

Dessislava benefits at Guilford

Christian Scanniello
Staff Writer

Guilford receives transfer students from many places, but few have traveled farther than Dessislava Nintcheva to reap our school's educational harvest. A transfer senior from Sofia University in Bulgaria, Dessislava, as she is known to her friends, is in pursuit of an American law degree. Having only been in the county for two short weeks, Dessy is understandably experiencing culture shock.

"The so-called cultural shock has two sides," said the 23-year-old from the north central city of Plevan. "Of course, America is more economically developed than Bulgaria, not only because Bulgaria was Communist, but also because America is a powerful and big country. It can allow itself to make decisions for other countries.

The other side is that it is not really what people imagine it to be. The myth of America is not true."

Stressing that she did not come abroad to escape any type of oppressive situation in Bulgaria, Dessy says she is here to experience American culture and to study areas of interest in the law that are not available at home.

"[It is] a chance for me to see a different society and try to compare it and try to evaluate positives and negatives," Dessy said.

Dessislava takes particular interest in the dynamics of a democratic society because her own country is in a process of political reform. Since the crumbling of Communism in 1989, Bulgaria has been trying to democratically reinvent itself. Not only has there been a major influx of new democratic ideals, but many members of the

former Communist party are embracing more progressive ideas.

"It's very difficult to say if they've changed because many people say 'How have they changed in one week or one month?'" said Dessislava. "The answer is they haven't changed; rather, they have grown in their thoughts."

The democratic voices in Bulgaria struggled to be heard

throughout the '80s, but have only recently begun to take prominence in political reforms.

"What was violated was their ability to talk, but their ability to think couldn't be violated," said Dessy of the Communists' domination of power, which began after World War II.

In addition to coming from a different political climate, Dessislava comes from a very distinct educa-

tional background. In the Bulgarian school system, after the 7th grade, students choose a specialized area of concentration, such as math, language, or music. After her elementary school years, Dessislava went to English Language School.

Five years later, at age 19, she graduated and moved on to Sofia University, Bulgaria's most prestigious school. Since 1990, the Bulgarian government has begun a program in which they pay for a limited number of students' tuition. This is an effort to encourage the specialized educational fields which may serve as an aid in the process of reform.

Dessislava was among the few chosen in the competitive process. She says that Guilford is the first school for which she has had to pay.

In her first year at Sofia University, Dessy studied history but switched to law in her last two years. While studying law at Sofia, Dessislava met Morton Sklar, an American professor on loan from Washington, D.C.'s Catholic University. In her classes with Sklar, she did an intensive study comparing international law standards and Bulgaria's own domestic laws. Sklar, who helped Dessislava with much of the literature used in her study, recommended that she pursue her law interests abroad.

Dessislava applied and was accepted to Catholic, the City University of New York, and Guilford. She chose Guilford because of its smaller size and setting.

"This place is very nice-natured," said of Dessislava of her new home-away-from-home. "The campus is very green and very quiet."

Immersing herself in Guilford's political science department,

Dessislava is taking American Political Systems and Fall of Rome. Though she comes from a thorough law background, she is finding that she must adjust to the American college classroom.

"The difficulties are because of the different educational approaches, not because of the level of scientific knowledge," said Dessy. "Many of the subjects of our high schools cover the extent of the knowledge of a college student here. If an American came to Bulgaria it would be much more difficult."

Dessislava is particularly interested in examining the foundations of American government and our perceptions of democracy because they offer insight concerning Bulgaria's own newly adopted constitution, which had imposed new democratic ideals since its passage in 1990. She has, however, found some Americans to be very insular in their political ideas.

"We always compare the constitutional law of Bulgaria with that of France, Britain, Germany, Italy, and America and I can't see it here," Dessy. She added that many of her Bulgarian classmates are multi-lingual and eager to learn about different countries.

Later this year Dessislava plans on joining the masses of American legal hopefuls who will take the notorious LSATs. Though she is not certain where she wants to attend law school, she has definite ideas about her future.

Dessislava said, "I would like to be a kind of expert in the law sphere so I can shorten the bridges between Bulgaria and America and Western Europe, so that Bulgaria can be observed [internationally] in the best way that it really deserves."

Point of Interest

Forty-one foreign countries are currently represented at Guilford College by international students.

Those countries are:

Australia	Kenya
Belgium	Korea
Bermuda	Liberia
Brazil	Mexico
Bulgaria	Nicaragua
Canada	Peru
China	Puerto Rico
Costa Rica	Russia
Croatia	Ukraine
Czechoslovakia	Scotland
Denmark	Singapore
England	South Africa
France	Spain
Guatemala	Switzerland
Iceland	Taiwan
India	Thailand
Indonesia	Turkey
Iran	Venezuela
Italy	Vietnam
Japan	Yugoslavia
Kashmir	Zimbabwe

For more information, contact Paula Swonguer,
International Student Advisor

Dean Olds stays busy; gets involved

Christina Haworth
Staff Writer

Mona Olds, dean of student life, is a woman always on the go, and always ready to meet new people with a smile and a friendly handshake.

"I want to be as accessible as possible to students, whether they have a problem or a new idea. I'm always open to new ideas, and if someone has a good one I'd like to be able to make it a reality."

Olds is still adjusting to Guilford College and getting her perspective on it. When asked what one of the things she would like to improve upon is, Olds said, "The foundation that Guilford pride



Olds

stands upon. This is a place where the basic ingredients are here, in place, and are working well and this allows for improvements to make it the best it can be."

Olds feels the top five things that Guilford has to offer are: one, its

physical beauty; two, its Quaker philosophy that resonates throughout the campus; three, the hard work ethic of the administration, faculty and staff; four, the inclusive decision-making process; and five, the great teaching commitment.

Olds sees Guilford as a college that breeds "openness, tolerance, friendship and trust." She believes that Guilford can spread these values over the surrounding community. "I'd like to see a commitment from students to work with the outside community even more than they do now."

While Olds learns her way around the school, she is also running into obstacles. "My biggest challenge so far has been the over-

whelming learning process. Learning new things has been my biggest frustration, challenge and reward, all rolled into one. The sensation of learning is a very positive one, but the frustration comes in when you wish you could learn things instantly. It's sort of like being a first-year student: you're just learning the ropes and trying to figure out how things work. But everybody is so patient here, the atmosphere is very tolerant," said Olds.

Olds' schedule is and will be very busy. One minute she's dashing off to a lunch meeting with James Green, president of Senate, then perhaps next to a Budget Committee meeting. Olds was also spotted at the Dillon Fence concert

in Dana.

Although very busy, she has made meeting individual students one of her top priorities, so making an appointment with her is always possible. "Just the other day I went to an International Tea which was a great opportunity to meet individual students."

Olds came to Guilford during mid-summer when most students were enjoying their summer breaks elsewhere. "When all the students came in it sort of rounded out my knowledge base. Before I could see everything on paper, but now it's alive and real. I'm excited about working with everybody this year, and I encourage students to come talk with me about any concerns."