

East-West relations encouraging more student exchanges

By AMY HUDSON

When President Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev met in November at the Malta Summit they pledged, among other things, to more than double the number of existing student exchanges between their countries.

The result, observers now say, has been a virtual student rush for foreign programs in the Soviet Union and other European countries.

"We're having a difficult time meeting the needs of students," said Vance Savage, dean of international education at Oregon's Lewis & Clark College.

"It's a whole new ball game now," declared Kirk Robey, head of foreign student programs at Ball State University in Indiana.

Robey, who helps coordinate exchanges with schools all over the world, noted, "A lot of individual institutions are starting exchanges" in the Eastern Bloc. Eventually, he says, students themselves will be setting them up.

In the past month half a dozen colleges have asked Lewis & Clark, which also has a reputation as a leader in foreign study programs, for advice about set-

ting up international exchanges, Savage said.

Lots of schools, he added, are expanding their study abroad programs or starting from scratch on new ones.

Based on figures from the 1987-88 school year, the most recent available, about 62,341 students from 1,700 colleges and universities studied in another country, reported the Institute of International Education.

During the 1988-89 school year, about 366,354 students enrolled on American campuses were from another country.

Both of these figures likely will increase as the changes in the Eastern Bloc — where many of the ruling communist parties have dismantled themselves, opened their commercial markets, created legislatures and freed speech — take hold and as Soviet-American relations continue to warm, Savage predicted.

At his own school, student demand for foreign study has increased so much that Savage is trying to establish a second exchange program in the Soviet Union.

In the first one, started in the fall of 1988, 10 Lewis & Clark students swap placed with 10 undergrads from Khabarovsk

Pedagogical Institute, located in a remote section in the Far East region of the Soviet Union.

Setting up an exchange the second time around, Savage adds, is a lot easier.

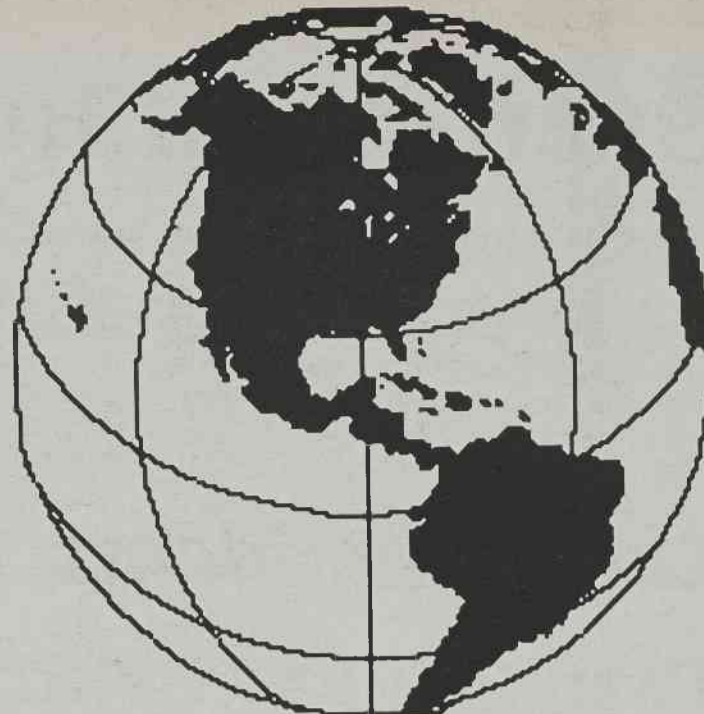
"It took me five years to get that first affiliation in the Soviet Union," Savage remembered. Then, exchanges had to be set up through the Soviet government. Now, he says, American schools can go directly to Soviet colleges to set up trades.

"I could go negotiate half a dozen exchanges now," Savaid said, adding that "are dying to get people here now."

"The people at my university," agreed Soviet exchange student Alexander Muratov, "their desire is to get to the United States. To study here would be a dream."

Muratov, who's from the Republic of Russia and is spending an academic year at Middlebury College in Vermont, said he's one of only three students from his university of 12,000 students studying in the United States.

The number is quickly increasing. In late February, Harvard University announced with great fanfare that it had accepted its first three masters of business



administration students from the Soviet Union.

Getting U.S. students over there, moreover, should be a top priority for American colleges, most exchange program officials agree.

"Institutions have an obligation to provide international opportunities for students," Savage asserted. Global education, he added, "is going to be one of the major trends in education of the nineties."

"You can no longer be an educated man and just know Western culture," declared Wilber Chaffee, a government professor at St. Mary's College of California near San Francisco.

Chaffee's been pushing to internationalize the school's curriculum — including set up foreign exchanges — for 12 years. Only recently, he said, have administrators given him a warm reception, mostly because of

imminent changes in the population of California. Demographers predict that by the year 2000, there will be no majority ethnic group.

"We have got to meet the educational needs of California," Chaffee said.

Changes in Europe and elsewhere, Chaffee added, "have made us feel a little keener what we have to get done."

By many accounts, most colleges have a long way to go. Not enough students study abroad and those who do tend to end up in big cities in Western Europe, Lewis & Clark's Savage maintained.

And most American collegians, say foreign students, know very little of different cultures.

"I have a feeling they're very curious, but it's almost obvious they don't know very much," says Florian Techel, a Ball State exchange student from West Berlin.

Senate says fraud plagues student aid

The federal student aid program is plagued by so much fraud and inefficiency that it no longer works correctly, a Senate panel has charged.

"To date we have not found one area that we have examined in the federal student aid programs that is operating efficiently or effectively," said a staff statement at a hearing by the Senate's permanent subcommittee on investigations.

The subcommittee issued the statement after compiling a report about the state of the programs.

"Despite lofty goals and good intentions of the student aid programs, hundreds of millions of dollars are being wasted or fraudulently obtained."

The result, of course, is that

legitimate two-year and four-year college students get either not enough financial aid dollars, or none at all.

In reply, campus student aid administrators say the Senate study is too general, blaming everybody rather than just the institutions that have high default rates.

"The report is oversimplifying a very complex situation," charged Hal Lewis, financial aid director at Coker College in Hartsfield, S.C. "The broad generalization doesn't apply" to all campuses.

Lewis and others say most of the fraud and inefficiency occur at trade schools.

"We know that there are some problems, but defaults are often limited to a small number who

support to be educational institutions. Many times the education is inferior, and the student is not properly trained to compete for a job," said Dallas Martin, executive director of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA).

The Government Accounting Office (GAO) noted that Washington guaranteed \$12 billion in loans to students in 1989, an increase of 83 percent over the \$7 billion loaned in 1983.

But the default rate during the same time, added GAO researcher Franklin Frazier, rose by 338 percent. By 1989, 36 out of every 100 dollars in the loan program went not to students, but to cover defaults.

Despite the increase in default-

ers, NASFAA's Martin believes that, "Overall the vast majority of students and institutions are working hard and doing a good job. It's important to get to the root of the problem, but don't give the impression that the whole system is rotten."

Martin, like others in the aid industry, notes a particular problem with trade schools, which are for-profit programs dedicated to teaching specific trades like truck driving, cosmetic care, and clerical skills.

The U.S. Dept. of Education, which administers most federal college programs, estimates that trade schools account for 35 percent of the schools participating in the federal guaranteed student loan program, but for half the to-

tal amount of loans that are in default.

Martin also thinks part of the problem is that the Education Department, after years of cutbacks, no longer has the funds or the manpower to police aid programs adequately.

While the department is suffering from cuts, some of the problems have been caused by its top officials, he added.

"I have mixed feelings (about the department). It's very difficult to run without the means, but I know of times when money within the department was diverted to hire people at the top levels, leaving the lower levels) without resources," Martin charged. "Congress is suspicious about giving money after that."