The Host Family Program for International Students held its first official get-together on February 10, an event co-sponsored by the Office of the Vice Provost for International Programs and Strategy and the Department of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation.

Students and host families from the program’s fall 2016 pilot program gathered at Skibo Gym to cheer on the women’s and men’s basketball teams as they faced the Brandeis Judges. The Tartans went on to win both games!

In between games, the group mingled at a pizza party. President Subra Suresh and Mrs. Mary Suresh joined the festivities to greet international students and hear from hosts and students about the program’s impact on their CMU Experience. Gina Casalegno, Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Affairs, and Jimmy Hsia, Vice Provost for International Programs and Strategy were also in attendance and acting as co-hosts.

Dr. Suresh gave brief remarks on the importance of the Host Family program, noting that he participated in such a program when he first came to the United States as an international student. He affirmed the university’s core values and identity, and our commitment to creating a nurturing environment for international students. Dr. Hsia thanked the host families and students for participating in this year’s Host Family program, and encouraged them to share their memorable moments and provide valuable feedback so that the program can continue to grow and improve.

Considering the uncertainty about the current political climate, many students expressed appreciation for the show of support for the university’s international students and scholars.
“It’s a hard time for international students here with all that’s been going on recently, but this event and the Host Family Program are proving to be supportive,” said Abhilaash Narayana Rao, Master’s student in Construction Management.

“Tiffany and Alan (Master’s students) were very pleased and surprised that the president took the time to attend the event, and they were very excited to have the chance to speak with him,” said Lisa Dennis. She and Joan Maser, coordinator of Athletic Support Services, host two students from China.

The Host Family Program for International Students is currently in its pilot year, with plans to grow each subsequent year. For more information, please visit the program’s webpage.