Different nationalities and cultures live together under I-House roof

By CRAIG E. REIMER

Housing regulations, lottery numbers, and the roommate hunt can get anyone down. Perhaps some will have, in the words of Jane Eichs-Andrews, "the courage to cross the line and find some really fun people." The International House poses a dynamic and rewarding alternative to the standard housing options at Tufts. Jane Eichs-Andrews, Director of Foreign Faculty and Student Advisor, runs the International Center through its office in the house with the help of her staff and the enthusiasm of I-House students. Working together, they try to meet the needs of nearly seven hundred international members of the Tufts community. Yet, the center and its house should not be looked upon as an entity separate from Tufts' general populace, as it serves as a center of diversity and cultural interaction.

Indeed, the fifteen undergraduates who occupy the International House on Sawyer Avenue, half American, embodying the original vision of the house's founders more than a decade ago. The founders sought to establish a place where undergraduates could broaden their horizons and discover the world around them outside of the language labs, lecture halls, and libraries.

Essentially, the I-House, with its adjacent International Center, serves five major roles in the Tufts community, ranging from orientation for international students to aiding students in planning to go abroad. The house itself features many unique options and lifestyles for its inhabitants. On the whole, Ms. Eichs-Andrews seeks to mix the cultures of students that form so rapidly on campus while meeting the needs of the international community.

Beginning with orientation week, a hectic and confusing time for any new student, the center helps new students adjust to Tufts life by drawing upon the guidance from Host Advisors; a position all students are welcome to apply for. As one former Host Advisor said, "We help to bridge the gap between the American and foreign communities here at Tufts by sharing our experiences and directing them [international students] toward the other facilities and people that can help them to adjust." The I-House becomes a focal point for the international community to gather and meet to discuss problems and concerns or just hang out.

For the students who actually live in the house, the two years (the maximum period of residency) spent are special and rewarding. Each year the house has to turn down qualified applicants for lack of space, something that its directors would like to see change in the near future. Drawing solely upon the undergraduate pool of upperclassmen, they seek mostly sophomores and juniors because a year at the I-House is not a passive residency. As part of the experience each person has been able to a cultural presentation and in the activities which the house sponsors. Ethnic dinners, theme parties, and films, and a number of the projects which past members have arranged. Presently, a lot of effort has gone into making the International Festival a success. An important aim of the whole event was to stimulate interest in the American community by involving each of the dorms in sponsoring a night of events with international flavor.

Beyond the services the center and house render for international students, the house is always available for use as well as the help and guidance of the center staff. Valuable first-hand advice from the majority of students residing there is also always to be found. Furthermore, the center helps arrange passports and keep international students informed of their visa and immigration papers and rules. With some three hundred students choosing to go abroad each year, the International Center is also the place for obtaining an international student ID card. This card is essential for receiving numerous discounts and benefits overseas.

What is life like in the International House? For starters, there are some myths which have arisen about the house. There is no need to be proficient or even knowledgable in a foreign language to live in the house. Of course, those considering a faster route to fulfilling language requirements or proficiency for international relations majors will find the atmosphere most conducive towards that end. Also, the house is entirely separate from the Fletcher School, so those fearing the same reception which is often found in Fletcher's library by the attitudes of some of its students need not be deterred by that prospect. One of Ms. Eichs-Andrews' goals, however, is to create more cooperation between the graduates and undergraduates within the international community. Cultural diversity is no myth at the house. It's an enriching and thrilling reality which all too many college students miss out on in their college experience. From fashion to food to thought, life at the I-House ensures that the only status quo is perpetual change. Indeed, the house offers the paradoxical opportunity to really find out how different and yet assimilate the people of the world are.

Before whizzing through college in pursuit of a successful career and comfortable home in the suburbs, one should take advantage of the diversity and international flavor that is present on campus and find out who we share the world with before so quickly falling into a restricted sphere of "friends, family, and job after graduation."