

# International student groups provide service, assistance

By Kelvin Wee  
Of the Emerald

International students make up about nine percent of the total student population in the University. The Office of International Services expects that about 1500 international students representing various nations will return to the University this fall.

To help students adjust better to the American culture, to Office of International Services, in coordination with the Friendship Family Foundation, offers a "Friendship Family" program. "Friendship Families" are similar to "Host Families" with the exception that the participants do not live with the families involved in this project.

"The Friendship Family Foundation has been a very successful program, and we have about 550 people who are involved with us," said Margo Ramsing, coordinator of the program and student advisor with the Office of International Services. "The program involves concerned families in the Lane County area who want to be friends to foreign students. They are extremely beneficial to students because one of the biggest problems faced by many foreign students is that of feeling all alone," she added.

The Friendship Family Foundation will also host the President's Reception that will be held at Gerlinger Lounge on Nov. 1 1987. "This is where students are officially welcomed by the president, as well as community and county officials," Ramsing said.

A similar program on a smaller scale is the Student's Welcoming and Assistance Program (SWAP) sponsored by the Singapore Student Association (SSA).

"This is a new service we provide to help Singaporean students who are new to the University," said Joyce Tee, vice president of the SSA. "We try to pair up volunteers and students according to their majors."

The SSA will host a Fall dance on Oct. 4, and a general meeting cum potluck on Oct. 10 at 6 p.m. in Gerlinger Lounge, she said. "Although the SSA serves mostly Singaporeans, our services and events are open to all students in the University. We have a collection of newspapers and magazines from Singapore in our office which is open to anyone for reference use," she added. The Singapore Student Association is located in Room 202 of the Erb Memorial Union.

The Foreign Student Organization (FSO) is another major organization that serves foreign students. Located in Room 206 of the EMU, the FSO serves about one third of the entire foreign student population.

Kiyono Kobayashi, president of the FSO, said that although they served foreign students, their services are not just limited to non-Americans. "We encourage cultural exchange," she said. "Our goal is to help both American students and foreign students understand more about each other's cultures."

The FSO holds weekly coffee-hours in the International Student Lounge every Friday at 4 p.m. "Everyone is encouraged

to attend this as it is a good chance for people to meet others from different nations and learn more about those countries," Kobayashi said.

In addition, the FSO also intends to host a monthly "tea-party," which will feature a different foreign culture each time. "We would like to include a variety of snacks and drinks from the country which is in focus for that month," Kobayashi added. "We hope to also incorporate slide shows and presentations on the cultures to help everyone learn more about that country."

"The FSO is a group which serves all students," said Kobayashi. "We encourage American students who are interested in foreign cultures to participate in our activities and events. We host several other events like sports meets, art shows, dances and picnics throughout the year and anyone who is interested in participating can call us at 686-4387 for more information."

The FSO also serves as a host organization for several smaller foreign student groups. Such a group is the Norwegian Students in Eugene, a group that serves the 110 Norwegian students attending the University.

Torbjorn Skarbo, president of the Norwegian Students in Eugene, said the group plans to host several regular events throughout the year, including their general meetings and the annual ski-jump. "As with most of the other groups, most of our events are open to the public," he said.

The contact level amongst the members of the group is personal, Skarbo added. "We hand out a list of people and their phone numbers to all our members at the beginning of the year, and like most other groups, we have a welcoming party in honor of those new Norwegian students here."

Foreign students also find they may need other forms of assistance that they may not be

able to obtain from the various student organizations on campus. Recent changes in tax and immigration laws in this country do affect many foreign students.

The Office of International Services offers workshops and one-on-one counseling on such issues, said Ginny Stark, a student advisor with the OIS. "There's always an advisor available for drop in, and another available for appointments all day at the office," Stark said. "Most of the people in this office have some international experience, and we are here to serve the students and the international community."

The Office of International Services also hosts special programs for spouses of international students and staff at the University, handles immigration problems and maintenance of visa status for international students and staff, assistance with practical training upon graduation, and advice on scholarships, loans, housing and academics.

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