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American students encouraged to join FSO

By Dirk Vinlove
Emerald Contributor

The Foreign Student Organization is in the midst of a crisis.

It needs both foreign and American students to round out its program and make it successful, FSO Director May Sagbakken said.

The organization, which has 13 subgroups and serves students from more than 70 countries, "tries to create cultural awareness among foreign students and U.S. students on campus," said Sagbakken, a senior journalism/international studies major from Norway.

Many American students either know little about the organization or do not think it is for them — but this will soon change, she said.

To reach their goal, group members host a variety of activ-

ities. These include the International Coffee hour held every Friday and International Week in the spring.

In addition, Sagbakken wants to compile an international list of contacts for University students to use when traveling.

The list of addresses and telephone numbers of people to contact when traveling abroad or in the United States is an attempt to lend a "helping hand," she said. "With students from over 70 countries we could create quite an extensive travel network that would reach all over the world."

According to Sagbakken, American and international students can learn a lot from each other if they just try. "Many times U.S. students are unaware of what is going on outside their own borders and talking to a foreign student could give them a unique per-

spective of what is really happening," she said.

In addition, the interaction between foreign and American students could bring a new perspective to those interested in studying a foreign language.

"A student studying German or any other foreign language could learn a lot from a native of that country," said Andreas Forerster, an interdisciplinary studies graduate student from Germany.

FSO also provides a forum and a social meeting place in which international students can talk about their cultures.

"Imagine yourself in another country," said Rachel Mittleman, a senior majoring in physical education. Without an organization like FSO, "it would be hard to meet the native people. There would be a communication barrier and cultural barrier; it could be lonely."

Mittleman is one of a few American students currently involved with FSO. But for her, the benefits received from interacting and exchanging ideas with international students are considerable.

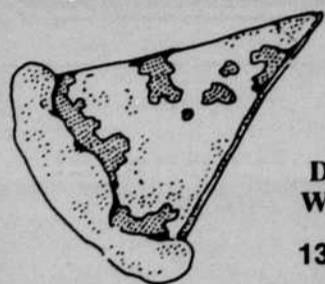
She compares FSO to athletics: "Sports bring countries together in a positive way and, here on campus, the FSO does the same thing." Mittleman is particularly interested in the interaction between people from different cultures.

"Many students have created lasting friendships through FSO, and both foreign and U.S. students can benefit from that," said Noriko Tsuboi, a graduate rhetoric and communication major from Japan.

According to Cheolho Lee, a senior business major from Korea, FSO added a social element to his life. "All I did my first two years at school was study; FSO got me involved in the local community and the outdoors," he said.

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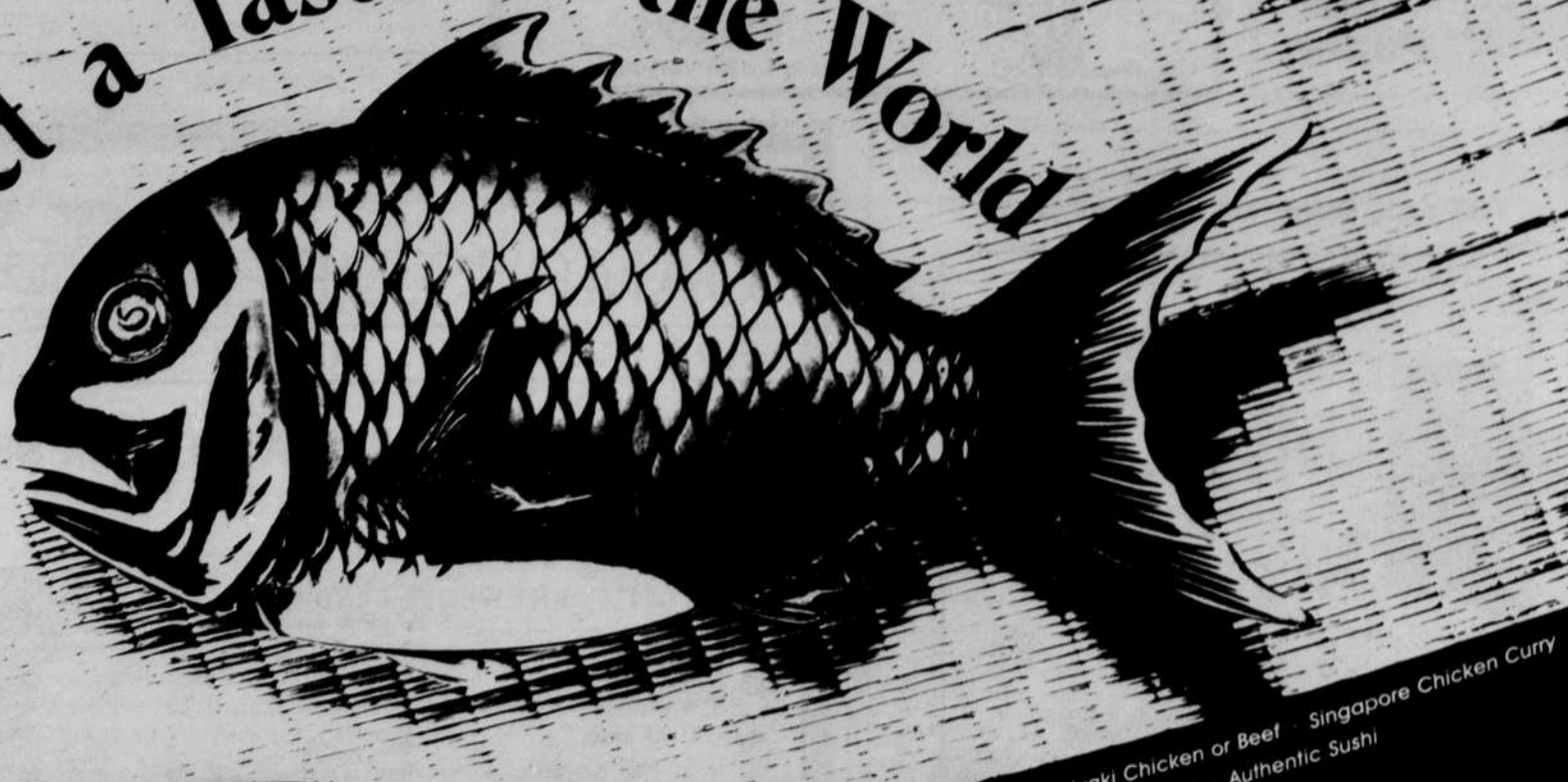
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