

*In Touch with the International Student Assoc.*

# Feeling at home made easier

**Y**ou might say they are world leaders, although the two of them probably don't think of themselves in such lofty terms.

The director and co-director of the International Students Association at the University oversee and look out for students from every continent on the globe. The organization is made up of 11 separate student agencies, such as the African Student Association and the Japanese Student Organization.

"With many of the international students who come here, it's their first time abroad and they feel uncomfortable from the beginning," said Caroline Steele, director of ISA. "They feel that they aren't being understood, that people don't know where they're coming from."

"They know they can come (to the ISA) because we represent international students," she added. "Here they know they have a voice."

Steele and the ISA co-director, Juanita Soerakoeseomah, said they are required to spend at least 15 hours a week in the office, but end up working there nearly 25 to 30 hours weekly.

"We have to be really dedicated," Soerakoeseomah said. "These are

paid positions, but the pay is very low. But we're not here for the pay."

Steele, whose family still lives in Germany, spent much of her life growing up in Italy and Germany. She said she chose to attend the University mainly because of the journalism school.

"I also found that they're really receptive to international students here," she said. "They responded quickly when I applied here."

Soerakoeseomah, who plans to graduate this term, is from Indonesia and grew up in the Philippines. Both she and Steele think they've learned a great deal about effectively working with people from their experience with ISA.

Besides picking up organizational and budgeting skills, "I think we've also learned how to be tactful, diplomatic and considerate of different people's backgrounds," Soerakoeseomah said.

The ISA will begin taking applications for next year's director starting April 16. The candidate will then be interviewed and must campaign and give a speech to ISA members. The co-director is chosen fall term, so new students will have a chance to run for the position, Steele said.

Steele and Soerakoeseomah said



Photo by Mark Ylen

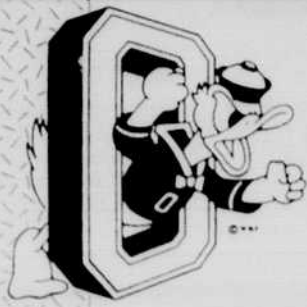
The ISA's co-director, Juanita Soerakoeseomah, and director, Caroline Steele, relax in the ISA office for a moment before plunging into the day's work.

they wouldn't trade their experience with ISA for anything, despite the high demands of the job and the low pay.

"I've been very happy with the job," Steele said. "It's a lot of work, but it becomes such a part of your life."

"Every year it changes and we have a new influx of people," she added. "We have the old dedicated souls and newcomers who are very curious, and they gradually become more involved."

—Darla Jackson



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