

Foreign students find a whole new world at UNL

By Adam Branting
Staff Reporter

For many students going to college is a big adjustment, but for Mostafa Khattab from Egypt, it's a whole new world.

"Everything is different. You have no

family, no friends, so you start making friends. It's very uncomfortable," Khattab said.

Taylor, who handles foreign admissions, said that students from 80 countries attend UNL.

Khattab is one of over 1,000 students from other countries at UNL, said D. Lynn Taylor, assistant director of admissions.

He said he feels both the foreign students and the American students benefit from this international integration.

"I think they bring a whole new view and experiences to the classroom," said Taylor.

Bakaruddin Tuha, an architecture major from Malaysia, said he agrees with Taylor. He said he believes it is very important for foreign students to get involved with other Americans and in the community.

"In Malaysia, we are involved in our society very close. The IES (International Educational Services) helps us get in touch with organizations here," Tuha said.

"Must of my time at UNL I spend in an architecture studio with my American friends," he said.

But Khattab, who has attended UNL for four years studying engineering, said he still feels a hesitancy by Americans towards him.

"People aren't used to being with a foreign student and it is difficult for an American student to talk to you," Khattab said.

Taylor says there are several reasons why UNL attracts foreign students. He attributes the city's beauty and low

crime rate, as well as its transportation system. He cites the community's receptiveness toward the students, the IES 10-day orientation program, IES's special "round trips" (to places like Kansas City and Omaha) and its various social and athletic events as very helpful for foreign students to get assimilated into the community.

In addition to IES programs, there are 22 different clubs for students. Some are for different nationalities, others are athletic or social.

"The members of one group (the Egyptian Student Organization) go to the airport to meet incoming students. We gather together occasionally to talk," said Khattab, the club's president.

Kabir Hassan, a finance graduate student from Bangladesh, said his countrymen have a very informal group.

The social aspects of these groups are very important when it comes to dealing with the students' culture shock.

"I used to cry every weekend... then I started to get social," Hassan said.

The foreign students came to UNL for different reasons. Hassan received an assistantship from UNL. Tuha said he was attracted by the low price,

which is very important for students and the generally poor nations that finance them. Hassan and the others said that they weren't overly impressed by the university, but instead by its various programs. Taylor and foreign students are generally here for the university's architecture and engineering courses.

Taylor said that the community and UNL are trying to reverse the recent decline in foreign enrollment by sending more literature and a special video about UNL to U.S. Embassies across the globe.

"There is a big interest by all the deans (to keep a flow of foreign students) and an important part would be to expand our English programs for them, but we are restricted by two other colleges (Doan and UNO) in how much we can teach," said Taylor.

After receiving their degrees, many foreign students are undecided as to what their future plans might be. Tuha wants to go back to his family, but then he said he might return to the United States. Others already have their careers laid out for them.

"I am to return to Egypt and teaching (engineering) at the University of Cairo," said Khattab.

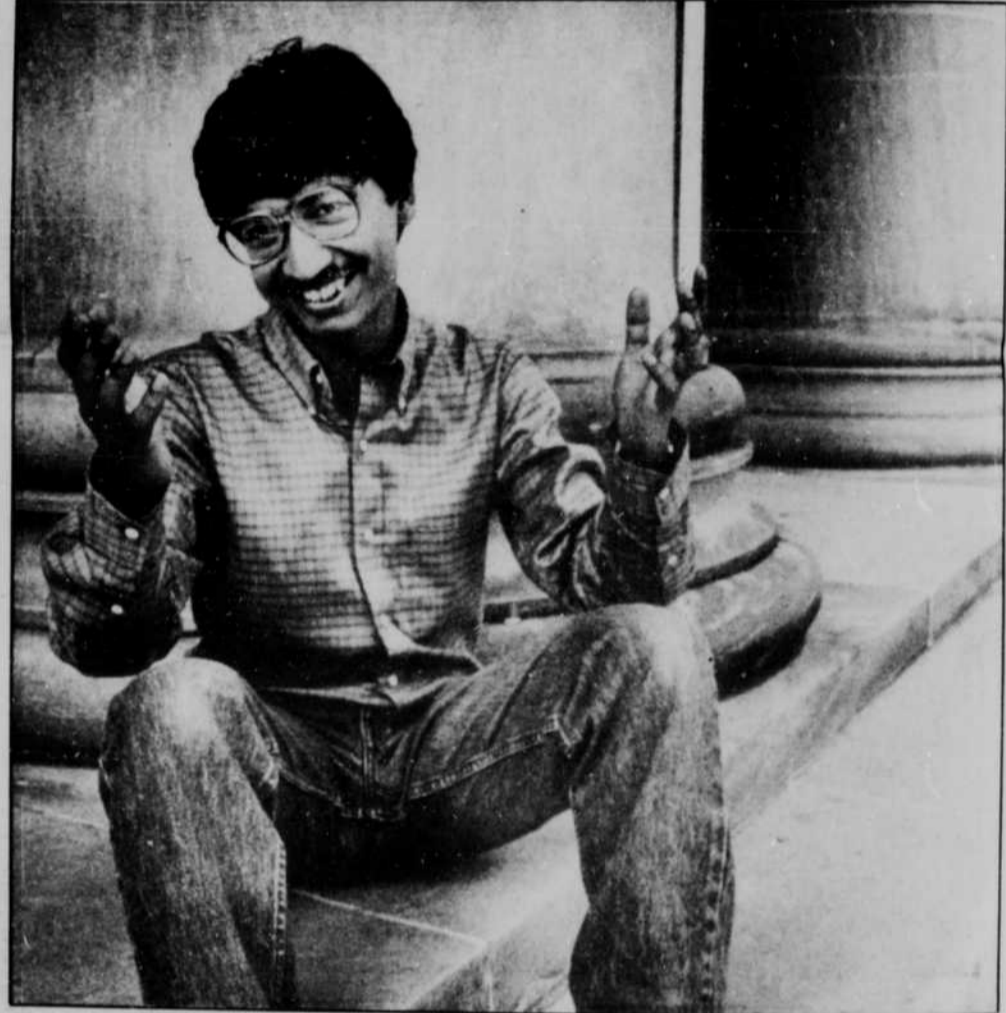
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Editor's Note:
Whether you ate lunch at Kuzo's Kabob, met a foreign student at Celebration or had a foreign teaching assistant in one of your math classes, nearly everyone on this campus interacts in some way with international influences.
Over 1,000 foreign students attend UNL, coming from 80 different countries. In Lincoln there is a veritable plethora of restaurants owned by foreigners, communities of immigrants and churches founded by those that help refugees.
Those of us here can also broaden our perspective by becoming involved in, or at least more aware of, the foreign influences we encounter every day.