

ISA eases transition for foreign students

International students agree that the cultural adjustment to America can be rough at times

By Kristina Rudinskas
Student Activities Reporter

For most students, the first day of school holds many challenges, including locating the right building and purchasing the right books.

International students face learning a new language, deciphering a different culture and making new friends thousands of miles from home.

The language barrier can become a major difficulty for international students. Dayeo Kim, 22, an accounting major, faced that problem when he came from Seoul, South Korea, in 1992.

"You need to be thick-faced and just start talking," he said. "Mistakes are part of the learning process and you need to be able to laugh at them, but it does get easier."

The University helps many international students orient themselves through campus organizations such as the International Student Association. According to co-director Soo Hyun Bak, the ISA reaches out to approximately 10 percent of the student body. It is one of the largest ASUO programs, representing about 1,600 students from 90 countries.

The association tries to help international students ease culture shock by holding a coffee hour every Friday from 4 to 6 p.m. in the International Student Lounge in the EMU.

"Getting involved with ISA is important because we went through the same phase and know what they're feeling. We can try to help them," Bak said.

The Office of International Education and Exchange in Oregon Hall also helps students adjust to their new surroundings. The office helps international students find housing, register for classes, ease cross-cultural adjustment and deal with financial and immigration regulations.

The office tries to build a community support network when international students arrive at the University, according to Peter Briggs, international student advisor.

"When you come to a new country, signaling systems are different," Briggs said. "Americans smile a lot and have an informal social hierarchy that can be difficult for new students to interpret. We try to help them know what to expect of Americans, making them more predictable."

For business major Daisuke Shizuya, from Tokyo, Japan, speaking to American students was difficult because it was more direct than in Japan. Americans don't need formal introductions and background as people do in Tokyo, so he didn't know what to expect here.

Culture shock, the sometimes frustrating experience of adjusting to a different environment and culture, can pose a variety of problems for international students.

"Culture shock, like all the rain, I take as a challenge and think positive to overcome it," Shizuya said.

CAMPUS BRIEFS

Hillel hosts Rosh Hashanah services

Hillel will host Rosh Hashanah High Holiday services Wednesday and Thursday.

The evening service will start at 7 p.m. Wednesday, and the morning service will start at 10 a.m. Thursday. Both will last between two and three hours. Anyone is welcome to attend.

Hillel's new co-director, Ephraim Eisen, will lead both services.

Services will be held on the third floor of Gerlinger Hall. Students not familiar with Gerlinger can meet near the EMU Courtyard and walk over together.

A free brunch will follow the morning service.

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