

UNL's foreign students face adjustment to U.S. culture

By Judi Nygren
Daily Nebraskan Staff Writer

Life on the streets of Peking or Tehran, Iran, would be difficult for an American brought up in New York or Omaha, and this cultural difference is recognized easily on a university campus, a UNL official said.

Peter Levitov, director of the International Educational Service, said UNL's ever-growing foreign population faces this same culture problem when it comes to campus. UNL's foreign students and teachers, about 1,000 of them, have to adjust to cultural changes such as America's casual classrooms, food, climate, language, religion and social style.

For instance, Levitov said, foreign students usually take the words literally in conversation. When an American says "see you later," foreign students often take the phrase literally, Levitov said. They are disappointed when the person does not call or stop by their home.

Foreign teaching assistants contend with classroom problems on top of the other adjustment,

Levitov said. Language is not the problem, because foreign TA's must pass a test of spoken English before they can teach, he said. But teaching styles pose problems. Many cultures require students to stand when a teacher enters the classroom and to address the teacher as "sir" or "ma'am." At UNL teachers often wear jeans to class, ask to be called by their first name and have casual teaching styles. To help foreign TA's overcome these differences, UNL requires foreign students to attend an American school for at least one year before teaching.

To fit into American culture, Levitov said, some students "divorce" their native friends and Americanize themselves. Others only interact with native friends and avoid Americans, he said. Neither of these solutions work.

"They have to have a foot in both cultures," Levitov said. "They have to be an actor or actress while they're here and take off their costumes and become themselves again when they return home. They have to remember who they are."

IES, at Nebraska Union 345, offers many programs to foreign students who are trying to adjust.



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Health aides help students with problems

Health aides are a liaison between students and the University Health Center, said Jana Crawford of the UNL Community Health Department.

Crawford said health aides live in all university residence halls, co-ops and fraternity and sorority houses.

Health aides are students who enroll in a training program that includes a two-semester public health course, first aid training and cardiopulmonary resuscitation classes. Before students are hired as health aides, they must be certified in CPR and have first aid skills.

Crawford said health aides are trained to help students with minor physical and emotional concerns. Health aides refer troubled students to appropriate medical services at the health center, improve health and safety and promote health through educational programs and projects.

Last year about 158 health aides serviced the UNL campus, but Crawford said only 123 have signed up for this year. Students can apply at the Community Health Department in the Multipurpose room of Selleck Quadrangle. Health aides earn about \$8.50 a week she said, and are required to take Public Health 230 — a course that meets once a week for the entire academic year.

Crawford said health aides counsel students in alcohol, drug abuse and other emotional concerns.

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