



Interested in becoming a French House Assistant?
Here's what you need to know.

The French House offers assistantships each year only to students from partner institutions in France including:

- Aix-Marseille Université: assistantship at the French House is *required* as part of the exchange agreement
- Science-Po Aix: assistantship at the French House is an *optional* component of the exchange agreement

Interested students must first be selected by their home institution before submitting their information to the French House. That information is submitted here: <http://uwfrenchhouse.org/french-assistants/>

The cost of room & board is at a savings of about 33% (current rates are posted at uwfrenchhouse.org/residence/rates). Room & Board (*pension complète*) includes a furnished, single room (with a shared bathroom), 3 meals per day Monday-Friday and brunch on Saturday and Sunday (while school is in session), Internet, and a few other extras. There are no other costs (*charges*) associated with living at the French House. Linens are not provided but the French House helps assistants locate or purchase a set at a reasonable price (we often have an extra set available).

The appointment at the French House would begin formerly on the Monday one week before classes start. If the assistant needs to arrive earlier or later, that's certainly ok but it is highly recommended that s/he arrive at least a few days before classes start so that there is plenty of time to get settled. The appointment at the French House would end on the Sunday one week after classes end. After that time, the assistant is welcome to stay (free of charge) at the French House for a few weeks, until the Visa expires, or until the room is needed.

The following paragraphs describe life at the French House and what we would expect from the French assistant. The list of responsibilities may seem overwhelming at first but these are duties that one can incorporate into a normal day without much interruption. In fact, assistants sometimes wonder from time to time why we offer such a large discount but this is because we value a great deal their willingness to share their language and their culture with us. It is an essential part of what makes the French House so unique and our assistants play a crucial role in that endeavor just by being there.

The French House is a francophone residence for roughly 25-30 students who wish to live in a French language immersion environment to improve their spoken French and their knowledge of francophone cultures. The House is in an ideal location: on the lake, downtown and just off campus. It's a 10-15 minute walk to most buildings on campus and 2 a minute walk to State Street, the heart of downtown Madison. The residents, of which the majority is American, must apply to live at the French House and have at least an intermediate level of French. There is a large dining room that seats almost 100 guests, a salon with a TV (with Internet programming), a Steinway grand piano, study rooms, a kitchen for the

residents and a laundry room. The French House is wired for Internet and WiFi; Internet access free of charge. There is also WiFi access just about everywhere on and off campus.

Madison is perhaps a small city, however it is our state capital and home to one of the best research institutions in the world. Our exchange students have the opportunity to meet – at the French House, on campus, downtown, at parties, cafés, concerts, and sporting events – individuals of almost every race and nationality. Madison is truly a multi-cultural community with something for everyone. All it takes is a bit of initiative to find one's niche. For general information about Madison, start by visiting visitmadison.com.

French House Assistants are expected to fulfill the responsibilities described below. While reading, please keep in mind one of the more challenging aspects of this position: assistants live day-to-day with fellow residents for whom they serve as a mentor and sometimes as a disciplinarian (we rarely have problems, however). Although strategies for meeting that challenge differ from person to person, the best course of action is to be a positive and enthusiastic role model at all times. Please understand that, while we remain as friendly and as encouraging as possible, the use of English in the house is strictly forbidden; students live here because they want to speak French but they sometimes forget (or become a bit lazy) and it is at this time that we must keep them on track.

French Assistant Responsibilities:

- **The "all-French" rule:** The French House exists as an educational institution whose purpose is to foster the discovery of French and francophone cultures and to ensure improvement of daily spoken French for non-francophone students and guests. Because of this educational objective, we are a not-for-profit establishment exempt from federal, state and local taxes. We must enforce the "all-French rule" in order to maintain that educational status. In addition, this is what makes us unique. We are the only French House of its size in the country that maintains such a high linguistic standard. Cooperation among our residents, assistants and staff is crucial in maintaining this standard.
- **Meals:** The French House welcomes non-resident students for lunch, Monday through Friday, and the general public for dinner on Wednesdays and lunch on Fridays. The residents and these guests come to practice their French in a relaxed (non academic) atmosphere. These meals are quite fun, and assistants have a chance to meet many different people from all over our community. The assistant simply needs to arrive a bit early (about 15 minutes before each meal open to the public) and make an effort to sit among the non-native French speaking guests and residents.

All one needs to do to keep the conversation going is to be *oneself*. In general, native French speakers are *much* better at maintaining a conversation than Americans (it's true!). But Americans are much more open to talking about just about anything. What's considered *indiscrète* in French is often fair game in English (*par fois un peu trop même!*).

- **Conferences and other events:** As a representative of the French House, assistants are expected to attend some official functions including conferences and receptions that are held at different times throughout the academic year. When they are scheduled, assistants will receive a notice. Because we will have a few other French Assistants at the House, one should probably only have to help with a few of these events each semester.

After each conference, there is a short “wine & cheese” reception. This reception provides an excellent opportunity to get to know a wide array of individuals from the campus and community. As the reception comes to a close, we return the room to its original state; this takes about 5 minutes at best.

- **Security:** French House staff members have access to keys that allow them access to the entire House. This privilege must never be abused. Each staff member is not required to stay at the French House all day or every weekend, but at least one of us must be available should a problem arise and we therefore try to keep in close communication to be certain that there is someone around at all times.
- **Other opportunities:** From time to time, we organize group events for the residents, some formal, some very informal. We expect that all assistants will participate in these events and also suggest some of their own. On Sundays, the residents can speak English if they want and this may be a great opportunity for the assistants to encourage an outing (*excursion*) to a café, a restaurant, a movie, a state park, whatever. And sometimes, organizing something is as easy as "*Qui veut aller avec moi visiter le Capitol?*"

That’s it! I know this may seem like a lot at first. However, past French Assistants have managed with very little difficulty because the responsibilities at the French House are easily integrated into one’s own daily schedule. In fact, after a short period of adjustment, our assistants discover that they have a great deal of free time that they can devote to their studies or other areas.

Merci !

Andrew Irving, Director
The French House