

GEORGIA ROTARY STUDENT PROGRAM HANDBOOK

8/1/2023

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-- McDonough, Georgia (District 6900) –
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WELCOME TO GEORGIA!



We are happy to have you here as part of the Georgia Rotary Student Program (GRSP).

Since 1946, Rotarians in Georgia, USA, have promoted world peace through understanding by offering ambassadorial scholarships to international students for one-year cultural immersion and study in Georgia colleges and universities. GRSP has sponsored more than 3,600 students since the program started – from more than 100 countries.

MISSION

GRSP provides scholarships to enhance cultural understanding and social experiences through friendship, develops potential global leaders, and expands the ideals of Rotary around the world.

VISION

To develop leaders who promote understand and peace around the world

Each year, students from all over the world make friends in the United States and other nations, and learn about differing cultures and lifestyles. Georgia Rotarians believe “Peace is Possible” and through GRSP promote international goodwill through friendship and understanding.

The following information is furnished with the sincere hope that it will provide guidance to you, making your special GRSP year a meaningful and rewarding experience.

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FOR STARTERS, SOME GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRAM AND YOUR ROLE

Having accepted the GRSP scholarship, you are an international guest of Georgia Rotarians and specifically of your sponsoring Rotary Club or Clubs (Host Clubs). You are an **ambassador of your country**, your family and, if applicable, your home Rotary club that sponsored you. And we know you will be an outstanding representative. Remember: by representing your country, **you have certain responsibilities**.

- During your GRSP year, you are responsible to your Georgia Host Club(s), your Host Family, your GRSP Trustee, and your Georgia university or college.
- Your GRSP scholarship is both a cultural and scholastic scholarship. GRSP's mission is to provide you with experiences that advance GRSP's ideal of World Peace through Understanding.
- The foundation of understanding will result from your INVOLVEMENT with your sponsoring Club(s), host family, college life (including US students and student organizations), GRSP students, etc.
- That said, TO ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF YOUR YEAR AS A GRSP SCHOLAR, YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH GEORGIA ROTARIANS AND GRSP LEADERSHIP SHOULD TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER NON-ROTARY AND NON-GRSP ACTIVITIES (including non-academic school activities)
- We can all work to further understanding among ourselves. You are encouraged to participate actively in all aspects of American culture. Likewise, you will be asked to share information about your country and its culture. Jointly, we will learn from each other:
 - It is important that we each explore and compare the similarities and differences between our cultures rather than judge what's right or wrong or better.
 - When discussing political, social, and religious ideas and issues, we must be sure that ALL dialogue is directed toward UNDERSTANDING and is not perceived by the other as attempted "conversion."

Your assigned GRSP Trustee will do all they can to ensure the mission of GRSP is fulfilled and that your year is a positive, enriching experience for both you and your sponsoring Rotary Club or Clubs.

If you encounter questions or problems that are not resolved, you should discuss them with your Host Family and Trustee.

For example, you will find that many people (though not all) in the Southeastern U.S. are deeply religious -- in thought and in practice. It is an important aspect of the culture.

GRSP asks that you remain open to and tolerant of unique cultural aspects like this. Likewise, you should expect others to respect, be tolerant of and interested in your beliefs.

- To enhance your immersion into the American culture:
 - Make every effort to speak English, rather than using your native language.
 - Associate with Rotarians and American college students; this way you will learn more about our culture, and they can learn more about your country and culture.
 - While GRSP is not an exchange program in the traditional sense, it is an "exchange" in the true sense of "sharing" cross-cultural experiences.

SOME IMPORTANT CAUTIONARY WORDS

Since GRSP students are mature, young adults there are seldom any serious problems requiring action by the Chairman or Trustees of the program. However, an individual's scholarship can -- and has been -- revoked for action and behavior unbecoming a student in this honored program. GRSP students are expected maintain a 2.0 (C) Grade Point Average (GPA) and to remain in good academic standing at their respective institution if higher than 2.0. We are confident YOU and the other members of your class will be outstanding ambassadors of understanding and goodwill!

There are a few areas to be particularly aware of:

COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL AND STATE LAW: In addition to the rules and regulations of your college, as an international student and guest of the U.S., YOU ARE GOVERNED BY ALL STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS. Your compliance with such laws is MANDATORY.

- Although these laws may be more restrictive than those in your country, GRSP REQUIRES you to adhere to these laws throughout your year in Georgia.
- Violations of these laws have serious legal consequences, as well as civil and criminal penalties.
 - It is a Federal offense to possess, use, or sell illegal drugs and controlled substances. This includes all non-prescribed narcotics and illegal drugs such as marijuana (in Georgia), cocaine, heroin, "crack," PCP, etc.
 - It is State law that an individual must be **21 years** of age to possess and to consume alcohol.
 - Campuses have a ZERO TOLERANCE policy.
- International Student Orientation and/or the International Office at your college will provide more details ... make sure you are informed!

SMOKING: America is becoming a smoke-free society. If you smoke, please observe the following:

- When visiting Rotarians' homes, if the family members do not smoke, you should ask permission to excuse yourself and go outside to smoke. This courtesy is appreciated.
- As of March 2014, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia adopted a tobacco- and smoke-free campus policy to make all University System of Georgia University Colleges 100% tobacco free. This not only includes the college campus but also the housing areas.
<http://www.usg.edu/tobaccofree/>
- Most public buildings do not permit smoking. There may be an area outside for this.

ALCOHOL: The legal drinking age in America in general, and Georgia in particular, is **21**.

- While most other countries have lower age limits in the U.S. it is **21**.
- If you are under 21
 - You may not enter a bar (unless it is primarily a restaurant) or a liquor store.
 - You may not purchase alcohol, or consume it in a public space, on your college campus or even in your student housing.
- If you are 21+
 - You may not purchase or supply alcohol to any person under 21.
- You may not drive a vehicle under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

- You will hear more about “DUI” regulations at your college’s new student orientation.
- Campus and City Law Enforcement (police) and the Courts take violations of drinking and DUI regulations seriously... penalties are severe.

SEX: All GRSP scholars are adults. It is not for us to tell you if, or with whom, you may have intimate relations. However...

- PLEASE exercise **caution** and **act responsibly** should you decide to have an intimate relationship.
- Please practice SAFE SEX... always use a condom even if you are using other birth control means.
- WARNING: **Abortion** is currently unavailable and illegal in Georgia. It would be very costly to travel to a state where abortion services are available, and this would NOT be covered by the very expensive health insurance your college will require you to purchase.... more to follow on *this* topic.

YOUR HOST FAMILY AND TRUSTEE

Your sponsoring Host Club(s) has selected an outstanding Rotarian(s) and his/her family to be your Host Family.

You are part of the family and your sponsoring Host Club:

Your host will provide you with a "home away from home" and make you "one of the family." Your host does this, not as an obligation to Rotary, but rather as a sincere belief in and commitment to the ideals of GRSP and Rotary.

- As a member of the family and not as a "guest," your host asks that you actively join in their activities and enjoy being part of your new, adopted American family.
- Your host is responsible for involving the Host Club in your GRSP year by:
 - Coordinating and scheduling Rotarians to pick you up and return you to campus so you can attend many of the Club's weekly meetings, service projects and social events. Ask your host family to be sure you are on the club's email list, have a club roster, and any club calendar of events for your planning purposes.
 - Coordinating and scheduling Club families to host you for HOLIDAYS, dinners, weekends, etc.
 - Informing the Club about your activities and status throughout the year. So please keep your host family and Trustee informed of your schedule.
 - Making Rotary a meaningful part of your life!



As the
representative of
your Host Club,
your Host is
responsible for
You. And YOU are
responsible to
your Host!

You may have more than one Host Club/Host Family: Due to the cost of sponsoring a student, several clubs frequently join together to select and sponsor one student. Each club has a host family; therefore, you may have more than one host family. Jointly, they select one "lead host" to coordinate scheduling between the hosts and the host clubs and make sure you engage with each of your sponsoring clubs and host families.

- Having multiple host families will present special challenges and opportunities due to different "sensitivities" of all participants. **Flexibility** and **communication** are key skills for a positive experience.

Supplies: Your host club and family will identify and loan you basic items you will need at college, such as bed linen, towels, cookware, etc. Please return them in good condition to the host at the end of your year. Note that:

- Your host family will be happy to take you so you can shop for any items you forgot to bring with you. Or your college may provide an opportunity for you to go shopping for dorm supplies.
- Many universities have a "Clean Up Fee" and you are responsible for this fee if everything is not removed from your dorm at the end of your year.

Communication with your Host Family(ies) is important before, during, and after your GRSP year.

- Prior to your arrival, your host will take steps to establish good communication with you (via email, FaceTime, WhatsApp, Zoom, phone calls, etc.).
- Once you are in Georgia, it's important you and your host work together to maintain effective and regular communication.
- If either you or the host/family don't understand what the other person said or meant, ask for clarification. Don't be hesitant and don't assume! Colloquialisms, metaphors, and "slang" frequently do not translate well. This is part of the cross-cultural learning process that we all benefit from.
- Feel free to call your host ANYTIME!

Good communications
with your Host(s) and
your Trustee will be
the key to having a
great year!

You are responsible for keeping your host/trustee informed of key dates and activities:

- Talk with your host/trustee **before scheduling any weekend, holiday, or travel plans**. This helps:
 - Avoid any conflict with scheduled Rotary and GRSP activities.
 - Your host/trustee to contact you in case of an emergency.
- Throughout the year, keep your host informed about your **academic term schedule and holiday-vacation periods**. You may even want to print a copy of your class schedule for your host family/trustee.
- You will be invited to your host's home and other Rotarians' homes for **weekends and holidays**. Please accept their sincere request to join them and be a real member of the family and your club.
 - Your host will explain the American holidays that are celebrated in Georgia. Be prepared to explain your country's special holidays to them.
 - Plan to spend **Thanksgiving** and **Christmas** holidays with your host family and club. These holidays are a very important part of American culture. GRSP prefers that you **do not** return to your home country for the Christmas holiday.
- If you encounter serious **financial difficulty** during the year, please discuss it with your trustee.
 - GRSP asks that you refrain from borrowing money from your host and/or Club. It is *not* the responsibility of your host family to provide financial assistance.
- Frequently, **parents come to Georgia to see their son/daughter during the GRSP year**. In fact, GRSP and the host clubs encourage this!
 - If your parents can come, please inform your host as soon as you know so the host can schedule time to meet and be with your parents and you.
 - In many cases visiting parents are invited to stay in the home of your host or other Rotarians. Sometimes it is more convenient for them to stay in a local hotel. Your host will help your parents make the best arrangements.
- **Other visitors/guests:**
 - Please be courteous to your Georgia host family. They have agreed to host you, the student. Don't assume that it is OK to have your girlfriend/boyfriend/siblings all stay with your host family.

Be sure you keep
the home, cell
and office
telephone
numbers of your
Host Family and
your Trustee with
you at all times.

- Many universities have a strict policy on guests staying in dorms, such as a 24-hour maximum visiting policy. This includes other GRSP students visiting you at your campus as well as anyone visiting from your home country.

Share your culture and customs with your host family and club.

- As possible, offer to cook a dish or even an entire meal typical of your country for your host family. As needed, ask your host for a Metric-to-Imperial (American) measurement conversion table.
- Many foods in Georgia will be like those to which you are accustomed; others will be different. Your host asks only that you try our foods. If you do not care for a particular dish, your host will certainly understand.
- If you must adhere to special dietary laws/restrictions as a result of your culture, religion, or medical condition, please tell your host prior to your arrival.
- If your host has young children in his/her family, offer to speak to the children's school class about your country and its customs.

YOUR HOST CLUB

Your relationship with your host Club(s) is extremely important.

- Your host Club(s) has gone to considerable effort and expense to make your GRSP year possible. It wants you to be actively involved in the Club's "Rotary family" throughout the year.
 - The Club's future support and involvement in GRSP depends, in large measure, on *your* involvement and participation with the Club and its families.
- Your Club(s) will ask you to make at least one, maybe **two formal presentations** -- one shortly after arrival and another before departing Georgia.
 - The **first program** will be scheduled as soon as possible after you arrive. If you have more than one host club, the "lead host" will coordinate your speaking schedule with all the clubs.
 - Your presentation should be a 20-minute introduction to your country and city, including its culture, customs, political events, economic, and social systems along with an introduction to your family.
 - PowerPoint and other media are strongly recommended.
 - Your Club considers this an important and exciting way to begin its year with you. Although you may be apprehensive about making a presentation (especially if you are not a native-English speaker), you will find Rotarians warm and friendly.
 - Allow your presentation to be fun with some humor. You'll enjoy it more and so will the Club!
 - Please discuss any questions you have with your host and trustee.
 - If you are invited to make a **second presentation**, it will usually take place in late spring. It should focus on the year you have spent in Georgia -- your perceptions of the United States,



Americans, Georgians, the GRSP program, your university or college, and a sampling of some meaningful experiences you have had. You should emphasize what you have learned and not merely present a travelogue. And be sure to include your thanks to the people who have contributed to your experience.

- Throughout the year, your host and other Club Rotarians will assist you in **attending Club functions**. You should plan to attend and to actively participate in:
 - Weekly Club meetings
 - Special functions such as Christmas parties, social mixers, picnics, barbecues, etc.
 - Club service projects.

Make sure you know the day and time of all your **host Club's weekly meetings**. When registering for classes, if possible, **try to avoid scheduling a class that would prevent you from attending meetings**.

- **Protocol at Rotary Meetings**
 - At the beginning of most Rotary meetings, a short prayer (invocation) is offered. It is followed by a "pledge of allegiance" to the American flag.
 - As an international student, you are **not** expected to recite the pledge or put your hand over your heart. Just stand with the Rotarians as a simple act of respect. This all that is expected of you.
- **Rotary Dress Code**
 - IMPORTANT: Be sure to bring some **dress clothes** appropriate for Rotary functions.
 - If you have a **national costume**, please bring it, and wear it when you make your presentation. You will also be able to wear it at the Conclave and your District Conference.

PARTICIPATION IN GRSP AND ROTARY EVENTS



We have talked about participating in your Host Club. As a GRSP student, you also are expected to participate in *all* sanctioned (official) **GRSP Events** and major **District Events**.

- **Required attendance:**
 - GRSP Annual Conclave (in late August)
 - GRSP Leadership Conference (in February)
 - Your District's annual District Conference (usually end of April)
- **Expected attendance:** GRSP Student Weekends - generally in September, October, November, March, and April.

Remember that the Rotary Clubs have invested a lot to put on these weekends – because we believe giving you opportunities to spend time together is an important part of the program, and because Rotarians want to get to know you all better. That said, you should attend unless you have an unavoidable conflict and get the advance approval of your District GRSP Chair.

- **Occasionally, you will need to miss a class to attend a GRSP or other Rotary function.** If your professor requires a permission statement, tell your trustee. He/she will write a statement on GRSP letterhead, detailing the function and your GRSP/Rotary attendance requirement.
 - If this is required before the function, please make sure to communicate with your trustee as much in advance as you can.
 - Please note that non-sanctioned (unofficial) GRSP or Club events, or personal travel/activities **do not** count as a justified reason to miss classes. Keep in mind many institutions have mandatory attendance policies.
- **Transportation to sanctioned (official) GRSP events** – including District Conference - will be coordinated by your trustee and host and provided by them or other Rotarians.
 - *You are responsible to organize and pay for your own transportation to any non-sanctioned (unofficial) events, whether organized by a Rotary Club, Rotarians or other GRSP students.*

Advanced planning is critical when asking for transportation assistance. Two weeks before the event is a minimum courtesy to anyone you are asking for travel help. Remember, a one-hour ride to a destination may total two to three hours for the individual providing the transportation in addition to the cost of fuel.

Annual GRSP Conclave



- An Orientation Conclave is held in late August for all GRSP students. Attendance at this information/social weekend is **MANDATORY**.
- The purpose of this meeting is to provide you with important, essential information that you will need to ensure that you have a great and successful GRSP year.
- This will be your first opportunity to meet and socialize with all your Class members as well as with Rotarians from all over Georgia.
- Remember we would love to see you in your native costumes during one of the conclave's dinner events.

Student Weekends

- At Conclave you will receive a list of **Sanctioned ("Official")** Student Weekends, and you are **EXPECTED** to attend and participate in them all.
- They take place in These are in September, October, November, February (Annual GRSP Leadership Weekend), March and April. These weekends are organized and paid for by Rotary Clubs throughout Georgia entirely and exclusively for you and your Class – and represent a considerable amount of time and expense from those clubs and GRSP – an investment we are willing to make because we enjoy getting to know you better **AND** giving you opportunities to spend time together is an integral part of the program.
- Put the weekends in your calendar and plan to attend them. And make sure that you reply promptly when you receive your weekend invitations – and get in touch with your Trustee and Host Family **EARLY** to arrange transportation.
- **If you have a reason that will keep you from attending a sanctioned weekend, you must have advance approval from your GRSP District Chair.**

District Conference

- These usually take place at the end of April. Your attendance at your District Conference is **MANDATORY**, and you may **ONLY** attend *your* District's Conference.
- District Conferences are usually held at a resort... often at the beach!
- You will travel to the District Conference either with your host family, with another Rotary family from your host Club, or with your trustee.
- Each District determines how their GRSP scholars will participate in the Conference... but it is always a great experience for scholars and Rotarians.



What's a Rotary District? Several Rotary Clubs in the same geographic area that come together to accomplish bigger projects. Georgia has more than 200 Rotary Clubs divided into three districts that all participate in GRSP.



A word about *unsanctioned* ("unofficial") weekends or events...

- You may be invited to one or more unofficial events organized by Rotary Clubs or by a group of GRSP scholars on their own.
 - Of course, you are welcome to participate if it does not prevent you from participating in sanctioned GRSP events, projects and events organized by your host Club(s), or from mandatory activities at your college.
- **BE AWARE:** you are responsible for arranging travel to and from unsanctioned events... it is **NOT** the responsibility of your trustee or host family to transport you.
 - While they **MAY** be willing to help you... you **CANNOT** expect this, and you must **NOT** put pressure on them.... **THANK YOU** for your cooperation.

A Simple Thank You

An important part of your year will come from your **involvement with Rotary families**. Periodically, you will be hosted for dinner, weekends, sightseeing, outings, etc.

- An important aspect of the American culture is your written acknowledgement of a family's or individual's kindness to you.
- GRSP asks that you send a "Thank You" card with a short, personal note of appreciation for the friendship that was extended to you. This must be **written** and sent immediately upon your return to school. A telephone call or text is not sufficient.

PREPARING TO COME TO GEORGIA

Travel to Georgia

- Do not make your travel plans to Georgia until you have communicated with your trustee and host family. They will write to you shortly after being notified of your acceptance by the college/university.
- Depending on your host's schedule, they may want you to arrive a week or so before international student orientation and class registration at college. This allows you to recover from your flight and have time to adjust to your new home, family, Georgia, language, etc. Your host family may have some local sightseeing planned for you.
- As soon as you know your travel itinerary, please provide it to your host, trustee and the GRSP office.

Spending Money for Incidentals and Personal Travel

- GRSP recommends you have at least \$3,000 personal spending funds for the year. You will have some immediate expenses when you first arrive, so make sure you have some U.S. dollars in cash or a credit or debit card.
- You can also arrange for money to be transferred from your bank at home to your checking account established at a local bank near college.
 - Your school's international student advisor and host family will help you establish your personal checking account at a bank near the campus.
 - Some colleges have automated teller machines (ATM's) on campus for convenient deposits and withdrawals.
 - Many students find it convenient to have a MasterCard or Visa credit card from their home bank.

Electrical Converters

For electrical items you bring such as a hairdryer, computer, etc. you may need to bring an electrical converter with adapter plugs. The United States electrical system standard is 60 cycle – 110/120 volt.

Clothing

As you pack for a full school year in Georgia:

- Be sure to bring some **dress clothes** appropriate for Rotary functions
- If you have a **national costume**, please bring it, and wear it when you make your presentation. You will also be able to wear it at the Conclave and your District Conference
- **Remember that Georgia's climate changes throughout the year**—plan to pack for all possibilities. Otherwise, you may be using some of your spending money to add clothes to what you bring with you.



Georgia Climate

Georgia's climate can vary a lot based on the season:

- During summer and early autumn, daytime temperatures will be between 80 and 95 degrees F. (26-35 C).
- In winter (December-February), temperatures can be in the 50's to 60's (10-15 C). However, cold periods occur with temperatures near or below freezing, 32 degrees F. Occasionally, temperatures will fall to 10 degrees F (-12 C).
 - North Georgia receives snow periodically through the winter. Also, ice storms do occur throughout the state, paralyzing the entire area.
 - Winter clothing such as sweaters, coats, etc. are a must!
 - The good news: normally, severe cold weather lasts only a few days.
- During spring, daytime temperatures range from 40 to 70 degrees F (4 to 21 C) -- a great time to get your suntan before going home.
- Georgia does experience occasional tornadoes and the effects of some hurricanes.

Silent Auctions and Gifts

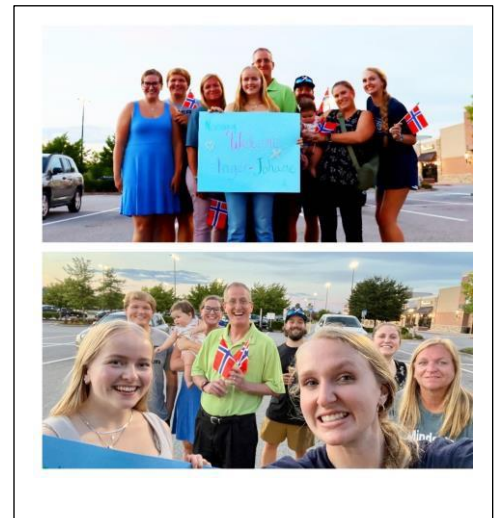
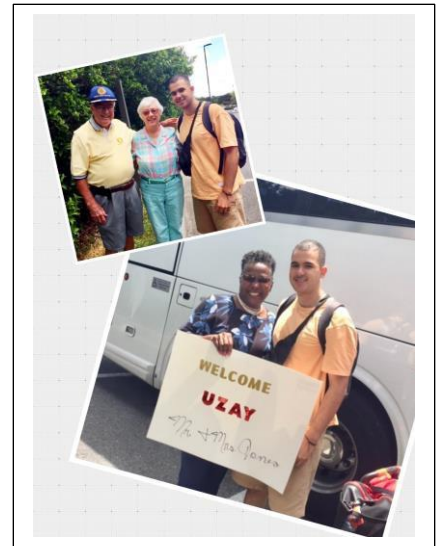
- In some Clubs, and sometimes at District Conferences, **"Silent Auctions"** are held to raise money for the GRSP Foundation. You may be asked to bring something to represent your country for a Silent Auction.
- In anticipation of the Christmas holiday, you should consider bringing a small gift for your host family. Small gifts are also appropriate to bring as a "thank you" to the various "weekend host families" you will stay with during the year.
- Gifts that represent something typical of your country will be appreciated and will be kept for years to come.

Your Endorsing Rotary Club (if applicable)

- If your application for a GRSP scholarship was endorsed or recommended by a Rotary club in your home country, please bring the name of the club president and his/her contact information. Give this information to your host so your host Club can communicate with the Rotarians who proposed you.
- If you have an endorsing club, you should ask the club to provide you with one of its banners for each of your sponsoring host clubs in Georgia. The **exchange of club banners** is a Rotary tradition. You should present the banner to the president of your host Club(s) when you make your first presentation.

ARRIVAL & INITIAL DAYS

- Your host family, members of the club and/or your trustee will meet you at the airport. Most GRSP scholars are met at Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport (ATL).
- Spend the time between when you arrive in Georgia and when you move to your college campus by adjusting to your new home, family, and culture.
- **Mobile Phone and Communication**
 - Your club and host family are **not** responsible for providing a cell phone for you to use while you are here. This is *your* responsibility.
 - Many students travel with a cell phone that can be used in the United States.
 - Your host may help you if you need to get one, but the cell phone and its bills are your responsibility.
 - Long distance/international calling and calling home: most students use FaceTime, WhatsApp, Messenger, WeChat, etc. from a Wi-Fi hotspot.
- You should communicate regularly with your **host** and your **trustee**.
 - Make sure you know the day and time of all your **host Club's weekly meetings**. When registering for classes, if possible, **try to avoid scheduling a class that would prevent you from attending meetings**.
 - You are responsible for communicating with your host family and/or trustee before scheduling any weekend or holiday activities... *this is simply so that they know where you are in the event of an emergency.*
- Your host will take you to college and help you move into your on-campus room.



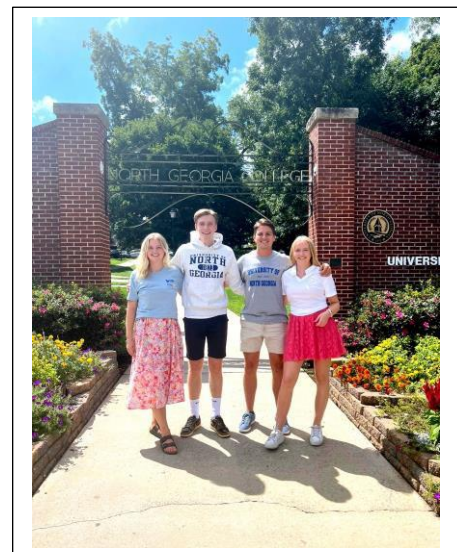
TRANSPORTATION WHILE YOU ARE IN GEORGIA

- GRSP *DOES NOT* PROVIDE A VEHICLE OR ENCOURAGE A PERSONALLY OWNED VEHICLE WHILE YOU ARE HERE ON THE SCHOLARSHIP.
 - Transportation is available in the form of shuttles on many college campuses.
 - Your Trustee and host family will arrange transportation to sanctioned GRSP events.
 - To have a successful GRSP year, you **DO NOT** need to have a car!
- **Public transportation** in the U.S., and Georgia in particular, differs vastly from many other countries.
 - Large cities like Atlanta have public (mass) transit systems that include light rail, buses, and taxis (Uber, Lyft, cabs). Other cities have limited buses and taxis but no subways or trains. Smaller towns have only very limited taxi services.
 - Many GRSP students find Georgia's public transportation system inadequate in meeting their needs.
- If you do purchase a vehicle, as a GRSP student, **you must adhere to all state and federal transportation laws.**
 - If you intend to drive, we recommend you acquire a Georgia Driver's License. Other forms of licenses to drive are often treated with a great deal of skepticism due to frequent fraud. Additionally, **you will need to get motor vehicle insurance.**
 - The State of Georgia **STRICTLY ENFORCES** the laws associated with alcohol and drug use and/or possession. **Violations resulting from Driving Under the Influence (D.U.I.) carry serious consequences**, such as large fines, suspension/loss of driver's license, imprisonment, and/or revocation of Student Visa.

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY LIFE

New Student Orientation

- Depending on your college, once on campus you should attend any new-student orientation and/or an international student orientation program. This will help you quickly learn about your new school environment. It's also a great time to meet other students.
- You will also meet with your **international student advisor** and/or your **academic advisor**. Throughout your year, he/she will help you in the selection of your coursework as well as offer academic guidance to you.



Compliance with College Rules and Regulations, Federal and State Law

- Colleges generally have a **ZERO TOLERANCE** policy for violation of State or Federal law, especially with respect to alcohol and drug use. See more specifics on page XX.
- International Student Orientation and/or the International Office at your college will provide more details ... make sure you are informed!

Academic Credit Transfer

- Most **Standard Selection** GRSP scholars take classes in Georgia in subjects that they would not normally have an opportunity to take and are not concerned whether the credits will or will not transfer to their college/university in their home country.
- In many cases, colleges/universities in a student's home country **will not** accept and apply credits earned during your GRSP year in Georgia toward a degree program at home.
 - Before coming to Georgia, please check with your college office at home about transferring academic credits earned in the U.S., if this is a concern for you.
 - If a credit transfer is possible, be sure you know the required procedures. Bring any necessary documents that your Georgia school will need to expedite your transfer.
- If you are a **Direct College Selection** GRSP scholar, you are enrolled in your Georgia college or university to earn a degree here in Georgia. Your course selection should be guided by the Academic Advisor at your Georgia college/university. Credit transfer to your home country will probably be irrelevant.

Academic Performance

As a GRSP scholar, your **academic achievement is important** to your host club and GRSP.

- GRSP requires that you maintain at least a **2.0 grade point average (that is, a C average)** in each of your classes. If the college/university has a higher academic standard, you should maintain that average.
- Like most GRSP students, we know your achievement will be higher! Your outstanding academic performance, participation and conduct will help ensure that the college you attend will continue to maintain high regard for, and acceptance of, GRSP scholars in the future.

Class Attendance and Online Classes

- YOUR ATTENDANCE AT ALL CLASSES IS MANDATORY.
 - Georgia's academic system is not structured where you can read all the coursework and then take the final exam without attending class. ***Class attendance and participation is required.***
 - If you must miss a class for a Rotary/GRSP function or any other excusable reason, you must discuss it with your professor ***before*** the planned absence.
- As an international student, you ***may not*** take more than **one** online class per semester without affecting your **visa status**.
- Visa requirements stipulate all students must maintain a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester. GRSP requires that the Program Chair must approve any credit hours per semester over 15.
- As a student in an American college, YOU MUST TAKE ALL EXAMINATIONS. Being a GRSP student does ***not*** exempt you from any test unless a professor exercises his/her option to exempt students with high academic achievement.

On-Campus Student Housing and Meals

GRSP REQUIRES YOU TO LIVE IN ON-CAMPUS STUDENT HOUSING, OFTEN REFERRED TO AS DORMITORIES OR DORMS. *OFF-CAMPUS ROOMS OR APARTMENTS ARE NOT PERMITTED.*

- A major objective of GRSP is to enable you to experience the unique aspect of American on-campus college living. Most GRSP scholars find this to be a real highlight of their year in Georgia
- You probably will have at least one roommate, depending on the specific dormitory. Your roommate (same gender... of course) may be another GRSP scholar, international student, or an American student.
- If you experience serious compatibility difficulties with one or more of your roommates, you are required to follow and comply with your college's rules and regulations for changing your on-campus living location.
 - Should the change in living location result in *additional cost*, you **must** contact your trustee and the GRSP office before accepting the new rooming assignment.
 - If you have difficulty with changing your room location, you must discuss the problem with your trustee.
- If you change your room location, mailing address and/or telephone number, **YOU MUST IMMEDIATELY NOTIFY YOUR HOST FAMILY, YOUR TRUSTEE AND THE GRSP OFFICE!**
- You will eat most of your meals in a nearby campus cafeteria (sometimes called "Dining Commons" or "Commons").
 - Your dorm may or may not have any provisions for cooking.
 - Most Dining Commons provide a range of menu options, including vegetarian and vegan selections.
- However, after a few weeks of cafeteria dining, you will discover one "real" benefits of visiting your host family on weekends and attending your weekly Rotary club meetings!

See your signed GRSP scholarship agreement for more specifics about housing, meals and health insurance.

Health Insurance is VERY IMPORTANT!

- At most colleges/universities in Georgia ALL INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS are required to have **health insurance**.
 - You may come from a country that provides socialized medicine for all citizens. This is not so in the United States.
 - Here you must carry private health insurance to have affordable access to health care.
- Ok. So, here's the bad news:
 - In nearly EVERY case health insurance or travel insurance purchased in your home country will NOT be accepted by your college/university.
 - Most colleges/ niversities in Georgia have a MANDATORY health insurance plan that you **must** purchase BEFORE you begin your first class! By what most international students are used to... the insurance premiums are VERY expensive
- **As a GRSP scholar YOU are responsible to pay for the insurance.**

Participating in Campus Life

- **You are encouraged to be involved in your college's social activities.** These will contribute to your overall exposure to our culture.
 - These activities, however, must not prevent you from participating in scheduled Rotary and GRSP activities and functions.
 - Many colleges have social fraternities and sororities. Because of the additional time and financial commitment, GRSP does NOT recommend GRSP scholars to join fraternities and sororities.
 - If you do consider joining one, GRSP encourages you to evaluate your time commitment to Rotary, GRSP, your academic studies, and other school social involvement.
 - Before making the **financial commitment** to join, please discuss it with your host family or trustee.
 - Please **refrain from engaging in activities that are potentially life-threatening** unless you are trained and very experienced, or it is a properly supervised activity by your college. These activities include, but are not limited to sky-diving, hang-gliding, spelunking (caving), rock climbing, bungee jumping.
- **Get to know the American students on your campus.** At first, you may find that some American students may be somewhat aloof or unfriendly. Please *do not* take this personally.
 - Generally, this is due to their lack of exposure to people from other cultures. Also, Americans are unaccustomed to students who are multilingual, and they feel uneasy due to speaking only one language.
 - Frequently, when they get to know how great you really are and learn about the things each of you have in common, they will become good friends.
 - The benefits of GRSP extend far beyond you and Rotarians. That's another reason your college was pleased to accept you for your year of study.
- Once here, you might be surprised at the number of showers or baths American students take.
 - In the United States -- and especially in Georgia -- our personal hygiene standards include a minimum of one shower/bath each day and the use of personal deodorants.
 - If you are not accustomed to these routines, you will find them a just reward for putting up with Georgia's heat and humidity nine months of the year. Enjoy!

What about "working"?

Since you have been granted a Student Visa to participate in GRSP, the United States immigration laws forbid you to work and be compensated. Violation results in immediate revocation of the Visa and the student must return home immediately at his/her expense.

- There is only one exception. A student may be employed part-time, on-campus by the college or university where he/she is a full-time student.
- Although an additional source of spending money is always helpful, GRSP asks that you avoid such employment due to the restrictive impact it will have on your year of cultural involvement.

PROGRAM END AND DEPARTURE

- At least **six weeks** *before the end of the spring semester*, determine what your plans and needs will be when school is over.
 - Please discuss this with your host and trustee for their help with planning.
- If you plan to return immediately to your home country:
 - Based on the type of airline ticket, you should contact the airline(s) to determine what date you must make your return reservation. If there are any questions, please involve your host and trustee.
- If you plan to do some traveling after school is out and before you leave Georgia:
 - Ask your host and trustee to help suggest points of interest that you would enjoy.
 - Be aware of how long you may remain in the United States based on your visa classification (see chart)
 - If you have any questions about your visa, PLEASE speak with the **international office** at your college

F-1 Visa	Visa Requirements for Departure
• Standard Select GRSP Scholar	You must leave the U.S. within 60 days after the end of the spring semester; unless you have already arranged through your college's international office to complete a degree program at the college
• Direct Select GRSP Scholar	You are already approved to remain in the U.S. to complete your degree.
J-1 Visa (Standard Select GRSP Scholars only)	You must leave the U.S. within 30 days after the end of the spring semester.

- **IMPORTANT: Plan to spend the last several days before you depart with your host family.** You and your Georgia family will need time for the closure of your year together.
- **Plan to attend one final meeting of your host Club to say "goodbye" and "thank you"** even if you made your farewell address a few weeks earlier. Your "Rotary family" will appreciate the thoughtfulness.
- Just as when you arrived, **your host family or trustee will take you to the airport** to say, "Goodbye".

AFTER YOU LEAVE

- In departing, you will experience some sadness in leaving good friends at college, GRSP students and your Rotary family. This will be offset by the excitement of returning home to family and friends.
 - Once home for a few weeks, you may undergo a period of depression. Reports from past GRSP students indicate such depression is normal.
 - The duration varies with each student -- a few weeks to almost a year.
 - If you experience this phenomenon, please keep in touch with your host family and trustee by social media, FaceTime, WhatsApp, etc. They will want to help you during this adjustment phase.
- **Stay connected**
 - Join the GRSP Alumni Facebook Group
 - Like the GRSP Facebook Page
 - Stay in regular contact with your host family, trustee, other Rotarians and your GRSP classmates by email, FaceTime, WhatsApp, etc. Many GRSP alumni and their hosts and trustees stay in regular contact for DECADES!
 - If you change your email address, mailing address, or mobile phone number, please notify the GRSP Office at grsp@grsp.org.
- **Celebrate reunions**
 - We had the first **official GRSP reunion** in conjunction with the 2017 Rotary International Convention in Atlanta. Alumni from all over the world and from as far back as the 1950s gathered with Georgia Rotarians to celebrate our joint work in “**promoting world peace through understanding.**”
 - Unofficial reunions of small or larger groups of GRSP alumni occur ALL THE TIME and ALL OVER THE WORLD.
 - When you get together with any of your GRSP classmates, whether it’s just a few of you or and bigger group... PLEASE send **photos** and a short write up to the GRSP office at grsp@grsp.org.
 - Many Georgia Rotarians travel throughout the world, and we love to meet up with our GRSP alumni... so it’s important to keep us up to date with your contact information.
- **Be an ADVOCATE**
 - The BEST people to spread the word about GRSP are YOU, the Alumni. Share your GRSP experience WHEREVER you go, with WHOMEVER you meet.
 - Offer to present a program at any Rotary clubs you have contact with, or with high school and college students.
 - The GRSP office will always be able to help you with Power Point presentations.