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Respondent

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Anonymous

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Time to complete

Application Information

1. Name: *

Nusha Shishegar

2. GCC Title/Position: *

Programs and Services Analyst

3. Department: *

International Student Office

4. Campus: *

Verdugo

Garfield

5. E-mail: *

nshishegar@glendale.edu

6. Phone: *

x5440; 626-422-0942

7. Dean or Department Head's Name: *

Drew Yamanishi

Project Proposal

8. Name of Project/Program: *

International Student Activities Funding

9. Please select which category best describes your project: *

- Arts & Culture
- Athletics & Fitness
- Career & Work Training
- College Operations & Facilities
- Humanities/Social Sciences
- Science & Technology

10. Amount requested: *

11,000

11. What do you propose to do? *

First Friends Program (\$4,000): As the international student population has decreased at GCC, so has the innate ability for students of like backgrounds to find community within one another. There are no longer groups of 5-10+ students from a single country that allows for immediate connection and community to form; while a few flagship countries (Armenia, Japan) still have multiple-student group numbers, many of our students are the only representative from their nation (our 120-member student body represents 37 unique countries). Increasingly, students are reporting feelings of loneliness and disconnection from one another. The First Friends International Student Program will rectify this by connecting newly admitted international students with current students to help them build meaningful relationships and feel welcomed into the campus community, similar to grant-funded Student Equity programs. Through one-to-one connections and group activities, the program will support students as they transition to life in the United States and help them find roommates, build friendships, and better acclimate during their first year of college life at GCC. Ongoing activities will be planned throughout the academic year to bring First Friends participants together in exclusive social, cultural, and community-building events, thus encouraging current students to participate in the volunteer program. By creating early connections and continued engagement, the First Friends program aims to:

- A) Make the transition to the US and college life easier;
- B) Reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation among international students;
- C) Foster long-term connections between students and the larger campus community; and
- D) Encourage positive word-of-mouth recruitment to aid in rebuilding the international student population at GCC.

The amount budgeted for this program includes start-up costs for program participant t-shirts.

International Education Week (\$5,500): International Education Week (IEW) was started by the US Department of State as a nationwide celebration that promotes international understanding, builds support for international educational exchange, and encourages the development of programs that prepare Americans to live and work in a global environment. For the past few years, due to continued generous grant funding by the Foundation, ISO has been able to offer a full week of IEW activities to the campus community that incorporated Study Abroad and the Garfield Campus's contributions towards internationalization and their impact on the larger Glendale community, and GCC students hosting internationally-focused culture fairs. Much attention has been paid each year to increasing the quality of offerings, including focusing on little-known internationalization opportunities that GCC offers, like Study Abroad. Efforts are also made to ensure that these events can qualify for professional development opportunities for faculty and staff (Flex/CPGU). We hope to repeat some of this year's events, including our now-yearly "TinyTalks" event, and to continue to pair with student clubs to turn this into a campus-wide student-focused celebration. Plans remain to market this week-long series to the wider Glendale community with the help of the Marketing & Communications team (contingent on staffing and available technologies).

Other Student Programming Activities (\$1,500): The international student office's regular programming efforts include orientation (\$1,400 yearly), workshops (\$800 yearly), off-campus events (\$3,000 yearly), and student surveys (\$200 yearly). We will use the Foundation's Funding in this category to augment our limited Student Activities budget, currently funded by the Student Activities fee. In the event the Student Activities fee is eliminated, this will become the sole source of funding for regular activities, and may need to be focused on orientation only.

12. Who will be involved in the project/program? *

International Student Office
 International Students
 Study Abroad Office
 Dream Resource Center
 Garfield Campus
 Student Clubs
 Marketing/Communications

13. What are the benefits of this project/program to the students, college, and the community? *

- Benefits to the Students: (with direct support for institutional strategic plan items A.1, A.2, A.4, A.7, C.1)
 1. Fosters global awareness and understanding amongst students to prepare them to participate in a globalized world, including by promoting study abroad opportunities and connecting students to resources on campus.
 2. Builds community on the GCC campus, increases cultural awareness, and increases recognition of the important impact of international students on the campus.
 3. Helps Garfield students take next steps to transition Verdugo campus.
 4. Provides funding for critical onboarding programs like international student orientation and other student engagement events.
 5. Increases feelings of connection to GCC and to each other, improving campus retention rates; parallels grant-funded Student Equity programs.
- Benefits to the Community: (with direct support for institutional strategic plan item A.3)
 1. All Glendale community members who attend International Education Week activities can educationally benefit from these internationalization events on campus. Holding these public events also increase GCCD's visibility in the community
 2. Community establishments will enjoy direct patronage via food purchases for on-campus events and First Friends activities.
- Benefits to the College: (with direct support for institutional strategic plan items A.1-A.4, A.6, A.7, B.2)
 1. All activities support internationalization efforts on campus. Studied benefits of internationalization "include improved academic quality, internationally oriented students and staff, and national and international citizenship for students and staff from underdeveloped countries." [Jibeen, T., & Khan, M. A. (2015). Internationalization of Higher Education: Potential Benefits and Costs. International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE), 4(4), 196. doi: 10.11591/ijere.v4i4.4511]. Internationalization also brings continued recognition to the College. For example, Glendale Community College's international student program used to consistently rank in the "Top 40" community colleges enrolling international students according to the Institution of International Education's annual census report published in "Open Doors" (a ranking we hope to reobtain as we have dipped out of it for the first time this year). Rankings like these give the College visibility in the international landscape.
 2. IEW activities, alongside ISO's regular programming efforts, improve awareness of services and resources available to students. Faculty/staff in attendance learn about these resources and can better connect/refer students to them as need arises. Flex/CPGU are requested for all IEW events.
 3. Activities provide opportunities for the College to learn about and react to the specialized needs of international students.

14. How does this project/program support the College's Institutional Strategic Plan? *

View ISP at <https://www.glendale.edu/home/showpublisheddocument/68172>

This project directly supports the values articulated in the ISP:

- Student-Centered Climate – directly supports the value of shaping our institution so that we work in recognition of students' goals and unique needs.
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility – directly supports the value of viewing our diverse student population "as an asset and strength of our college, and our commitment to closing equity gaps by supporting each student to meet their educational needs regardless of level of preparation; race; socio-economic status; age; gender; gender expression; sexual orientation; cultural, religious or ethnic background; linguistic expression; immigration status; or disability status." Creates a "student equity group" for international students.
- Open Access – helps create an educational community where both Garfield and Verdugo students can take the next steps toward the future.
- Community Building, Engagement, and Partnerships – both First Friends and International Education Week actively "build a sense of belonging and engagement with the community we serve," and position GCC as a "vibrant center of educational excellence and cultural engagement." First Friends, especially, provides an opportunity to "collaborate with students to build a community of acceptance and inclusion."

15. Timeline for the project/program. *

2026-2027 academic year
First Friends would be piloted for Spring 2027 admits

16. How do you propose to use the funds requested? Please include specific budget information. *

The International Student Program has experienced a significant decline, shrinking from nearly 500 students pre-pandemic to just 120 currently enrolled due to COVID-era enrollment disruptions, rising tuition costs, staffing gaps, global visa challenges, and current US immigration policies. International students pay nearly 10x the tuition as domestic students while being ineligible for most financial aid and grant-funded support programs, placing them among the most financially burdened yet least supported populations on campus. ISO currently relies on a \$25 enrollment-dependent student activity fee to provide essential programming such as orientation, community-building activities, and International Education Week, but the Tuition & Fees committee has recently taken steps to withdraw this fee. To sustain core support services, strengthen student connection and retention, and rebuild enrollment, ISO seeks \$11,000 in grant funding to launch the First Friends program, support International Education week, and continue high-impact programming.

- Develop a "First Friends" program (outlined above) to better ensure meaningful student bonding and reduce the feeling of alienation amongst international students. This program will provide a "home" for international students in the same way grant-funded Student Equity groups provide homes for Latin, Black, and Asian Pacific Islander Desi American students. A secondary purpose of this program is to aid in word-of-mouth recruitment efforts. Estimated costs of \$4,000 in start up supplies (student trainings and t-shirts) and program-specific bonding activities throughout the year (i.e. bowling or movie nights, sports outings, pizza parties, hikes, etc.). Given the timing of potential grant approvals, we anticipate launching this program as a pilot for Spring 2027.
- Plan a comprehensive International Education Week Program (outlined below) in Fall 2026 for an estimated cost of \$5,000 including:
 - o Continuing our partnership with Study Abroad to encourage program participation
 - o Better inform the community about the two-way nature of campus internationalization
 - o Partnering with the Garfield Campus and Dream Resource Center to increase awareness of the way their programs support the local immigrant populations.
 - o Working with the office of marketing and communications to better engage the larger Glendale community and encourage their participation in IEW events as a means to increase GCCD's visibility and education of internationalization efforts on campus. Estimated costs of up to \$500.
 - o Estimated direct programming costs include:
 - Keynote and other Guest Speakers – remote speaker honorariums of up to \$500; in-person honorariums of up to \$900 (including travel costs). Estimated costs of up to \$2,000.
 - Cultural foods and entertainment at specific events. Estimated costs of \$3,000. Note that we make efforts to request advance RSVPs for our events to reduce food waste. Our hybrid events have seen much participation over Zoom, and our RSVP system allows us to plan and spend more responsibly.
 - Rewards for participation in events and challenges. Estimated costs of \$500.
- Regular programmatic offerings:
 - o Includes two yearly full-day orientation programs (~\$700 each), which include meals and prizes for student participants
 - o Monthly Lunch and Conversation Program series that highlight GCC programs/resources and discuss social/cultural adjustment issues (3x a semester, ~\$100-\$200)
 - o Incentives to participate in surveys and #GCC_ISO_CARES Month (usually \$25). #GCC_ISO_CARES Month invites students to make counseling appointments to plan the next semester's course enrollment/complete SEPs, file necessary paperwork, and discuss personal or academic challenges. This initiative has led to better time-to-degree and student learning outcomes for international students.
 - o Major sporting events (~\$1500 each term for transportation and ticket discounts).
 - o Other on- and off-campus events (\$30 pp)

17. Please list any other sources of funding you have applied for and include dollar amounts if already awarded. *

As of the time of this application, we have not applied for any other Foundation grant funding.

18. How will the Foundation's support be recognized? *

We will advertise that funds for the events were made available specifically due to the Foundation's support on all event materials (fliers, Instagram posts, direct emails, and online calendar event postings).

Foundation representatives will have the opportunity to speak, if desired, at IEW or First Friends events to increase awareness of Foundation and contribution opportunities.

19. How do you plan to evaluate this project's success? *

- ISO administers surveys for most, if not all, of our activities. First Friends participants will be "softly required" to complete feedback surveys as a part of their participation obligations.
- Surveys are administered at the end of each IEW event to gauge the effectiveness of programming (survey response is tied to the ability to earn awards like prizes for students and Flex/CPGU credit for staff/faculty).

20. If your project/program is successful, how will it inform your practice moving forward? *

If the proposed First Friends initiative is successful, it will strengthen our practice moving forward by providing a scalable, evidence-based model for supporting international student belonging, retention, and recruitment during a period of continued enrollment uncertainty. Strong participation in International Education will reinforce the value of partnership with departments such as Study Abroad, Marketing and Communications, and Garfield Campus. These collaborations will shape how we design inclusive, college wide programming that supports internationalization while benefiting the broader campus community.

By tracking participation rates, survey feedback, and student outcomes for the First Friends program we will be able to identify which elements of the program — such as one-to-one connections, group activities, or recurring social events — are most impactful. These insights will inform how we structure future onboarding, orientation, and student engagement practices, ensuring that community building is embedded consistently rather than treated as episodic programming.

Second, program success will guide how we allocate limited resources in the future. Given ongoing budget constraints and enrollment dependent funding, clear evidence that relational programming improves student satisfaction, retention, and word of mouth recruitment will allow the International Student Office to prioritize high impact, cost effective activities. Successful components can be institutionalized, replicated annually, or expanded incrementally without requiring large increases in funding.

Third, positive outcomes from these initiatives will strengthen our broader international recruitment strategy. Improved student experiences and stronger interpersonal connections increase the likelihood that current students will recommend GCC to peers and family abroad. If successful, this “armchair recruitment” model will be intentionally incorporated into our long-term enrollment recovery efforts, particularly as traditional recruitment pathways remain unstable due to visa challenges and geopolitical uncertainty. It is our hope that by incrementally increasing the population through low-stakes strategies, we can reinitiate conversations with administration for future investment in recruitment efforts.

In sum, success will allow us to move forward with clearer data, stronger partnerships, and a replicable framework for fostering connection, belonging, and sustained engagement among international students at GCC.

21. Please provide a 2 – 3 sentence summary of your project proposal. *

Foundation funding is being requested in support of the international student population at GCC and to administer the yearly International Education Week program. The First Friends program will foster connection amongst students and provide an organic method for future student recruitment, while regular programming provides critical support and onboarding services to all international students. International Education Week highlights internationalization efforts on campus (such as study abroad programs), fosters international and cultural understanding, and prepares Americans and international students alike to live and work in a global environment.

Signature and Acknowledgments

22. I hereby acknowledge/certify: *

- My Dean or department head is aware of this application and has authorized its submission.
- If my proposal involves the hiring of temporary/contracted professionals, I will obtain approval from Human Resources before proceeding and will provide documentation to the Foundation that the hiring/contracting has been reviewed and approved.
- If my proposal involves conference and/or other travel, I will complete the GCC travel approval process and adhere to GCC travel guidelines.