

Academic standing, hospitality draw international student body

Adjusting to school can be challenging

By Jiffin Arboleda Emerald Contributo

Maria Laaw is a Yapi from the island of Yap, part of the Federated States of Micronesia located smack in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

Laaw came to the University two years ago to study business. She had heard about the school from a woman from Texas she met when she worked for the Micronesian government after high school.

"When this lady learned that I was thinking of studying in the U.S., she recommended UO." Laaw said. "She had been here and she had come to love Eugene.

Laaw is one of about 1,300

international students who will be attending the University this fall; between 400 and 500 of them will be here for the first time

International students make up about 8 percent of the University student population. Tom Mills, director of International Services, said he believes it is the school's good academic reputation, specifically its standing as one of the top 20 research universities in the country, that attracts a large number of students from abroad.

He said he also believes that the University's location in a state as environmentally conscious as Oregon adds a lot to its attractiveness to international students.

"In Japan, Oregon is perceived to be a 'fresh' state, and the University benefits from this reputation." Mills said.

International students also come to appreciate the receptiveness of the Eugene-Springfield community to people from different countries and cultures

Teresita Ramellini is a college teacher from Panama enrolled in the clinical psychology graduate program. She said she finds the people in Eugene more open to international students like her than are people in bigger cities such as New York

"Bigger cities have a lot of other things to think about, so for them, international students might be no big deal." she said

have some problems to contend with, too. They have more adjustments to make than American students.

"In the beginning, everything was hard." said Lilliana Sancho, a Costa Rican taking her graduate studies in computer science education. "You don't know the people, the language, the culture. You come here used to a different way of life."

Language differences can be a big obstacle to hurdle, as Sancho found out when she arrived last year. She learned English in Costa Rica and attended a six-week English course in New York before coming to Eugene, but she still had some difficulty during her first few months.

"You just get used to the language after you do everything in English." she said.

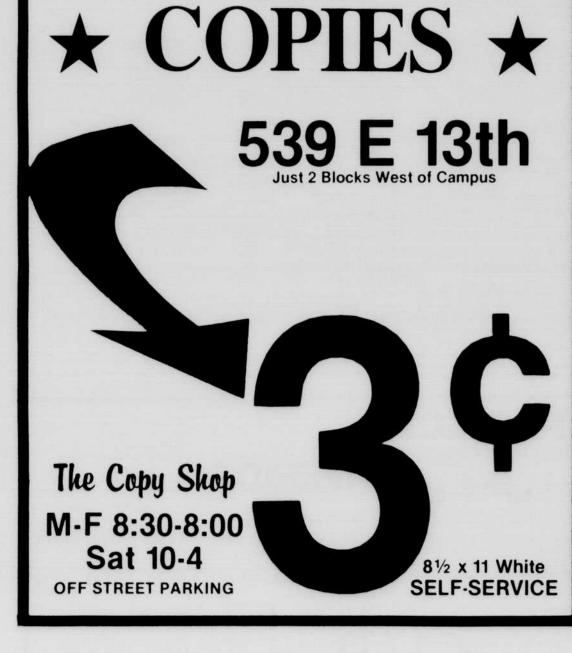
Ramellini also pointed out that at the start, some cultural differences made her feel out of place.

"People from Latin America are friendly in a different way." she said. "Here in the U.S., sometimes you talk to somebody one day, then the next day they might not talk to you, perhaps because they are busy

"When I stopped thinking that they did not want to speak with me, I felt better.

Culinary differences can be a problem, too. Laaw did not eat broccoli when she first arrived here, "because it reminded me of a certain sea animal that we have back home," she said, but she has since learned to like the vegetable.





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