

Foreign students find welcome at IES center

By Susan MacDonald

For international students new to the UNL campus this fall, the Office of International Educational Services (IES) is a "port of call," said office director Peter Levitov.

Levitov said there are more than 800 foreign students from more than 70 countries enrolled at the university. About 175 are attending UNL for the first time, Levitov said. The international office is the check-in point and advisory center for new international students.

Upon arrival, foreign students are given information about UNL and orientation materials.

"We give them the initial welcome to the university," said Levitov. "We establish a relationship at that time, where they know who we are, and how we can help them," he said.

New international students have just completed a 10-day orientation session, which included an English place-

ment examination, registration and advising conference, a tour of the city and social activities.

Levitov said IES is the home base for all international students.

"It seems to be the place they turn to," he said. The office provides direct services and referrals, advising and information about the university and surrounding community.

IES staff members also provide counseling. Levitov said this is a delicate area, and counselors must be careful of the individual's self-esteem.

"Every simple question has cultural overtones," he said.

Levitov said the time just after arrival in a new country is a difficult and insecure period. He said the language, climate, distance from family, different academic systems and patterns of friendship, and anxiety about

being a foreigner are just a few of the problems faced by new international students.

For students desiring more personal contact with community residents, IES puts them in touch with the Lincoln Friends of Foreign Students. This organization assigns students to an individual or group of individuals who invite them to become "occasional members of the family."

"There are people in Lincoln who want a foreign student for a friend," Levitov said.

International students are not the only ones who benefit from IES services. Levitov said IES staff members present cross-cultural training programs to faculty members and university staff. He said these programs bring a greater awareness to people about cultural differences.

"We are all involved in an exchange process," Levitov said. "We all have a lot to gain and give."

The IES office is in Nebraska Union, Room 345.

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