



Office of International
Students and Scholars

International Friendship Program Newsletter: Bridging Borders

Fall 2024 Newsletter

Dear Reader,

I want to thank you for being a part of the Fall 2024 International Friendship Program (IFP) or Host-a-Boiler programs. Whether a host or student, I'm so thankful you decided to sign up and participate. This fall was full of fun events, like our Semester Kickoff Cookout, our annual Pumpkin Painting, a fun day at Exploration Acres making s'mores, and the Fall Harvest Party and Chili Cookoff. We also had 185 students join in the Thanksgiving Host-a-Boiler program, which is amazing! I look forward to seeing some of you around for our 2025 events and programs, and until then please enjoy the student highlight story for this semester's edition of Bridging Borders below.





Student, Guest, Ambassador

For this edition of Bridging Borders, I interviewed Akshat Verma. This is his third year as a graduate student at Purdue, and he currently volunteers as a Global Student Ambassador. Akshat has volunteered at many of our IFP events over the past two semesters, but he first got involved by being a guest during our 2023 Thanksgiving Host-a-Boiler program. I've been thankful to get to know him and to learn more about his story and involvement at Purdue, so I wanted to share that with you!





I started with asking Akshat about his memories of his 2023 Thanksgiving Host-a-Boiler (HAB) experience:

"My experience with the HAB program was wonderful. The hosts were incredibly polite and welcoming. The food was abundant and absolutely delicious, and I was able to form meaningful connections with my host family. They even went out of their way to pick me up and drop me off at home since I didn't know how to drive in the US at the time. While I don't have one specific standout memory, I do recall the environment being warm, humorous, and relaxing. The hosts created such an inclusive and friendly atmosphere that I never once felt like an outsider."

Akshat then decided to become an ISS Student Ambassador for the Spring 2024 semester. The now-called Global Student Ambassador program helps students gain global experience through volunteer and networking opportunities via engagement with the Purdue community. Part of an Ambassador's responsibilities are to help with different international student and scholar events on campus, including IFP sponsored events.

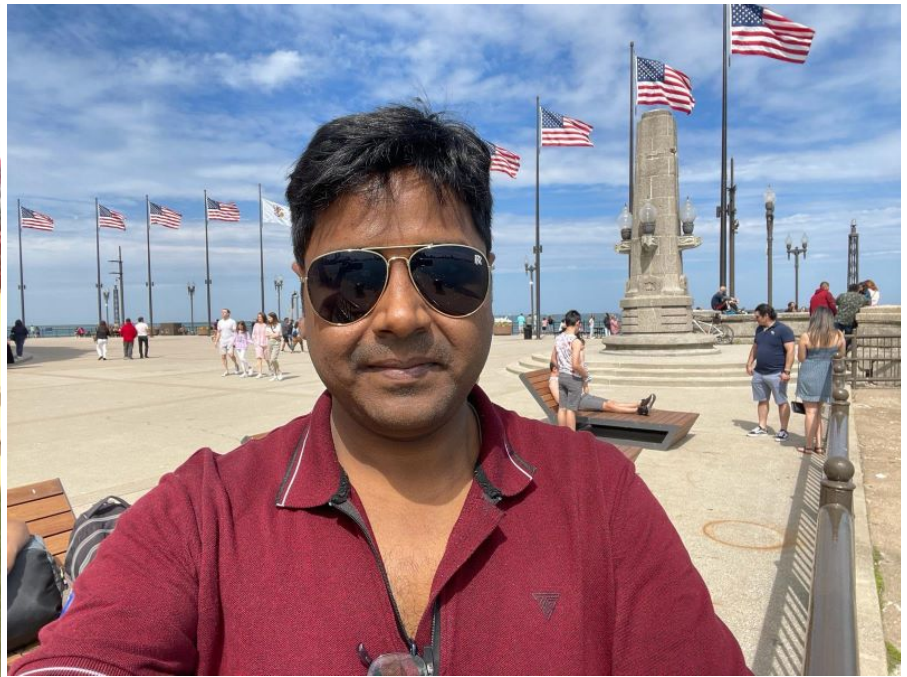
In just two semesters, Akshat has been a key figure in making five of our IFP events happen! From the first ever IFP Quiz Bowl Trivia Night, to the Semester Kickoff Cookout and Fall Harvest Party, to working our Global Fest booth and Exploration Acres' fire pit, he's done it all. He says that those IFP events have helped him meet and build relationships with both hosts and fellow international students: "These events have been full of fun, meaningful conversations, and of course, great food."

I've personally been so thankful for Akshat's dedication to volunteering at these events, as his help and support have been invaluable. When asked what his favorite memory from the IFP events he's attended so far, he replied, "One of my favorite memories is participating in the IFP Trivia event. Leah invited me to join the trivia game, and my team ended up winning! It was such a fun and engaging experience that brought us all closer together."

After a year of participating in and engaging with Purdue's International Friendship Program (IFP), I asked him if and why he would recommend IFP to others: "The IFP program is truly a gem for international students. It provides a unique opportunity to immerse oneself in Greater Lafayette's

culture and American culture more broadly. Through IFP, students can form meaningful connections, build friendships, and gain a deeper appreciation of their new environment. I would strongly encourage all international students to participate and take full advantage of this wonderful program."

Our IFP and HAB programs would be nothing without people like Akshat—the hosts, students, and volunteers like you. Thank you for all you're doing to connect with others and make them feel welcome to the Purdue community!



Until next time,

Leah Bechtold

Coordinator of the International Friendship Program & Host-a-Boiler