American students join in International Orientation

by DANIEL BARBARISI
Daily Editorial Board

Most freshmen, even those who come from Medford, consider college a world away from home. But there are some members of the freshman class who literally travelled across the world to come here.

Some came with their parents, some by themselves. Some came from places as far away as Pakistan and Taiwan; but for the past three days, all of them have been participating in International Orientation, a three-day acclimation period designed to introduce students to life in the US and at Tufts.

According to Janie Bess, assistant director of the International Center, the 180 international students come from all around the world and fall into one of several categories. Some are US citizens who have lived overseas, some are foreigners living in the US, and others come from US territories, such as Guam and Puerto Rico.

Although most American students arrive during regular orientation, some of them opt to attend the International Orientation through an international relations program. Bess said this year there was a dramatic increase in the number of students applying to arrive early to get their foreign counterparts.

“It was great, I had a really good time,” said Colin O’Higgins, a freshman from Miami Beach who participated in the program. “It was nice to get some things done with only 180 people here rather than 1,300. It also gave me a good idea how large the international community is at Tufts—I was quite impressed with that.”

Despite the increase in the number of American students participating in the program, the majority of the international students are foreigners looking to find their way around the campus and the city before the rest of the freshmen arrive. To get them settled in their new environment, the orientation leaders took the students into Boston, played “adventure games” with them, and took them on tours of the campus.

According to Bess, this year’s program ran smoothly, adding that “Atomic Bowling” and the treasure hunt were two of the most popular activities.

Perhaps one of the more dynamic parts of the program this year was the treasure hunt, Bess said. “The students were asked to go around campus, learning the layout as they went to each of the seven stations, and then, as a team, create something out of the odds and ends they found at each station.”

Several groups made miniature elephants, while others constructed more outlandish creations, such as the “Jungle Hat” designed by the winning group.

Of the students themselves, Bess said that, “This year’s group of participants were not only the most polite group I’ve worked with in my time here, but they were also the most exuberant I’ve yet seen.”

Last night, the international students were treated to a party in Dewick/MacPhie, marking their last social occasion before the freshmen participating in the regular orientation arrived on campus today. By Saturday, when the international students meet for an ice cream social in the Carmichael lounge, they should be well situated to live here and in the States.