



YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING
Intercultural Exchange Programs



COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROGRAM HANDBOOK
FOR STUDENTS

Introduction

What is Youth for Understanding USA?

Youth For Understanding USA is a private, nonprofit, educational organization that prepares young people for their responsibilities and opportunities in a changing and interdependent world. YFU is one of the world's oldest, largest, and most respected international youth exchange programs.

What is our history?

Dr. Rachel Andresen founded YFU in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1951. The first participants were 75 German and Austrian teenagers invited to live with American host families as part of the Post-World War II effort to rebuild international friendship.

Since 1951, more than 240,000 students have participated in YFU exchange programs. Each year approximately 4,000 participants take part in YFU programs worldwide.

How is YFU organized?

YFU USA is directed by a president, who reports to a board of trustees. The president is advised by the International Advisory Council (IAC), whose members are elected by the worldwide YFU community.

Today, there are more than 60 YFU partner offices and organizations around the world. Each national organization shares a common mission and vision for the future and is fully autonomous.

If the majority of YFU National Organizations around the world are autonomous, how are programs coordinated?

The YFU International Basic Standards, developed by the International Advisory Council in consultation with all YFU National Organizations, provide consistent quality in programs and operations worldwide. All YFU National Organizations adhere to these standards to provide such quality through their own style and cultural context. Copies of the International Basic Standards are available from the YFU International Secretariat in Washington, D.C. These standards apply specifically to programs that include school attendance, but also set the tone for all YFU programs.

What types of programs does YFU USA offer?

YFU has a number of different homestay programs for American and international students. This diversity allows YFU flexibility in matching individual needs with its programs. American students participate in semester or academic year programs that include enrollment in school, or in summer programs. Students between the ages of 15 and 18 coming to the USA from other countries attend secondary schools for semester or academic year programs. The growing Community College Program offers students between the ages of 17 and 23 an opportunity to live with a host family or in a dormitory and attend college classes.

Overview

Community College Program: Background and Scope

Responding to the needs of international students and recognizing the enthusiasm of community colleges for international students, YFU placed its first group of exchange students at U.S. community colleges in August 1991.

International students who have completed secondary school studies and meet comprehensive admission criteria are eligible. Students admitted to the one-year program Academic or English Language Program, the two-year Degree Program, or the semester-length enroll as full-time students at carefully selected YFU partner community colleges.

YFU community college students may choose to live with volunteer host families or in a dorm and participate fully in college and community life. Students in the Degree Program live independently in apartments the second year.

YFU partner organizations recruit, screen, and prepare students for the college programs. The Community College Program receives students from the following countries: Belgium, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Hungary, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Liberia, Mexico, The Netherlands, Norway, Russia, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Vietnam.

Using This Handbook

This handbook provides students participating in the Community College Program with guidelines, rules, and suggestions for successful exchange experiences. Students are encouraged to discuss the contents of this handbook with their host family and ask the Campus Coordinator for additional information, as needed.



Program Design, Expectations and Communication

The Communications Big Dipper: An Explanation

The Communications Big Dipper provides a visual image of how the various YFU Community College Program (CCP) players work together.

The person who facilitates the exchange on all these levels is the YFU Campus Coordinator. Appointed by the college, the Campus Coordinator supports YFU students and their host families. YFU USA trains and supports Campus Coordinators. The Campus Coordinator is the student's main point of contact.

The Communications Big Dipper Diagram shows the Campus Coordinator's key role in the YFU support structure: s/he stays in contact with all members of the exchange. The Campus Coordinator completes the critical triangle which includes host families and YFU students and provides support in key areas:

Host Family/Student Support. Students and families are expected to support and communicate directly with one another. Students contribute to and participate in family life. If communication between student and host family breaks down, the Campus Coordinator or your Support Services Manager is available to help.

Orientation and Information. The Campus Coordinator directs structured orientations and conducts regular meetings for exchange participants to gather information, address issues, plan activities, and learn about recreational options.

Liaison with Campus Resources. Students can benefit from the many faculty, staff, counselors, and other trained professionals who assist YFU college students. The Campus Coordinator assists the student with identifying appropriate college staff for advanced course approvals, tutoring, and other academic services.

CCP students must take responsibility to:

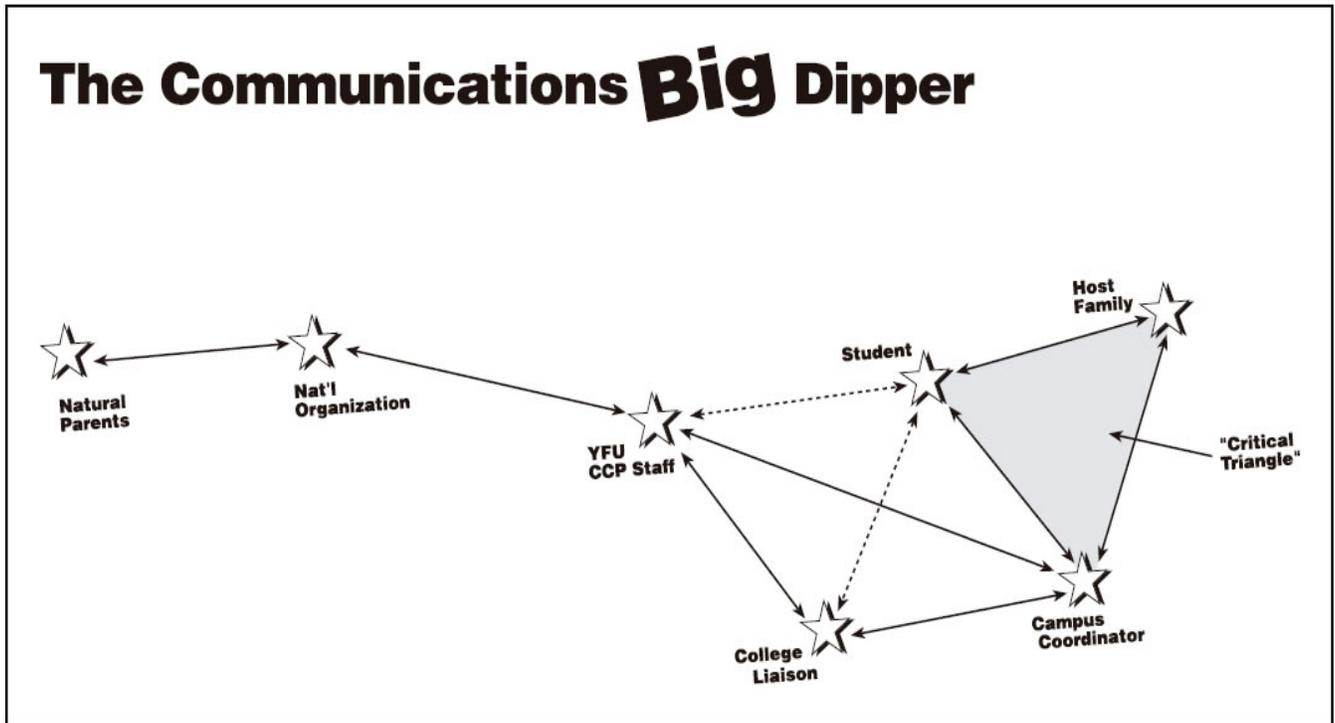
1. Access the support available to them;
2. Approach and cooperate with others to resolve difficulties; and
3. Explore new opportunities for personal growth provided by the exchange experience.
4. Put forth the effort to excel in school both academically and socially

Generally, the Campus Coordinator relays most routine requests for information or support to students directly however, students can contact YFU USA directly. CCP staff will refer an issue back to the appropriate college representative if contacted about an issue that must involve the Campus Coordinator or College Liaison. Most adjustment, host family, academic, and policy issues can only be thoroughly addressed with the help of educators at the college.

The CCP staff ensures students' well-being by offering guidance, leadership, training, teamwork, and open communication to the community colleges and other YFU USA professionals and partner staff in overseas offices. As illustrated in the Big Dipper, YFU USA college program staff link national organizations, on-program students, and partner community colleges.

National organizations contact CCP staff for information concerning a student or YFU college.

Students on-program and YFU college representatives must contact CCP staff for information from a YFU partner organization. As stated in the Student/Parent Agreement signed by students and natural parents, “individuals [students] on this program over 18 will be treated as adults for all purposes.” The YFU National Organization representing the natural parents’ home country will inform and involve natural parents where appropriate. YFU USA encourages students to correspond with their natural parents; however, students should not rely on natural parents to play a central role in resolving on-program issues



Interpreting the Big Dipper diagram:

Solid lines ———

Regular channels of communication described above.

Dashed lines - - - - -

Secondary channels to request further assistance. These are used only after the Campus Coordinator has been consulted. The College Liaison, who is the college official responsible for the YFU program, supervises the Campus Coordinator and is a resource outside of the main triangle for students or host families seeking further guidance.

Educational Support Before the Exchange

Community College Orientation

Students typically arrive in the U.S. a few days prior to the start of classes at their community college. The Campus Coordinators uses this opportunity to orient the students to their college.

Typical topics covered in the orientation are:

- A Campus Tour
- How to Register for Classes
- How to Open a Bank Account
- Health and Safety Issues
- Transportation

Examples of Student Expectations

Pre-Departure Orientations address expectations because students may have different or unrealistic expectations of living in the USA. Many ideas of what the United States will be like come from movies and magazines. You may also hear from previous YFU students who are excited to share the highlights of their exchange and have forgotten their initial cultural adjustment challenges. Furthermore, students may be selective in their hearing...they want to think about the glamorous side of the USA because they are coming here!

It is important for you to talk about your expectations with your host family and Campus Coordinators. When expectations and reality differ, there are disappointments, adjustments, and sometimes problems. Honest communication helps families, students, and Campus Coordinators work out these differences.

Students may have some of the following expectations:

- **My host family will consist of a mother, father, and children.** Stereotypical images of US families persist. Students may not understand that each family is unique. For instance, one family may include siblings and one parent. Another family may have no children at all, or they may have young children but no teenagers. The diverse population of the USA means that a host family can be of any race or ethnicity. These differences give a true picture of American life.
- **All Americans are rich and I will live with a rich family.** The myth that “all Americans are rich” is believed in many parts of the world. Students may

have this idea and be surprised and unprepared to live with an average American family. This expectation that all Americans are rich may also lead to some misconceptions about spending money.

Many of the students come from upper-middle-class families and are used to more than modest living. It is very common in some countries to have domestic employees do the cleaning, washing, gardening, etc. Hiring someone from outside the family to do these tasks is a common way of employing workers in many countries. What an American family might pay for someone to come one day a week to clean the house could pay for a full-time, live-in maid in another country.

- **I will travel and see all of the USA.** Some students may think of their trip to the USA as a vacation or opportunity to travel. They sometimes do not think of the experience as becoming a member of a family and learning about the “American way” of life.

Some students do not understand how large the United States is until they arrive. Traveling around some countries does not take the time and expense required to travel within some of our larger states. Other students feel that they may not have another chance to see the USA, and so they should try to see as much of the country as possible.

A student’s desire to travel is understandable. Students, host families, and Campus Coordinators should talk about the realities of time and expense to clarify why this is not always possible, especially during the school year. The YFU Community College Program gives students a travel option which allows time for independent travel, at their own expense, after the homestay is over.

- **Americans will be knowledgeable about my country.** Students come to the USA from countries with their own cultures and issues. They want to and expect to talk about their country with people that they meet. They may be disappointed to find how little some Americans know about other countries. This is an opportunity for YFU students to share their country’s perspective.

- **I will feel like a part of my family immediately.** Students frequently assume that they will fit into their host family right away. They may assume that the family will be just like their own—with the same habits, procedures, and lifestyles. They may have “intellectualized” that there will be differences, but it is hard to imagine living in a manner different from that in which one has always lived. Fitting into a new family can be difficult and may take some time.
- **My family will do many things together.** How much time family members spend together varies greatly among Americans. In homes where several members hold jobs outside the home and all family members have many activities away from the home, exchange students may be overwhelmed at first with the quick pace and lack of quiet, sit-down dinners and family discussions.

If a student comes from a culture where families do spend a great deal of time together, he or she may find it difficult to adjust to the fast-moving family.

Additionally, students attending a community college have personal responsibilities for their studies. Many become involved in student activities on the campus. These responsibilities and activities keep students busy and may reduce available time with the host family.

- **Americans are very religious (or non-religious).** Many students have heard from former students that Americans are extremely religious: attending religious services several times a week and saying grace before meals. Other students don’t expect Americans to be religious at all because of the well-publicized value Americans put on religious freedom and on the separation of church and state.

Although many students come from countries with an official religion or, at least, a very high membership in one denomination, it may be that the people do not actively practice their religion much. Furthermore, few students will be familiar with the social role that religion plays in America. The religious community can be an important gathering point for social activities as well as spiritual ones.



Some Background on YFU Families

Host families involved in the Community College Program come from many different backgrounds and represent various lifestyles. A college professor’s family, a single person, a couple with grown children away at college, or retired couples are examples of the types of families involved in the YFU Community College Program. This diversity reflects US families today.

Educational Support During the Exchange

The Campus Coordinator will provide ongoing support and will direct structured orientation programs through-out the year.

Support Services

The YFU Campus Coordinator serves as the principal support person for exchange participants. Students should request the help of their Campus Coordinator when they have a problem or issue. Using college and community resources, the Coordinator will provide orientation and ongoing support for both host families and students. Moreover, the Coordinator will offer academic advice to students and help them integrate into campus and community life.

Post-Arrival Orientation for Students

The Campus Coordinator will schedule and direct a Post-Arrival Orientation for both students and families approximately four to six weeks after the arrival of the students. Students and families come together at this point to discuss mutual issues and concerns; to share their experiences so far; and to learn more about maximizing their experiences together. This orientation complements the Pre-Arrival Orientation for host families and the Pre-Departure Orientation for students.

Because the Post-Arrival Orientation takes place after students and families have lived together, it is an excellent time to redirect energies and revitalize the experiences in light of real adaptation and adjustment concerns. Students have the opportunity to meet with other students and community college staff to discuss any difficulties they may be having: families are reassured when they meet other host families, and can have their, “What do you do when...?” questions answered.

It is extremely important that both students and host families attend the Post-Arrival Orientation. Pre-Departure Orientations for students and Pre-Arrival Orientations for host families are an initial step in the learning process; however, by the time of the Post-Arrival Orientation, the experience has become a reality and there are new concerns that were not present earlier.

Re-Entry Orientation for Students

At the end of the program year and prior to student departure from the USA, students will attend a Re-Entry Orientation, directed by the Campus Coordinator, to prepare you for your return home, to prepare host families for the student’s departure and absence change, and to evaluate the exchange experience.

A YFU student stated the issue so clearly when she said, “I experienced two trips and two experiences abroad: one was in my host country; the other was going home.”

The experience of having difficulties readjusting to one’s home culture has been recognized for some time by businesses, governments, the Peace Corps, development agencies, exchange programs, and missionaries. This adjustment is referred to as re-entry or reverse culture shock.

The worst part of re-entry is being completely unprepared for it. A person returning to their own culture does not expect adjustment problems because the country, its customs, and its language are known to them. In not expecting difficulties, one is not prepared to resolve them.

It is for this reason that YFU requires the Campus Coordinators to conduct a Re-Entry Orientation before students return home. Not only do the orientations help students anticipate some of the adjustment problems they may face, orientations encourage students to think positively about new skills and attitudes that they have gained through the exchange experience that will make their adjustment easier.

The following suggestions are based on more than five decades of YFU exchange experiences:

- **Share yourself with your family.** Spend time with each member of your family. If the host parents are home when you return from classes, talk to them about your day and theirs. If there are children in the host family, make a special effort to spend time with them. Try to teach them about your own customs while asking and learning from them about theirs. Respect their private time and their own friends.
- **Show appreciation.** Very few things are more important in your home than thanking your family for what they do for you. It is not customary in the USA to give expensive gifts or big parties to say thank you. Small things that will make your family feel good include a smile, willingly helping with chores, or cooking a special dish. Notice how often other host family members show appreciation and how they do it. It may be done very differently in your own country, but appreciation is always important.



- **Establish a working relationship with your Campus Coordinator.** As a young adult, you are expected to be self-directed, motivated, and responsible. During your exchange experience, however, you will need the guidance of people who know the campus and community, or people who are sensitive to the challenges of a cross-cultural experience. Your YFU Campus Coordinator is appointed by the college and trained by YFU to support you and serve as a resource. Establish a relationship with your Campus Coordinator early on in your exchange experience.

Your YFU Campus Coordinator places you with your host family, provides ongoing support to you and your host family, advises you on your academic and technical training options at your college, and facilitates your

integration into campus and community life. Depending on your particular needs, the Campus Coordinator also can refer you to other faculty, staff, and counselors on campus for additional assistance.

- **Meet people and make friends.** When you come to the USA, you will be separated from old friends but will have an opportunity to make new friends. The roles of friends vary from one culture to another. Since you are the new person in town, it is your responsibility to introduce yourself to people and to get involved in campus activities.

A variety of extracurricular activities are offered at each college. Some colleges may offer drama and music clubs; other colleges may offer strong athletic programs or student government. In some cases, the college may be the center of community social and cultural events.

YFU makes every effort to match students with an appropriate college on the basis of academic objectives and stated extracurricular interests. Extracurricular activities often offer more opportunities for friendships than the classroom situations. To feel more a part of the college community, participate actively in campus life in order to enhance the total US living experience.

As community-based institutions, YFU partner colleges have strong links with organizations in the communities they serve. One can find a variety of civic organizations, clubs, religious institutions, schools, hospitals, social service agencies, and businesses interested in the students' perspective and willingness to contribute. Students are invited to approach their Campus Coordinator and other college educators to request help in identifying volunteer opportunities.

- **Do not be afraid to make mistakes when speaking English.** English has many words, slang expressions, and idioms that are not universally understood. Studying English can be different than speaking English.

Hints for learning the language include:

1. Focus on everyday conversation. Ask your family and friends to speak slowly and clearly.
2. Keep a [your native] language/English dictionary on hand.
3. Listen to the radio, and watch TV news programs and talk shows. Some educational programs that teach English to young people such as Sesame Street may be helpful for students just beginning to learn the language.

4. Keep a list of expressions and words that are new and useful and try to use them in conversation.
 5. Take advantage of college resources; join clubs and groups for special interests. The Campus Coordinator can direct you to tutoring services or language laboratories.
- **Show concern for personal appearance and grooming.** Although your wardrobe may be limited by airline baggage allowances, you should dress properly for most occasions. Dress appropriately both in terms of the occasion and what your friends are wearing. Personal habits differ from country to country. How people bathe or shower, and how often, varies from culture to culture. Americans are generally concerned about cleanliness and body odor. It is customary in the USA to shower or bathe daily and change into clean underclothes. Both men and women use underarm deodorant.
 - **Assume your share of household responsibilities.** All members of the family usually share jobs around the house. You can shovel snow, help with meals, baby sit, cut grass and do chores other family members do. Discuss household responsibilities and chores with your family. You are expected to do your share when living with a family.
 - **Do not overuse the telephone.** You must pay your own telephone bills and always ask permission before using the telephone to make long-distance calls. YFU discourages frequent calls home, or to relatives or friends in other parts of the USA. It is recommended that students call or video-chat (for example, Skype) with their family at home about once per week at maximum. Calling home too frequently can cause homesickness and will slow the adjustment process.

- **Limit Internet and computer use.** Most families have only one computer which is shared by all family members. Host parents may use the home computer for work and children may need it for homework assignments. Many families in the United States subscribe to a limited internet plan and will have to pay an extra fee if they go over their allotted amount of data. Discuss computer usage expectations and schedules with your host family. Students should respect and adhere to the family's schedule. If more computer time is needed, use the computer labs located on the community college campuses.



- **Respect nonsmokers' rights.** Smoking cigarettes is not a habit many people in the US have. Be respectful as smoking is generally illegal in buildings and frowned upon to smoke in many other public areas as well. If smoking is not allowed in the home and you are a smoker, discuss this with your host family. Depending upon the host family attitude and lifestyle, you may be asked to smoke only outside the home.

Restaurants, stores, and many public places also do not allow smoking. Many colleges nationwide are also banning smoking on campus. Smoke-free environments are the norm in the USA. Students must follow all college rules and regulations regarding smoking. Purchasing tobacco under the age of 18 is illegal in the United States.

Policies and Procedures

YFU maintains policies and procedures to ensure fairness to the majority of students, consistency of standards, and program integrity. After carefully reading this chapter, host families and students can discuss issues of concern with each other and approach the Campus Coordinator for clarification.

Homestay Expectations

Students who chose to live with host families are reminded that they made a commitment to living with a host family. Also remember, that the decision with the host family was your choice. The homestay component of the YFU Community College Program immerses students in US culture and language.

If a student is absent from the host family's home on a regular basis or behaves in a way which minimizes the host family's participation in the exchange experience, YFU will either place the student on probation or dismiss the student from the YFU program. Students should discuss with their host family's what the expectations are in terms of a curfew and meal times. If a student removes themselves without the assistance of their Campus Coordinator or without their knowledge, students risk becoming off-status and therefore being removed from the YFU program. If this happens, students will be responsible for all charges they may incur including but not limited to: school tuition, transportation, insurance, housing and meals.

For students who live with host families, take note that **you may not stay with your host family during the summer** – no host family accommodations are provided over the summer months when school is not in session. After one academic year with host families, students in the Degree Program will live independently in apartments at their own expense during the second year.

Academic Standards

YFU academic standards policies give students the freedom to pursue the field of their choice and maintain the academic rigor of the YFU Community College Program. Students have the opportunity to pursue a meaningful and challenging educational experience and are expected to contribute to the academic atmosphere of their institutions.

YFU Academic Standards require students to maintain a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 and attend all classes on a regular basis. YFU expects that students

will adhere to the academic standards set forth by the college. YFU Academic Standards extend beyond objectively measured grade point averages and class attendance. A student who chronically fails to complete assignments, or who disrupts class, or who refuses to act in a courteous and respectful manner toward fellow students, faculty, and staff will be subject to YFU probation or dismissal from the program.

Academic Performance

After an initial period of adjustment, YFU college students are expected to achieve academic results which reflect their true abilities. Students will maintain a grade point average of at least 2.0 on a 4.0 scale, for each semester or quarter. A 2.0 grade point average is regarded as average achievement (Refer to your college catalog for a more detailed explanation of grade points).

Each semester/quarter, students are required to ask instructors to complete an Academic Performance Form and return it to the Campus Coordinator to share with YFU.

Students who fail to achieve a minimum 2.0 grade point average, for any semester or quarter, will be placed on probation and his/her academic achievement will be subject to regular review. YFU will send the student a letter with dates for review of a student's progress and other terms of probation. This letter will be shared with the YFU partner country. **Students who fail to improve their academic standing or who violate the terms of probation will be subject to dismissal from the YFU program.**

Students who finish the academic program with a cumulative grade point average below 2.0 are subject to program dismissal, effective on the Program Completion Date. Such students will lose the opportunity to request an independent, post- program travel option.

[Note: Some colleges may require a grade point average higher than 2.0 to be in good academic standing with the college.]

Attendance

Students will attend classes and laboratories on a regular basis. **YFU will dismiss students from the YFU program as a result of chronic non-attendance.**

Chronic non-attendance is defined as missing more than three (3) class sessions of any one course during one semester or quarter.

In the case of the intensive English Language Program, chronic non-attendance is defined as missing more than ten (10) hours of English language instruction during the semester. YFU will dismiss English Language Program students from the YFU program as a result of chronic non-attendance.

Should a student need to miss classes for an extended period of time due to medical or other reasons, the instructors and the Campus Coordinator should be notified in advance (if possible). Students are responsible for arranging a schedule with their professors to make up missed assignments. In the case of medical issues, the Campus Coordinator may require the student to obtain a doctor's written statement for extensive absences.

In addition to YFU attendance requirements, maintaining a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester or quarter is a requirement of your student visa. **Any student who falls below 12 credit hours will risk termination of his/her student visa status, as mandated by US immigration law, and will face immediate early return.** At US community colleges, professors have the option of dropping students from their classes for non-attendance. Therefore, chronic non-attendance can jeopardize a YFU student's visa status, if the dropped course(s) causes a student's course load to fall below the minimum 12 hours.

US Immigration places strict requirements on colleges and universities who issue I-20 or DS-2019 forms to students. Colleges must abide by the regulations or risk the loss of their ability to issue I-20 or DS-2019 forms for future international students. Therefore, when students violate student visa regulations, they will likely face immediate early return to their home country.

Academic Misconduct

CCP students should become familiar with their college's rules of academic misconduct. As academic misconduct and the resulting consequences vary by institution, students should check with their Campus Coordinator if they have any questions.

Course Selection

Students selected to participate in the Community College Program must take responsibility for their own education. Students will work with their Campus Coordinator (and college academic advisors) to select and register for classes.

Course schedules that list courses offered during a particular semester or quarter are available from the Campus Coordinator and on the college's website. Not all courses listed are offered during each semester or quarter, be sure to check the current term's course listing for details. YFU will only pay for students to take maximum 16 credits.

Each student will establish goals for the duration of the exchange experience with the Campus Coordinator's help. Students who wish to make changes must secure approval from their Campus Coordinator.

Online Courses

Students may enroll in one online course per semester/quarter, with a maximum of two courses per academic year. Degree-seeking students who need specific online courses in order to complete their degree requirements may request special permission from YFU on a case-by-case basis.

Degree Program

Students who pursue an Associate Degree in the two-year Degree Program will design an academic program which satisfies college requirements for the degree intended. Students accept responsibility to schedule and successfully complete courses, as well as any required labs or internships during the four semesters (or six quarters) of full-time study provided.

Degree Program students electing to take summer courses should consult with their Campus Coordinator to determine the cost of housing, meals, cost of summer courses etc. (these costs are not covered by YFU). Degree Program students are subject to the same departure deadline established for all YFU community college students.

College Exams and Other Requirements

Students must respect colleges' rules and regulations, including those governing student behavior, academic performance, English language proficiency, etc.

Any student dismissed from her college because of a violation of the college's policies will be dismissed from the YFU program.

All community college students are required to take placement examinations (English, mathematics, basic skills, etc.) once they arrive at their colleges. The types of examinations used at each community college may differ. Students who are required to take intensive ESL instruction will not be permitted to take regular courses. With the approval of the appropriate college dean and the Campus Coordinator, YFU college students taking advanced ESL courses may be allowed to take some regular college courses. Advanced ESL students may be limited to courses which do not require strong English skills.

In addition to required placement tests, students may also request permission to take examinations to demonstrate their knowledge of particular subjects. Performing well on placement examinations in specific subjects can demonstrate they are academically prepared to take advanced courses in those subjects.

Alcohol

The legal drinking age in the US is 21 years. If a student is found to be drinking illegally, immediate program dismissal will be considered.

YFU college students of legal drinking age should not use alcohol in a manner which is excessive, inappropriate, or embarrassing to themselves, the host family, the college, or Youth For Understanding.

Cell Phone Guidelines

YFU knows that the key to every student's successful adjustment is frequent personal communication and interaction with host family and new friends in the host country. Increasingly, peer communication among students is via cell phone and text message, and use of this technology is a key way for the YFU student to network with new American friends.

YFU acknowledges that most students will bring with them or purchase a cell phone while on program. Specifically, contact with the home country, to include phone calls and/or text messaging, should be limited to once per week. If it is determined that cell phone use is interfering with cultural adjustment, YFU will support the host family enforcing restrictions on use.

Cell phones on campus

YFU students must familiarize themselves with their schools' and professors' policies regarding cell phone use on campus. Many US schools limit cell phone use to specific areas on campus.

Sexting

Sexting is a term referring to sending sexually explicit text messages, pictures, or videos via cell phones or through the internet. Unfortunately, students are not always aware of the short- and long-term consequences of their actions, and the actions of others, when using digital technologies.

The consequences of irresponsible "digital" behavior can be more public, more severe, and longer lasting than mistakes people make "offline." Sending and/or receiving sexually explicit content to or from another person can lead to immediate disciplinary actions at school and within YFU. Depending on the circumstances, law enforcement may also become involved and criminal charges may be filed. In order to protect yourself, your friends, your host family, and natural parents from embarrassing and serious situations, you should never send or open a sexually explicit message.

Harassing or Threatening Texts

Students should report to the Campus Coordinator, host parent, or instructor if they are the target of harassing or threatening texts or phone calls. Students should never use the cell phone to harass or threaten others.

Safety Texts

If available, students should enroll in Emergency Notification services available on their campus or in their community. Safety alerts can be sent by text or email depending on the student's preferences.

Computer Use and Social Media Safety Guidelines

Computer use and social media are increasingly part of everyday life for adults and youth alike. Laws and ethics surrounding internet use vary from culture to culture and family to family. YFU USA hopes that the following guidelines regarding computer and internet use can serve as a foundation for open discussion between host families and students. Ongoing discussions about appropriate computer use will prevent misuse throughout the exchange experience.

- Use of the host family computer or access to the internet is a privilege, not a right. Students should be prepared for no access in the host family home or limited access at the host family home, at school or at a public library.
- If granted permission to use the host family computer, the students must always ask permission before adding programs, downloading materials from the internet or opening e-mail attachments.
- Students must limit their time on the computer, as excessive computer use is likely to have a negative

impact on host family relationships and overall adjustment. Host families and YFU have the right to limit or suspend computer use.

- Students should be aware that nothing on the internet is private, including blogs, social media, and personal web pages. Everything posted on the internet can be viewed by any person at any time.
- Students should be aware that any file stored on the host family computer is not considered private. Students should not store anything on the host family computer that they do not wish to be viewed by host family members.
- Students should be aware of the danger of internet predators. Predators can become a threat when a student communicates with strangers over the internet. Never reveal personal information, such as school name, home town, contact information or pictures. Never agree to meet someone in person who you met in an internet chat room.
- Students should not use violent, offensive or sexually suggestive photos, screen names or language on the internet. These can result in the student being asked to leave their host family and/or school placement. In such cases, YFU may need to recommend an early return to the home country.
- Pictures or videos depicting nudity or sexual acts must never be viewed, downloaded, or sent electronically. This is a serious crime in the US that can result in the student being arrested, charged with internet pornography, and sentenced to jail. Do not open such files sent by friends from your home country.

Dangerous Activities

Some activities are considered too dangerous for YFU students and are not permitted. If a student participates in a prohibited activity, YFU will consider the particular circumstances and either place the student on probation or dismiss the student from the program.

YFU community college students are NOT permitted to drive or ride as the operator of the following vehicles:

- All Terrain Vehicle (ATV)
- Go-Cart
- Jet Ski
- Motorcycle

- Trail Bike (Motorcross)
- Moped
- Snowmobile
- Waverunner

Students are permitted to ride as passengers on the above vehicles provided they follow all local laws and practice reasonable safety precautions (only ride as passengers where it is legal, wear helmets, etc.).

YFU college students are NOT permitted to participate in dangerous activities, such as:

- Bungee jumping
- Hang gliding
- Parachute jumping
- Parasailing
- Piloting a private plane
- Mountaineering

Youth For Understanding reserves the right to withhold authorization for any other activity if it is deemed hazardous and unacceptable for the student to participate.

Driving

Students should be aware that the majority of Americans use their own automobile for transportation. While public transportation is sometimes available, it is often not as easily accessible or convenient as it is in other countries. Some YFU college students find purchasing a car to be a good investment, others view finding transportation as a way to meet and make American friends.

If a YFU college student chooses to operate an automobile at his or her own discretion, YFU has no liability for possible damages or claims resulting from the student's use of such a vehicle.

To own and drive an automobile in the United States, you are required to have, at a minimum, the following:

- A valid driver's license—each state has different regulations. Some states do not accept an International Driver's License or a license from another country. Most states require each licensed applicant to pass both a written test on roadway rules and an actual road test where an instructor is present in the vehicle while the driver performs a series of maneuvers.
- Auto insurance—YFU requires students who drive an automobile regularly to carry their own auto insurance.

The minimum amount and rates vary by state. Students may expect to pay approximately \$100 or more per month. State-required automobile insurance purchased by the student is the primary source of medical injury coverage. If a student chooses to drive in the United States, the student and his or her natural family are solely responsible for all costs and obligations including licensing and required automobile insurance.

- It is necessary to contact the Department of Motor Vehicles in your area to obtain information about local motor vehicle laws.
- YFU students must also know traffic laws and obey all regulations, including speed limits, when driving any vehicle in the U.S. Students should be aware that they will be subject to penalties associated with traffic violations and said violations may be taken more seriously than in other countries.
- The cost of purchasing a vehicle will vary. Past students have spent between \$700 and \$3,000 for a used automobile. Be aware that the host family is not obligated in any way to offer the use of their vehicle or to cover any costs related to a YFU college student's operation of an automobile.

Disciplinary Procedures

YFU follows a structured disciplinary procedure to document and review student behavioral issues. YFU Community College Program students are representatives of their home country, their college, and YFU and are therefore expected to behave in a mature and responsible manner.

All students are responsible for following host family rules, all college and YFU rules and regulations, as well as all federal, state, and local laws. If a student violates host family, college or YFU rules and regulations, a warning letter will be issued for the first offense. Repeated disregard for host family, college or YFU rules will result in the student being placed on probation. This means that the student will be considered for Involuntary Early Return if his or her behavior does not improve or if s/he is reprimanded again for disregarding or breaking a host family or YFU rule.

A student who breaks any federal, state, or local law will be considered for immediate Involuntary Early Return. This decision will be made based upon the nature of the offense by YFU Community College Program staff in consultation with the campus coordinator and the YFU Sending Organization.

Early Return

Involuntary Early Return.

An Involuntary Early Return occurs when YFU decides that a student should be removed from the YFU program and returned to his or her home country. This type of program dismissal usually occurs when a student seriously violates a program or community college policy, immigration regulation, or other US law. Community college staff and the YFU Sending Organization are consulted when an Involuntary Early Return is under consideration.

YFU will establish departure dates and specific travel itineraries for students undergoing an Involuntary Early Return.

Voluntary Early Return.

A Voluntary Early Return occurs when a student desires to return to their home country before the designated end of the program. This may happen because a student cannot adjust to the USA, or because the student has personal or natural family problems.

Students who decide to return early will be helped to prepare for re-entry into their home culture. Students under the age of 18 who desire to return to their home country by their own choice must obtain their natural parents' permission. YFU will establish departure dates and specific travel itineraries for students electing Voluntary Early Return.

Employment

Legally, YFU college students who hold a valid F-1 visa are allowed to work on-campus for 20 hours per week or less. YFU students holding F-1 visas cannot work off campus. It is important to note that obtaining an on-campus position can be a competitive, selective process.

Students should not rely on the possibility of on-campus employment as a source of income to meet their financial obligations while on-program. Failure to comply with YFU and F-1 guidelines concerning paid employment may result in dismissal from the program.

YFU college students are solely responsible to comply with all US immigration regulations governing employment of foreign students. Students assume all responsibility to obey Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations, to pay income and other taxes, and to file required tax forms. In order to legally work on-campus, students will be required by the IRS to obtain a social security number and pay US taxes.

Extension of Stay

YFU cannot grant an extension of stay. An F-1 visa holder remains in valid status for up to 60 days after the last day of classes at their college. This exact date will vary by college, but will typically be around early to mid-July.

The organization will not participate in the investigation of visa extension or issue a “no objection” statement unless there is demonstrated evidence of a medical or special emergency requiring such an extension.

YFU students holding F-1 visas assume responsibility for maintaining valid visa status should they decide to continue their education in the USA after the YFU program ends. YFU will not provide assistance on visa issues to students who elect to stay or return to the United States independently of the YFU Community College Program.

Health

Immunizations

The availability of specific immunizations varies around the world. In the US, immunization requirements differ from college to college. If a student arrives without the shots needed to officially enroll or participate in sports activities at the college, s/he must get the shots soon after arrival. The cost of immunizations is the student’s responsibility.

Insurance

All YFU college students are insured. Students are covered by medical insurance from the date of their arrival in the United States until June 30th or December 31 (for Spring and Winter departures, respectively).

Copies of the basic insurance information, claims sending procedures, and claim forms are sent to each YFU partner, international students, and Campus Coordinators. Host families can obtain this information from the Campus Coordinator.

The host family and student should read the information carefully. The policy has definite limits and exclusions. While host families are encouraged to help their YFU students to understand clearly what is not reimbursable; the student, however, is ultimately responsible for filing claims and for all non-reimbursable costs. **YFU USA will not assist with any claims matters.**

In filing a claim, the claim form should be completed with all required information. All papers (the original physician and hospital bills, prescription receipts, etc.) should be submitted with the claim. Bills must state diagnosis, treatment, and charges. If the bills have already been paid and reimbursement is being requested, include the receipt.

The claim form is mailed to the claims administrator, not to YFU. Keep copies of all claims and related documents.

Medical treatment (including emergencies)

Before a student arrives in the USA, YFU obtains written permission from the young adult student (co-signature by natural parents) to get emergency medical attention if it is needed (Health and Dental Certificate). YFU, the community college, its representatives, and host families are not responsible for a student’s medical bills, no matter who signs a hospital admission form, or for any negative results of emergency treatment. For more details, host families and students should refer to the current insurance policy regarding emergency medical attention and coverage.

Legal Status

A YFU community college student is subject to the national and local laws of the United States of America. Neither YFU nor a student’s embassy or consulate can arrange free legal advice, provide bail, or get him or her out of jail.

Marriage

Married students are not permitted on the YFU program. If a YFU student marries while on-program or is discovered to have married before becoming a YFU participant, the student will be immediately dismissed from the program. YFU will establish departure dates and specific travel itineraries for students found to be married.

Natural Disasters

In the event of any natural disaster emergency, students should call his or her natural parents as soon as possible to relieve concerns about safety or to notify them of any arrangements to provide emergency services to students. YFU also asks the host family and student to contact the Campus Coordinator as soon as possible to report their status.

Off-Program

A student who separates him or herself from YFU will be designated off-program. In consultation with the Campus Coordinator, YFU will decide whether a student’s absence from the college, host family, etc. justifies off-program status.

In order to avoid being designated off-program, students are advised to follow YFU policy governing class attendance (see above) and to keep YFU and Campus Coordinators informed of travel plans. Students’ travel plans may not interfere with scheduled classes and examinations. Once a student is designated off-program, the separation from YFU is final. YFU has no responsibility, legal or otherwise, to the student and their natural parents or guardians for their further well-being. The off-program

student will be given their return YFU airline ticket for departure on the date established by YFU. Students who attempt to make improper changes to their return tickets risk invalidating the tickets.

YFU insurance coverage will be canceled effective on the departure date scheduled by YFU. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will be notified that the student is no longer on-program. YFU strongly advises students who leave the program to depart the US in accordance with US immigration rules.

Passport

YFU college students are responsible for keeping their passports in a safe place. In addition, the passport number should be noted and kept in a separate location. For identification purposes, students should carry their college student ID card at all times. They do not need to carry their passports when not traveling. Students are advised to make a copy of their passport (identification and US visa pages). If their passport is lost, having a copy can help accelerate the process of receiving a new one.

Political Expression

It is not common or polite in the US to speak about one's political or religious view unless with others who you know have similar values to you.

The political views a student expresses are only his or her own. Students should emphasize this to people they meet who might think otherwise. Students are in no way official representatives of their own country's government or YFU.

It is recommended that a YFU student should not become actively involved in the political activities of the United States if that involvement will detract in any way from the relationship with the host family or participation at the college—no matter how strongly the student may feel about an issue or a candidate.

Pregnancy

For medical reasons, placement and personal considerations, female students found to be pregnant while on the YFU program will be dismissed from the program and encouraged to return home immediately. Individual circumstances may warrant exceptions to this policy; however, all students will be considered for dismissal. Male YFU students who cause pregnancies while on-program will be dismissed from the program.

Privacy

The host families right to privacy should be respected. It is unethical to examine and/or confiscate a family member's personal possessions such as mail, diaries, etc.

No YFU representative has the legal right to withhold from the student any legal personal possessions such as a passport, visa form, or driver's license. However, under certain circumstances, YFU does have the right to demand, as a condition for continuance on the program, that students voluntarily destroy or turn over a specific personal item.

Student Expenses

YFU covers the cost of tuition and fees as follows:

Degree Program

YFU will pay for a total of 64 credit hours of tuition over four semesters (or 96 quarter credit hours over 6 quarters). YFU students and their natural families are responsible for tuition costs beyond the budgeted 64 credit hours (or 96 quarter credit hours).

Some students may need English language instruction before they begin mainstream coursework towards their Degree Program. This is determined by testing upon the student's arrival at the college. Generally, ESL credits will not apply to Degree Program requirements. Therefore, the tuition for these courses is also the responsibility of the student and natural family, and should be paid to the college directly.

YFU covers mandatory fees and/or general fees required of students attending the college in order to register/matriculate up to a certain amount. YFU pays course fees to cover limited additional costs (language labs, science labs).

Year Program

YFU will pay the cost of 16 credit hours of tuition per student per semester (or quarter) for two semesters (or three quarters).

YFU covers mandatory fees and/or general fees required of students attending the college in order to register/matriculate up to a certain amount. YFU pays course fees to cover limited additional costs (language labs, science labs).

Academic Semester Program

YFU will pay the cost of 16 credit hours of tuition per student for one semester. YFU covers mandatory fees and/or general fees required of students attending the college in order to register/matriculate up to a certain amount. YFU pays course fees to cover limited additional costs (language labs, science labs).

English Language Program

YFU will pay the cost of 16 hours per week of intensive English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction for one academic semester. YFU covers mandatory fees and/or

general fees required of students attending the college in order to register/ matriculate up to a certain amount. YFU pays course fees to cover limited additional costs (language labs, science labs).

Expenses Not Covered by YFU

YFU will not cover the cost of laboratory materials and special student membership/activity fees. Special fees such as those for ID cards, transcripts, parking, music courses, credit by examination, graduation-related fees, athletic courses, interpreter services and highly technical laboratories will not be covered.

[Note: Students are responsible for the cost of books and supplies as well as fees and expenses not covered by YFU.]

Living expenses

YFU college students should budget enough money to cover the cost of telephone calls, personal spending money, transportation to and from class and activities, clothes, meals outside the host family home, leisure time activities (movies, sports/music events, travel, etc.) and any damages to either the student's or host family's property. YFU will hold students responsible for any and all bills that are left unpaid.

Student Travel

US arrival dates

YFU USA will establish arrival dates for students participating in the Community College Programs.

Specific arrival dates will be provided to students by their YFU National Organizations as soon as college assignments are completed. Students will arrive in the United States in time to settle into their host families, participate in arrival activities, take English and other placement examinations, finalize their course selection and begin to become familiar with their campuses and communities.

Arrival travel arrangements

Most YFU college students may travel to the USA on arrangements made by YFU. Students will be given YFU Travel's contact phone number to use should they encounter any difficulties while traveling.

If student's have a layover, they are encouraged to ask airport staff for directions to their connecting flights.

Sometimes travel plans do not work as scheduled. Weather, mechanical problems, and/or late departures may cause students to miss connecting flights. If this happens, students should contact YFU Travel. YFU Travel

will assist with bookings and make overnight arrangements, if required. The number for YFU travel emergency is: **1.800.705.9510.**

Campus Coordinators organize arrangements to meet students at their final destination airports. Students are advised to convert some money into US dollars before departure for miscellaneous expenses while traveling.

Luggage

Airline regulations about the number of pieces of luggage, luggage size and weight vary by country and airline. **Check with your airline regarding current size and weight limitations for checked and carry-on luggage as luggage policies are subject to change.**

The airlines may add an extra charge if there is too much luggage or if it is too heavy. However, the airline may refuse to take it, even if students are willing to pay. Students will have to carry their own luggage while traveling; therefore, students should not bring more than they can carry by themselves.

The YFU National Organization in the student's home country will give students YFU luggage tags. Students' names and the host families' addresses should be written on the tags. Also write the addresses inside the luggage. Students should not leave luggage unattended while traveling. This is an important security matter.

Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

Students should be reminded that entering and traveling within the US can be more complicated than in other countries. Students should be aware of Transportation Security Administration (TSA) regulations and pack accordingly. Students should also expect to have their luggage and their person subject to metal detectors and/or screening machines. Although these processes may seem invasive, remember that they are for collective security and patience should be practiced.

Travel during the academic year

All YFU college students **must complete and submit a Student Travel Approval Form prior to travel without host parent supervision and/or for any international trip. This form must be submitted to the Campus Coordinator at least 2 weeks prior to travel. In addition to the form, students** under 18 must also provide Campus Coordinators with their natural parents' written permission before undertaking any independent trip. As young adults, YFU college students over 18 and those under 18 with parental permission may travel while on-program if their travel plans meet the following criteria:

1. There is no significant interference with college attendance or YFU-related meetings, events, etc.
2. The student informs the Campus Coordinator in a timely manner of proposed itinerary 2 weeks prior to traveling.
3. The student discusses travel plans with the host family.
4. Student is in good standing with both the community college and YFU.

In addition to these conditions, YFU college students must follow any procedures required by their Campus Coordinator or host family. Failure to comply with YFU and community college travel policies may result in program dismissal.

Travel outside the USA

Students are strongly encouraged to limit their travel while on-program to travel within the United States. If YFU college students elect to travel outside the United States, the students assume full responsibility for the appropriate visas for entry into the country to be visited and valid visa status for re-entry into the United States. YFU and the college cannot advise on foreign visa requirements or re-entry visas into the United States.

Students are responsible for all travel arrangements, travel documents and expenses. All conditions governing travel during the academic year (described above) remain in effect for travel outside the United States.

Students who travel outside the United States, particularly those who choose to visit their home countries or home country friends, may encounter adjustment difficulties when they return to their YFU community college and host family.

If adjustment difficulties become serious, YFU may consider early return of the student.

Program Completion Date

The exchange program for YFU college students formally ends one week after the last day of scheduled final examinations for the semester or quarter at each college. This date (which will vary from college to college) is referred to as the Program Completion Date.

Students should check their own community college's current academic calendar to determine when the last day of exams is scheduled for the semester (or quarter) at their college. Contact the Campus Coordinator with questions about the Program Completion Date.

[Note: A semester in the United States typically lasts sixteen weeks. A quarter typically lasts ten weeks.]

YFU will arrange return travel for students to their home countries on the Program Completion Date (where applicable). Students should be advised that actual departure dates are subject to availability.

[Note: After your program end date – seven days after final exams – you will be responsible for of all of your own expenses, including housing and meals. Students must depart the United States no later than 60 days past the program end date. To remain in the U.S. beyond this date will be considered a violation of your legal status.]

Independent, post-program travel option

Forms to request an independent, post-program travel option will be sent to Campus Coordinators. Students who request an independent, post-program travel option may be charged an airline ticket change fee and will be required to purchase short term health insurance for coverage after the official end of program date. Students wishing to travel after the end of program date must demonstrate to their Campus Coordinators and YFU that they have made arrangements for the following:

1. to live independently (pay for housing, meals, etc. in their host community; students are not permitted to stay with their host families after the Program Completion Date. NO exceptions to this policy will be permitted.
2. to travel to other regions of the United States at their own expense.

Students who do not complete their academic program with a cumulative grade point average of 2.0, or those that have been placed on probation for any reason, may not be granted an independent, post-program travel option.

Departure travel arrangements

Students are able to choose their return date (or a range of days for the return date). The return date must be after the last day of exams at the student's college and before their visa expiration (60 days after the last day of classes at the student's college). Students must depart from the airport at which they arrived at the beginning of their program. YFU will arrange each student's flight from the US to their home country according to the information provided on the Return Travel Request Form that will be given to each student by their Campus Coordinator. YFU USA will set a required date for the completed form to be returned to YFU USA. If the form is not returned to YFU USA by the required date, YFU will select a date and schedule return travel arrangements by the end of program date. Once the form is submitted

to YFU USA, the requested return date will be final. Any changes will be subject to a prepaid airline cancellation fee of \$300.00 or more.

It is imperative that students consider all responsibilities that await them upon their arrival home. Commitments to jobs, military service, families or other pressing obligations must be considered carefully before the student selects a preferred date to travel home. It is the responsibility of the Campus Coordinator to reiterate these facts to students as they complete their Return Travel Request Forms.

Visits from Natural Parents and Home Country Friends

Natural families, relatives, and home country friends are strongly discouraged from visiting the exchange student, especially during the initial adjustment period. Host families and community college staff report that visits from natural family members and home country friends at any point in the year are often inconvenient, disruptive to a student's relationship with the host family, and diminish the exchange experience. This sometimes leads to adjustment difficulties so serious that YFU may have to consider Early Return of the student.

Since YFU students must attend classes regularly, natural families and others insisting on visiting should consider scheduling them during breaks—often during the holiday seasons—in the academic year. The Campus Coordinators and host families are committed to the exchange students' experience; they are not obliged to entertain visitors.

Natural family considering such visits must contact the YFU Sending Organization before any flights are booked or arrangements are made. Host families must contact their Campus Coordinator if and when they learn that natural parents or home country friends plan to visit.

If natural family members, relatives or home country friends insist on visiting during the independent, post-program travel option, YFU will not change students' return travel itineraries to accommodate the schedules of such visitors. NO exceptions to the departure deadline (to be established) will be permitted.

Natural families, relatives, and home country friends who choose to visit even though YFU strongly discourages such visits should not expect host families or Campus Coordinators to provide or arrange lodging and meals for them.

Violations of the Law

When a student admits to breaking a criminal law or is arrested or charged, the student will be considered for program dismissal. Students are advised to secure legal counsel at their own expense when faced with legal issues.

Drugs

YFU students may not buy, sell, possess, or use drugs which are illegal in their home or host country. Violators of this policy will be considered for immediate program dismissal from the Community College Program. A verified violation normally includes physical evidence, student admission, or reliable witnesses who have seen the student with or using drugs.

If a student is placed in a home where drug use is discovered, the student must notify YFU and YFU will remove the student from the host family. Please remember that in the US, alcohol is considered an illegal substance for persons under the age of 21.

Theft/Shoplifting

The nature and severity of the offense will determine procedure and possible outcomes, and may constitute cause for dismissal from the program.

What is an Associate Degree?

If a student enrolls at a community college to obtain an Associate Degree, it is possible for that student to transfer the final two years of his or her education to a four-year college or university to complete his or her education and receive a Bachelor Degree. Upon completing an Associate Degree, another option would be for that student to seek employment. There are three basic categories of the Associate Degree.

1. Associate in Arts (A.A.): Usually signifies that the student has followed a liberal arts academic curriculum. Most courses are transferable to a four-year institution.
2. Associate in Science (A.S.): Indicates that the student followed a university curriculum but that he or she had moved into the technical fields. Some of these courses may not be transferable to a four-year institution.
3. Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.): Usually the degree received by students in technical and vocational areas. These courses may not be transferable to a four-year institution.

How do Credits Transfer?

Community colleges have Articulation Agreements with four-year colleges and universities in their regions in order to facilitate the transfer of credits. Many such agreements exist between two- and four-year institutions. Counseling service is also made available to students to assist with each student's credit transfer process.

YFU students will be able to receive official transcripts of their grades. Some colleges may present students with certificates acknowledging attendance and/or performance. Students should work to get this paperwork prior to departing after program completion.

What are Certificate Programs?

In courses at community colleges, students enroll for the purpose of obtaining a Certificate, which is tailored for a specific career. Community colleges are concerned with the needs of their local communities, and therefore each institution has a business advisory board that ensures that the courses students take in the certificate programs are current.

How Are Community Colleges Funded?

Most community colleges are publicly funded, which means that financial support comes from state and local taxes paid by the citizens of that community. Another large portion of the funding comes from student tuition and fees.

For privately funded community colleges, financial support comes primarily from student tuition, contributions from private citizens and foundations, income from the colleges' own accumulated endowments and, for church affiliated colleges, from their religious organizations.

After the Community College Experience...

Internationally renowned politicians, artists, scientists, and others began their education at a community college. They were given opportunities to study and obtain invaluable skills for their professional careers to come. Some notable community college alumni include:

- Fred W. Haise Jr. – Apollo 13 Astronaut
- Craig Venter, President, Celera Genomics Corp. – Discovered the code for DNA
- Clint Eastwood – Actor & Oscar Award Winning director
- Calvin Klein – Fashion designer
- Eileen Collins, NASA astronaut – First woman Space Shuttle Commander
- Jackie Robinson, baseball player (Dodgers) – First African American to play professional baseball
- Cathy Turner – Olympic gold medal winner in short-track speed skating
- George Lucas – Director and Creator of Star Wars and Indiana Jones
- Sarah Palin – Former Governor of Alaska
- Halle Berry – Oscar award winning actress

These successful people and others began their undergraduate education at a community college and it turned out to be an excellent way for them to further their professional and personal interests.

Preparation for Departure to the USA

Medical Arrangements

- **Insurance.** Students purchase insurance for their time here in the US. The policy does not cover pre-existing conditions, medications not prescribed by physicians, routine examinations, alcoholism, drug abuse or misuse of medication, non-emergency dental treatment, replacement of lost glasses or contact lenses, or immunizations in home or host country. If students do not have extra personal insurance for the above, they will have to directly pay such costs themselves while in the US.
- **Any medical condition that a student has prior to the YFU program will not be covered by YFU insurance.** Therefore, the student must pay immediately in the US, the costs of doctor visits or medicines related to a “pre-existing condition.”
- Students should check with their insurance company in their home country for additional coverage before leaving.
- **Medication.** If a student must take medication regularly, an extra copy of the physician’s prescription with a full explanation of the dosage and use of any medication is needed. Customs officials may want to see this when the student enters the US. Keep prescriptions in their original packaging.
- **Eyeglasses or contact lenses.** If a student wears glasses or contact lenses, the prescription, as well as an extra pair of glasses should be brought to the US.

Planning What to Take to the USA

- **Pack lightly.** It is wise to bring as little as possible from home for the following reasons:
 1. Airlines usually limit checked luggage and carry-on baggage, even for international flights. Most also airlines have luggage weight and size limits. If bags exceed those limits, it will be necessary to pay for excess luggage, or the airline will refuse to take all additional luggage. It is the student’s responsibility to pay any such costs.

2. Students are responsible for and carry all of their own luggage.
 3. Natural parents can send students more items after arrival at the host family’s home. At the end of the stay in the US, students may have more things to take home and luggage may exceed the airline requirements. If this occurs, items may have to be mailed home in advance.
- **Clothing.** Weather may vary depending upon where students are placed in the US, therefore it is difficult to recommend exactly what to bring. Students may have to buy some clothes while in the US, especially if it is a different climate from the home country.
 - **Gifts.** Gifts for the host family should be carefully chosen. The cost is generally unimportant; it is the thoughtfulness in bringing something from the home country that is important.

Some suggested gifts to bring include:

- Sample of the home country’s music
- Picture books of the country or region showing geography, historical places, views of rural/city life, etc.
- Special foods of the country/region, such as fruit preserves, candy, etc. (Note: certain fresh produce, seeds, and meat are not permitted through US customs, please refer to the Customs and Border Patrol website); or
- Handicrafts of the country/region.

If the total value of the gifts is more than \$100, an import tax (duty) will be collected by US Customs when entering the US.

Some things from home. Students should bring along a few things that they enjoy and can share with others. Some suggested ideas are:

- Photo album of family, home, friends, country;
- sports equipment;
- hobby materials/musical instruments;
- a few books in the native language;
- a book about the country or recent magazines to share with family and friends.

The things brought by the students are to help share some important parts of their life with host family and friends; they are not intended to significantly distract from life in the US.

Finances

Living Expenses. The generosity of YFU volunteer host families saves YFU college students the expense of housing and most meals—the largest portion of the student’s living costs. On average, students can expect to spend US \$250-\$500 on books and school supplies per semester.  Transportation costs will vary greatly depending on whether the student uses public transportation and the distance of the commute. Students may wish to plan on US \$200-\$350 per month for their daily living expenses. This is only a suggestion, not a minimum or maximum requirement. Campus Coordinators can provide better estimates for their individual colleges and communities.

Items students should consider when planning their budget are: food (other than meals provided by the host family), clothes, transportation, leisure time activities (movies, sports, music events, dining out with friends, etc.) and occasional travel costs.

In the college environment, students often have lunch at the college cafeteria or nearby restaurants. YFU college students are responsible for the cost of meals eaten outside

the host family home. An individual student’s appetite and choice of restaurants (sandwich shops, fast food, formal dining, etc.) will determine how much money any given student should budget to meet this expense.

Bank accounts. It is advisable to open a bank account (checking and/or savings) in the US. A W-8 form is needed, and the student can obtain one from the bank. Having an account in the US will help students if there is ever a need to transfer money from the home country.

Former students recommend the bank-to-bank transfer as the best method for natural parents to send money. Using this method, parents go to their bank and ask to transfer US dollars to a bank in the US. Natural parents pay for the services of converting money and transferring it. They will need the name of the US bank, branch name and number, and student’s name and account number. Campus Coordinators can recommend banks in the community upon arrival.

Borrowing and lending money. Standards of living and costs of living vary around the world as well as within the US. YFU strongly recommends that students not borrow or lend money. If the host family lends money to the student in an emergency, a written receipt should be given and the debt paid back promptly. If someone lends money to another person, it is strongly recommended that a receipt always be obtained for the other person’s debt.



Welcome to the USA

The First Few Days

You will probably arrive very tired. You may have had emotional good-byes at home, a long plane flight, and perhaps several busy days of orientation immediately prior to departure.

- **The Neighborhood/Community.** The student may wish to see the surroundings, the college, the bank, and know how to use public transportation, especially if she will be taking the bus to the college.

Students may wish to change money and open a checking account right away. They may also wish to shop. The temptation to buy many things because there is so much to buy is frequently a problem for students. They usually find the first months the most difficult on their budgets.

- **The Community College.** During the first week after students arrive, Campus Coordinators will conduct a series of arrival activities specifically designed to introduce YFU students to campus services and facilities as well as community institutions, services, businesses, schools, and the cultural environment.

Broad participation by faculty, staff, US students, and community leaders in these welcome events is strongly encouraged.

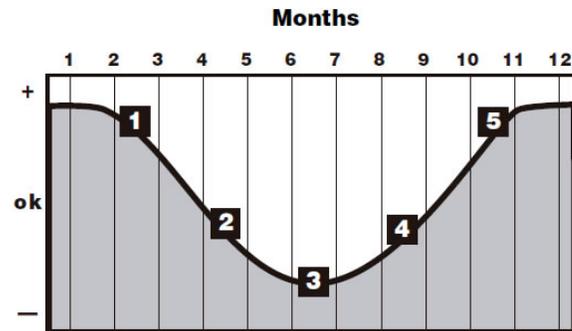
Other practical matters will also be covered during the week of arrival activities. Students will be instructed, for example, on course registration procedures. Required and optional placement examinations will also be arranged.

Initial Adjustments: Physical and Emotional

Minor physical upsets sometimes occur because of the big changes in the student's life. It is not uncommon for students to experience stomach troubles, irregularity, or missed menstrual periods within the first few weeks of their stay. These come from a combination of many factors such as change in diet, time difference, anxiety, and excitement. When the student begins to feel more comfortable and develops a routine, the symptoms will probably disappear. In the first few days and weeks, a relaxed atmosphere is important.

The Adjustment Cycle

There is a fairly predictable cycle of adjustment for students. The cycle is predictable, normal, and healthy, but not everyone experiences all of the stages or in any set order.



Stage 1: Isn't that interesting! This is when the newly arrived student is excited about everything and sees things as novel and interesting. Reactions are of pleasure and excitement. The student tends to be the center of attention.

Stage 2: The thrill is gone.... Routine begins to set in, the student becomes accustomed to the environment, everything is not so fascinating now, the first burst of learning and stimuli is gone. The student is no longer the center of attention.

Stage 3: How can they live like that? Now several months away from home, homesickness may be common. With the holidays approaching, depression sets in, and the student may feel like an outsider. "It's not all I dreamed it would be." Sometimes there is a rejection of the culture ("Our ways are better"), isolation from the host culture, more seeking out of same nationality friends, and the "I'm tired of trying" mentality. This is normal and OK. This is culture shock and culture fatigue.

Stage 4: Let's get on with it! The student decides that there are only a few months left to get on with it, to make the best of the time left. In some areas, it's spring, there is a rebirth, and the bleakness of the winter is leaving. The student develops a new understanding of live and let live and becomes accommodating. Home culture values, attitudes, beliefs, and ideas are no longer threatened by the new culture.

Stage 5: I feel “at home.” The final stage is achieved when the individual completely functions in the foreign culture as in the home country. The student begins to act and react much as a native would in the host culture environment. The individual even learns to behave in the very way s/he found so distracting, disturbing or disgusting in Stage 3. This final stage is not always reached, nor is it always a 100% positive stage, since at times students try too hard, and uncomfortable situations occur. We all know people who have felt “at home” and who know the language and culture of the country so well that they truly are “at home.”

Coping with Culture Shock

What is culture shock? When a person lives in a new culture, many of the things that s/he is accustomed to are gone. Sometimes, one has to think about the simplest of things. When a person first lives in a new culture, it is fun to see the differences and to learn how to do things differently. Sometimes, however, a person can get tired of having to remember how to do so many things differently. S/he may feel that everything is different; nothing seems familiar or comfortable. This is very common and almost everyone who lives in a different culture feels this way at some time. When it becomes a problem, it is called “culture shock.”

Culture shock means that the mind is tired of having to think about everything. Instead of trying to adjust to the new society, a person may withdraw, become quiet, feel confused and angry, or wonder if they can get along in such a strange place.

Since culture shock is a normal reaction to living in a foreign culture, the family may need to help the student when such symptoms arise. In order to cope with culture shock, the family and student need to understand what it is and that it is normal to feel that way in an unfamiliar environment.

If no one in the family has ever experienced culture shock traveling to a foreign country, then they should think of a time when they moved within the US, began working in a new office or company, started in a new school, or traveled to another city. The same feelings can be experienced in these situations. Anxiety and irritation are almost always a part of traveling, a new job, or moving. Even knowing the new procedures is not enough to relieve the frustration of having to think “how” to do something that is automatic under more familiar circumstances.

There are both physiological and psychological signs when someone is experiencing culture shock.

Here are some of them:

Physiological indicators

- Sleepiness or insomnia
- Compulsive eating or loss of appetite
- Recurrent minor illnesses and rashes
- Stomach upsets
- Headaches
- Psychological indicators
- Loneliness or boredom
- Homesickness/idealized feelings about home
- Sense of helplessness, overdependence
- Irritability, perhaps hostility
- Social withdrawal
- Unwarranted concern for cleanliness and/or physical security
- Rebellion against rules
- Crying

Any of these indicators alone may not necessarily mean that the student is finding his or her adjustment to be difficult. The student’s total behavior will determine if s/he needs help in coping with culture shock.

When the student shows signs of culture shock, the host family or Campus Coordinator should talk with him or her about the adjustment cycle. Students should try to identify the things, even if very insignificant, that are contributing to their discomfort. If the host family or Campus Coordinator finds out what is bothering the student and tries to understand why s/he is irritable, this may help relieve the situation.

It may be difficult for the host family and student to discuss the things that are bothering the student. Trained to work with exchange students, the Campus Coordinator is prepared to assist. Students may be able to see more clearly why certain things upset them if they can understand that they need to see them from a different “cultural point of view.” “Equally logical but different” is a phrase that helps one look at ways of doing things in another culture.

How can someone overcome culture shock? It may help the student overcome depression or feelings of isolation if s/he sets up specific goals and activities. Here are some things that students can do to progress out of culture shock:

- Set small goals for each day (take a trip to a store, learn ten new words, talk to one student at college, use public transportation);
- stay in touch with home while continuing to learn new things;
- take part in events and activities; and
- practice strategic withdrawal (spend small amounts of time with people of your home culture who can offer insight and tips on success in the host culture).

Each successful encounter should give the student more confidence that s/he can get along in our society.

The student should develop an attitude that can help him or her learn to live with differences. The student does not have to worry about losing his or her own culture or feel that s/he is the only one who feels this way, but can try living in a new culture successfully.

Culture shock indicators sometimes occur suddenly. Bleak weather and being closed in, such as in January and February, or a special holiday, anniversary, or important event the student remembers may be sufficient to cause depression.

In general, students are encouraged to eat balanced diets and do some physical activity each day. They also need time to be by themselves. Both the family and student should recognize that it takes time to work out of a depression; it's not going to happen overnight.

If after a period of time, the student still does not feel better and needs additional help, the Campus Coordinator must be consulted.

Adjustment

As the student's English skills improve and s/he begins to act more independently, s/he will feel more comfortable in his or her new home, the college, and community. Most exchange students go through a difficult period; it is just a step on the way to adjusting to a new lifestyle.

To pass beyond the basic levels of learning and to establish a role within the host family and culture is the next important step. Students must adapt to or accept values



in the host culture that may challenge or change their own values. If they do not do this, the YFU experience remains entertainment—rather than educational. Host families often find they are prompted to reflect on their family values and American cultural values. The student's adaptation process can be one which causes a sharing of perspectives.

The advanced stages of cross-cultural learning for both the student and host family are:

- Developing consciousness of oneself as a product of one's culture;
- Developing awareness of what skills and attributes are needed to be successful in cross-cultural interaction; and
- Developing a meaningful relationship with the person of a different background and culture.

When individuals reach these stages, they function with one another in an adaptive way that does not detract from their own cultural heritage but is accepting of cultural differences. When the student is truly adjusted to the US, s/ he will accept most customs as just another way of living. S/ he will feel comfortable with daily life and experience fewer anxious moments.

With complete adjustment, the student will see that the environment does not change, but his or her attitude towards it changes. The student will begin to understand why the people in the US live as they do. The sooner this occurs, the sooner the problems will begin to disappear and the student will adjust.

The Future Years for Students

Continuing the Relationship with YFU

Students may find their lives changed by the YFU Community College Program. Perhaps a new academic or career path will open as a result of their studies and experiences in the US.

Students often return to visit host families and friends years after their exchange. Marriages, births, and other events can be shared long distance or in person. Students can also join YFU alumni groups in their home countries. These groups provide a way for the US experience to remain fresh and for students to meet others who share their world view.

YFU would like students and families to continue to be a part of the organization after the exchange experience. As “alumni” or YFU returnees, students can help with orientations for future YFU Community College Program students, as well as with programs for foreign students coming to their country.

Suggested Reading Materials

Students will most likely be able to find books about US culture in their native language prior to departure.

The following list offers a variety of useful publications in English about aspects of American culture. Many are written for international visitors.

- American Vertigo: Traveling America in the Footsteps of Tocqueville, Bernhard-Henri Levy & Charlotte Mandell, 2007.
- American Ways: A Guide for Foreigners in the US, Gary Althen, 2nd ed., 2002.
- The Art of Crossing Cultures, Craig Storti, 2007.
- The Average American: The Extraordinary Search for the Nation’s Most Ordinary Citizen, Kevin O’Keefe, 2005.
- Class Matters, Bill Keller, 2005.
- The Exchange Student Survival Kit, Bettina Hansel, 2007.
- Living in the USA, Alison Lanier, revised by Jef C. Davis, 6th ed., 2004.

A resource for re-entry into one’s home culture after living in another culture:

- Speak American: A Survival Guide to the Language and Culture of the USA, Dileri Borunda Johnston, 2000.