

- It's important to stay connected throughout the program. Use what communication method works best for both of you. (Examples: WhatsApp, WeChat, SMS, etc.)

5

Complete your end-of-semester evaluation

?

Reach out to ISSS if you need help or guidance:

- Primary Contact: Ford Johnson, RJOHN40@emory.edu, 404-727-5303
- If you have any general questions or concerns, please contact us at isss@emory.edu or 404-727-3300. We are here to help!

Code of **Conduct**

To create an environment of engagement, learning, respect, and safety in the ISSS Buddy Program, we require participants to review, agree to, and abide by the following statements:

- I will be an active participant in the ISSS Buddy Program by attending required events/activities and staying in contact with my assigned buddy throughout the semester.
- I will treat my buddy and all program participants with respect, dignity, and fairness at all times.
- I will remain respectful when navigating differences (including differences in culture, language, personality, religion, etc.) with my buddy and other members of the ISSS Buddy Program.
- I will respect my buddy's privacy and keep personal information shared within the program confidential unless my buddy explicitly gives consent to share it.
- I will report any behavior that makes me or others feel unsafe to program coordinators.

Let's start the Conversation

Sometimes, starting a conversation is the hardest part about getting to know someone. If you find yourself struggling to choose a topic, consider some of these suggestions.

Your Time at Emory

- Why did you decide to come to Emory?
- What are you most excited for during your time at Emory and in the United States?
- How do you think you will adapt your tradition and holidays while in the US?
- What is one US holiday that you are most excited to experience in the United States?
- Have you experienced any moments of culture shock so far?
- What are some differences you've noticed between your home culture and American culture?

Your Culture

- What are the major holidays or festivals in your culture?
- What music, movie, or TV show would you recommend from your home country?
- What is something about your home country or hometown that people might not know if they have never visited there before?

Your Personality

- What is the most recent place you traveled, either within your home country or internationally? Why did you choose that destination?
- Which US city do you want to visit the most while you're in the United States?
- If you could meet one person (living or dead), who would it be? Why?
- What is the best advice you have ever heard?
- How do you deal with stress?
- What do you like to do on rainy days?
- Do you have any hidden talents?
- What is something you have always wanted to try but still haven't?
- If you were a superhero and could have one superpower, what would it be?
- What is your dream job?
- What would you like to be known for?

Explore questions of genuine curiosity after your buddy answers their question!

Activity Ideas

Don't let deciding on activities to do with your buddy stress you out! Take some of our suggestions for easy opportunities to connect with your buddy.

Check them off as you do them and see how many you can complete!

Icon Legend:

◆Free with Emory Student ID

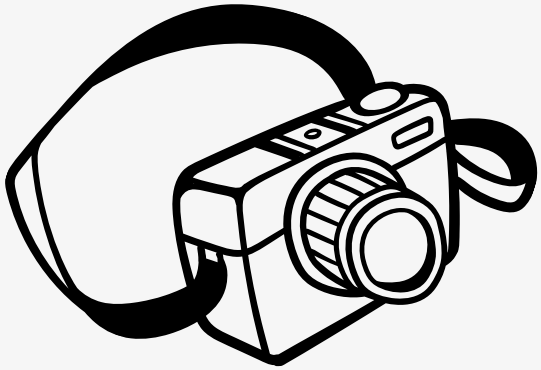
*Student Discount Available with Student ID

Be an **Eagle!**

- ☐ Cheer on an Emory sports team
- ☐ Attend an International Community Friday Lunch or Coffee Hour
- ☐ Take photos at the Emory gate
- ☐ Grab a coffee/tea on campus
- ☐ Attend a group fitness class or work out together at Emory WoodPEC◆
- ☐ Check out one of the tables at Wonderful Wednesday
- ☐ Have lunch at one of the dining halls on campus
- ☐ Attend a Windows to the World event
- ☐ Explore the Emory Farmers Market
- ☐ Rent out a video game or board game from the Cox Hall Computing Center◆
- ☐ Attend a show at Emory Schwartz Center*
- ☐ Visit the Carlos Museum◆
- ☐ Study at one of Emory's libraries
- ☐ Attend Global Festival or host a table
- ☐ Explore Lullwater Park: Main Entrance at 1463 Clifton Rd NE Atlanta, GA 30329
- ☐ Check out a student club or campus organization
- ☐ Attend an event from the Emory Events Calendar

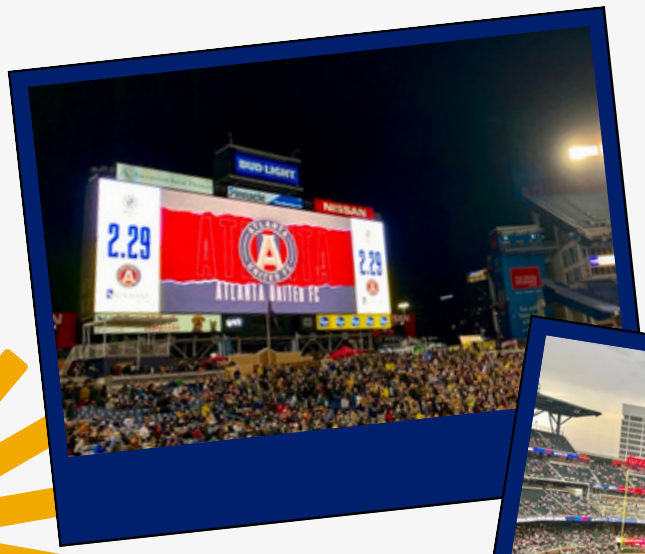
Be a **Local!**

- [ ] Little Five Points
- [ ] Downtown Decatur
- [ ] East Atlanta Village
- [ ] Oakland Cemetery
- [ ] West End
- [ ] Piedmont Park
- [ ] Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area
- [ ] Krog Street
- [ ] Grant Park
- [ ] Virginia Highland
- [ ] Buford Highway



Be a **Tourist!**

- ☐ Georgia Aquarium*
- ☐ World of Coca-Cola
- ☐ National Center for Civil and Human Rights
- ☐ High Museum of Art◆
- ☐ Atlanta Botanical Garden
- ☐ Centennial Olympic Park
- ☐ The Fox Theatre
- ☐ Ponce City Market
- ☐ Fernbank*
- ☐ Zoo Atlanta*
- ☐ Skyview Ferris Wheel*
- ☐ Atlanta History Museum*



Be a **Fan!**

- ☐ Atlanta United (Soccer)
- ☐ Atlanta Falcons (American football)
- ☐ Atlanta Braves (Baseball)
- ☐ Atlanta Dreams (Women's basketball)
- ☐ Atlanta Hawks (Basketball)
- ☐ Atlanta Motor Speedway (NASCAR)
- ☐ Atlanta Open (Tennis)

Navigating Differences

Are you nervous about cultural, communication, and personality differences between you and your buddy? Don't worry! This helpful guide will provide you with a starting point and reference material.

Be aware of:

Cultural Differences

- Eye contact
- Touch
- Clothing
- Personal space
- Food
- Concepts of time
- Formality
- Cultural values

Communication Differences

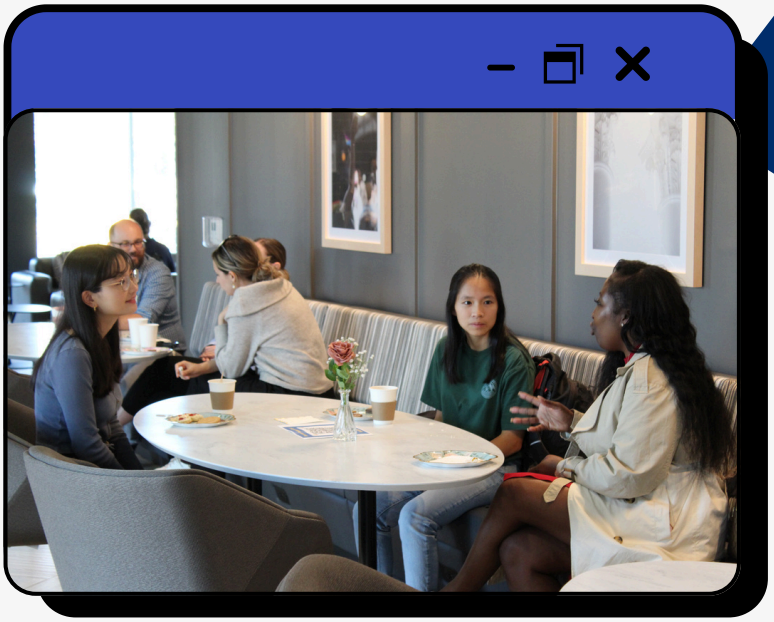
- Language
- Greetings
- Hand gestures
- Tone of voice
- Directness/ Indirectness
- Non-verbal signals

Personality Differences

- Introversion/ Extroversion
- Hobbies
- Openness: Curiosity/Caution
- Conflict resolution

Sensitive Topics

- Politics
- Gender
- Race
- Sexuality
- Religion
- Health/ Disabilities



Tips & Best Practices

- Practice self-awareness. Be mindful of your own identities, privileges, biases, cultural lens, and background.
- Remain open-minded and willing to consider other perspectives.
- Try to withhold judgment on behaviors that seem strange to you – including gestures, eye contact and greeting rituals.
- Be curious and ask polite questions. Genuinely seek to understand.
- Be flexible and willing to adjust your approach and behavior.
- Don't be so afraid of making mistakes that you avoid conversations.
- Be mindful of stereotyping.
- Stay calm and respectful.
- Stay positive and don't make fun of or speak ill of those who are different.
- Educate yourself on other cultures.

Additional Resources

International Student and Scholar Services

https://isss.emory.edu/

Emory Housing

https://housing.emory.edu/

Emory Student Health

https://studenthealth.emory.edu/

Emory Counseling and Psychological Services

https://counseling.emory.edu/

Emory Transportation

https://transportation.emory.edu/

Emory Dining

https://dining.emory.edu/

Emory Student Center

https://studentcenter.emory.edu/

The Hub

https://thehub.emory.edu/home_login

Emory Police

https://police.emory.edu/

Emory Events Calendar

https://www.emory.edu/home/events/index.html

Office of Spiritual and Religious Life

https://religiouslife.emory.edu/

Emergency Contact Information

We want to ensure that everyone in the buddy program stays safe while having fun, getting to know their buddy, and engaging in cultural exchange.

If you encounter an emergency, please refer to the following emergency contact numbers:

United States' General Emergency Phone Number: **911**

- This will work anywhere in the United States and can be used for any type of emergency.

Emory Police Department (EPD) Phone Number: **404-727-6111**

- If you experience an emergency on campus, we recommend calling EPD's phone number first as they will be able to respond to your emergency more quickly than if you dial 911.

ISSS Buddy Program

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