

International students adjust to new culture

Jeff Wirick
Staff Reporter

Elon range from the moderate climate to small size. "A lot of them were looking for a smaller private school that offers the arts," Walker said.

Why do foreign students come to America?

Walker said going to school in America is a good way to learn English, which is the world's most commonly used language.

International students also come to the United States to learn American customs.

Students get a taste of American culture throughout the year, such as they did on Nov. 20. International students joined Elon College President Fred Young and his wife Phyllis for a traditional Thanksgiving Day meal.

The Inter-Cultural Relations club, an organization designed for international students to get to-

gether, meets twice a month (the first Monday and third Thursday of every month).

"It is a place where international students can meet and talk about the things that concern them," Walker said.

The organization goes on trips outside of Elon to show international students what life is like.

"International students don't get a chance to see different cultures in the United States," said junior Ami Pathak, president of Inter-Cultural Relations.

"Elon is so confided, the students don't understand that so many things are going on around them," Pathak said.

Despite the cultures that are studied and experienced by the members of the group, Pathak stresses the club is also a social organization.



Kelli Bridges/The Pendulum

President Fred Young laughs with junior Ami Pathak at his home.

The group has camped in the beach, and is planning a trip to New York City next semester. Washington D.C., gone to the

Leaving the familiar surroundings of home is one of the most difficult adjustments that college students have to make when they become college freshmen.

However, for most freshmen that doesn't include having to learn a new culture and primary language, something that international students must face.

There are about 50 international students that attend Elon this semester. They represent Japan, Austria, Canada, Spain, India, China, and parts of Africa.

"Most of the students are here as full-time students as opposed to one or two semesters," said John Walker of the Office of International Programs.

Their reasons for coming to

Lack of financial aid available to international students

Gemma Cubero
Reporter

After years of scrimping and saving to pay for his education, Justo Arevalo's family is going into debt.

It is not that Arevalo doesn't want to work or wouldn't take a loan, but Elon College doesn't offer financial aid to international students.

Since Arevalo came to the school in the fall of 1993, his family has had to pay the \$13,233 annual cost at Elon. With the exchange rate of Spanish currency into dollars, Arevalo is actually paying the rate of \$17,300.

Out of the 55 international students enrolled in Elon College, only the five who are on sports teams receive scholarships.

However, Elon College has never awarded an academic scholarship to a foreign student, said Joel T. Speckhard, associate dean of Financial Aid at Elon.

"International students are not eligible for economic aid because of the limited amount of institutional money at Elon College," Speckhard said.

Alejandro Amaro, a double major graduate from Elon, believes that it is a bad investment for the school not to offer scholarships to foreign students who have outstanding records compared to those of U.S. applicants.

Elon international students, such as Alvaro Ramos, who is now getting his master degree in public

relations at Boston University, "go to the best graduate schools all over the nation," Amaro said.

"If Elon had scholarships for these students, who then go to excellent graduate schools, an increase in prestige could occur for Elon," he said.

Speckhard said the school offers three types of financial aid: Federal loans and grants that require U.S. citizenship; state funds, which require North Carolina residency; and college and private scholarships which have limitations depending on the donor, "such as being a resident of a certain county."

Alice N. Essen, director of International Admissions, said applicants call from countries in Eastern Europe, where their incomes are too low to afford school in the United States.

"The school has to say, 'No, we are sorry,'" Essen said. "I would love to be able to offer financial help, but Elon College does not have enough private funds."

William Rich, associate dean of Academic Affairs, said some schools have 25 percent to 30 percent of the budget invested in scholarships, while Elon has chosen to invest in scholarships 12 percent of its budget.

However, Rich thinks the money from other schools is not "real" money but "soft" money, a discount that either comes from charging more to the rest of the students without economic need or from an endowment.

Because the Internal Revenue

Service prohibits students who are not U.S. residents from working off campus, campus employment is the only option for foreign students who need help with living expenses.

Arevalo wanted to help his family by paying out of his own pocket the cost of books and laundry. But, Arevalo said, jobs on campus have been impossible to get.

"I tried to work as a Spanish tutor last fall, but occupations were already taken," Arevalo said. "Then I tried at the cafeteria twice, and I didn't even get an answer, which I even found more discouraging."

According to the Office of Financial Planning at Elon, the student worker budget is divided into two main funding sources: The Federal Work Study (FWSP) and the Institutional Work Study (IWSP).

Kenneth M. Mullen, comptroller at Elon, said that the federal government supplies 75 percent of the FWSP, while Elon supplies 100 percent of the funding for IWSP.

The institutional money for work-study programs varies based on funding availability and the program needs of each department.

Lorraine M. Allen, accounting director at Elon, said the request by each department is given to the Budget Committee, which includes the provost, comptroller, the vice presidents of Academic Affairs and Business and Finance.

"The committee distributes the resources based on need," Allen said.

"The budget is confidential," he said.

The budget for FWSP has held fairly constant for the last few years at about \$ 190,000. The IWSP program had \$ 570,000 last year," Mullen said.

Most of the excuses international students get from departments that offer jobs is the lack of institutional money.

However, Mullen said the 1994-95 IWSP budget will increase 8.7 percent because of the need of new programs and activities in Koury and Moseley Center.

"We (foreign student) are not asking for any sort of special privilege," Amaro said. "Only to have the same opportunities and to be treated like any other student at Elon."

Elon College President Fred Young was not aware that international students are not eligible for college scholarships, such as the Honors Scholarships program.

"I assume that international students are eligible just as those who need economic aid," Young said.

Kathy J. Lyday-Lee, director of the Academic Honors Program, said international students don't receive Honors scholarships because they are not on campus for the competition in February.

"We are now trying to find a method by which we can identify those students that are likely to excel and achieve," Lyday-Lee said.

"If we can target some of our good international students at the

very beginning, then we will be able to offer the on Honors scholarships," Lyday-Lee said.

For now though, only athletics scholarships are granted to international students.

Clay Hassard, assistant athletic director, said the coaches award scholarships to athletes.

"The athletic scholarships may range from \$500 to a full scholarship," Hassard said. "It is an institutional decision that Elon has made since we had international students in the athletic program."

However, Rich sees the possibility of creating a scholarship for international students from money raised in the last Investing in Excellence.

"I do know that people who have made contributions to the college for individual scholarships are going to designate the money for scholarships to international students," Rich said. "It may take another two years before the money is available."

Amaro sees that by including international students in the scholarships program, not only the school's diversity would increase but its reputation.

"International students who earn their education in the United States usually hold the top management and leadership positions in their native countries," Amaro said.

"If Elon could widen their scholarships for foreign students, Elon College's presence would expand all around the world," he said.