

# INTERCULTURAL MENTORING

## Interview with a mentee

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg



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### Where did you find out about the program?

I found out about the program at the International Welcome Day for International students!

### Why did you apply for the Intercultural Mentoring Program? What were your expectations?

I applied because I knew having someone there to speak with me about any questions I would have could ONLY bring something positive into my life! To change from an American school system to a German has been a BIG change, and to have someone who had previously been through a similar situation was the best way I could think of overcoming new learning challenges!

### Did you have former experiences in mentoring someone?

I hadn't had any 'official' mentoring experiences other than when I was in High School, and I was a part of a group called Circle of Friends. We were paired with disabled students as a "buddy," and we would meet up monthly to hang out. It was such an enriching experience!

### Does your mentoring partner study the same subject as you do?

My mentor doesn't study the same subject as I do.

### Is there something you would do differently in your partnership?

Absolutely not! I am so thankful that my mentor was always willing to reach out and was genuinely interested in creating a friendship with me. She was always incredibly empathetic and has made my experience coming to the University so much easier. It would have been so difficult to do everything "alone" without anyone to speak to about my situation.

### How many times did you meet your mentoring partner?

I honestly have lost count. Maybe ten times?

### What were the activities that you have done together?

We had coffee, she invited me to a Christmas party, and one night we hung out and made some food together!

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### What were your tasks as a mentee?

I think the most important thing we did is show up for each other, and it was much more than a mentor-mentee relationship. We are true friends!

### Is there something you have achieved because of the help of your mentor?

The most important thing I've achieved because of my mentor is honestly being able to understand myself better in a culture that is so different from my own. She gave me understanding, patience, and, most of all, validation! Several of our experiences with the language and culture have been very similar, and it's good to know I'm not the only one going through them because that can feel incredibly isolating. I think it's important to have someone who understands what you're going through and to see their successes helps you also believe in yourself.

### Would you recommend the program to others? Why?

ABSOLUTELY. It is such a beautiful place to go to meet new people and to create genuine friendships. Coming to a new country can feel totally intimidating, and sometimes finding friends in your own faculty is also! The mentoring program is designated ESPECIALLY for people to create new friendships, which is probably the most important thing anyone could need!

### What is your overall experience with the Intercultural Mentoring Program?

I've answered this somewhat in all of my answers, but I feel like I have been truly "seen" in a sense. It's genuinely about learning from others, opening yourself up to new people and experiences, and a place to go to feel like you're a part of a community. Without community, it's nearly impossible to live ANYWHERE because, as humans, we're meant to connect with others. I had already been living in Freiburg for a year before coming to University, and I craved a place like this where people would be open, kind-hearted, and excited to meet one another. This is exactly the place I had been searching for.

### What did you gain from the program?

A friend for life 😊

### In what areas could the program improve?

Thankfully, I had a mentor who really put in the effort to connect instead of leaving an open invitation to "contact her anytime I need anything" - It's a genuinely kind offer, but I think open invitations are usually not replied back to because, let's face it, life gets busy and it's easy to forget! I think it would be a good idea to tell the mentors to meet with the mentees at least once a month or so, just so both people are consciously making an effort to meet up even if it's for a 30-minute coffee!

### Would you like to apply for the program as a mentor next year?

Absolutely!