

## Conversation Partner Program: Guidelines for English-Speakers

**WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THE CONVERSATION PARTNER PROGRAM?** Our ESL students need one-on-one practice with conversational English with students approximately their age. They may have cultural questions, want to learn slang, have questions about social options, etc. that are not addressed in the ESL classroom.

**DO I GET PAID?** No, this is a volunteer program. Please do not sign up if you do not have an hour a week to spare and can be somewhat flexible with times you have available.

**HOW SHOULD I CONTACT MY PARTNER?** You should have your partner's email address and maybe his/her phone number. It is best to contact your partner first by email or text because it is probably easier for you both to ensure that you have understood the other person with written words.

**DO I HAVE TO TUTOR MY STUDENT IN GRAMMAR?** No! The point is to practice conversational skills. You should not help them with homework. Just talk! PLEASE, BE PATIENT! We tell our ESL students that it is considered rude in American culture to agree to meet someone and then not go there. Initially, sometimes connections are missed; the ESL student confuses Tuesday and Thursday, doesn't know your gender, thinks you don't look like what he/she imagined, is late, forgets, etc. Be patient; it will be worth it.

**WHAT IF I DON'T HEAR FROM MY PARTNER?** 1. Check your SPAM or JUNK folder. Sometimes ESL students' emails don't make it past the SPAM filter. 2. Then, try to email your partner three different times. 3. If that doesn't work, try the phone number, if given. 4. If nothing works and you have tried for a week, email the Conversation Partner Program Manager at [Niko.Kirby@du.edu](mailto:Niko.Kirby@du.edu) and explain the issue. She'll try to help!

**HOW OFTEN SHOULD I MEET MY PARTNER?** You are obligated to meet once a week for an hour. If both you and your partner would like to meet more often, you are welcome to, but don't feel pressured to do so. Some ESL students are lonely, homesick, and looking for a friend. Your obligation is to help them practice speaking English an hour a week.

**HOW DO I COMMUNICATE WITH MY PARTNER?** You will spend the whole time speaking in English. Half the time, you might talk about the international student's culture, and half the time you could talk about American culture.

**WHAT SHOULD I TALK ABOUT?** You will be sent an email with a weekly conversation theme to help you with ideas for conversation. You are also welcome to talk about any shared interests; the weekly themes are guides and not required conversation topics. You could also ask your partner questions about their family, major, friends, the weather, university, culture, language, favorite music and movies, etc.

**If you cannot continue for any reason, please write your partner and the program manager as soon as possible.**

Please contact the program manager right away if there are any problems at [Niko.Kirby@du.edu](mailto:Niko.Kirby@du.edu). Thank you for your participation in this program. We hope you will enjoy the experience.