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Exchange students discover differences between U.S., Russia

By Kristi Daughtridge

Life in America can be pretty over-whelming at times — especially for someone who is Russian.

someone who is Russian. Just ask Professor Nina Leontieva and her five students, Vlad Pironko, Sveta Panova, Andre Tischenko, Jenya Koudriavtseva and Misha Korobeinik. All six are in Chapel Hill on a federal grant as part of a special exchange pro-gram between UNC and the University

of Rostov in Russia. They arrived Jan. 7 and will return to Russia on May 18. While at UNC, Leontieva is teaching Russian, and the students are taking various University courses that will

complement their majors. The UNC students now in Russia as part of the exchange program are studying the

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Svota Panova

try. Jenya Kedriav-21-year-0 tseva, a 21-year-old economics major, said that after she had had a chance to rest, the first thing she noticed was the smell. "There is a very different smell in the two countries. I can't really explain it, I just know it."

over in Atlanta. "I decided to stroll around the airport, and I saw a huge Lincoln Towne car — it was the biggest car I've ever seen." Pironko said the car reinforced the Russian stereotype that Americans were prosperous and drove big cars. big cars.

Now that they have lived here for a while, the students have made many observations of life in America compared with in Russia.

A major difference between the two countries is the educational system. Koudriavtseva said the American edu-cational system was too stressful. "I see people studying all the time or talking all the time about studies. "I think it's crazy. According to this,

I draw the conclusion that everybody only studies," she said. "It is hard to

ing and drinking." Pironko agreed that studying took longer here but said the American system of education also provided more choices.

"In Russia, you choose cannot courses. Here, I can choose all courses," Pironko Misha Kozobeinik

×4.

said. "In Russia, you can only study your field and related courses."

Russian students begin college around age 17 and take five "courses," around age 17 and take five "courses," one per year. After five years, students receive diplomas that entitle them to work in their chosen professions but are

To enter graduate school, the student must have a faculty recommendation and a high grade point average. After two to three years of graduate study, the student receives a true degree and can

student receives a true degree and can teach at a university. Sveta Panova, a 20-year-old geogra-phy major, said Americans and Rus-sians were both hospitable. "The Ameri-cans that I meet are very friendly. If you need help, they always help you. I enjoy that. It is sometimes surprising that I can feel comfortable here." Russian law major Andre Tischenko.

Russian law major Andre Tischenko, 20, immediately noticed that Americans smiled more often than Russians.

"I got used to this trend very quickly," he said, laughing. "I like smiling." Misha Korobeinik, a 22-year-old math major, agreed. "People in Russia are deep into their own problems, and

it's hard for them to 'see' other people

Russians' problems stem largely from the dire condition of Russia's economy and the fall of communism in 1991. Leontieva said that although Russia had a lot of problems, it was fortunate not to be at war.

"We live in peace now, despite the

"We live in peace now, despite the problem in national ethnic relationships. We are eager to create a market economy and make our living more civilized." All of the students have their own opinions about the ousting of commu-nism from their country. It is a topic shrouded with tension.

"For me, communism was just nor-mal life. I never worried about it," Panova said. "Since its fall, I have no-



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