Follow IO’s lead: Enliven orientation

by Nadia Shihata

On the plane flying to Boston from Washington DC, I couldn’t help but get anxious about the experiences that lay ahead of me. In my immediate future at Tufts, I was looking forward to International Orientation (IO) and then the regular Orientation all freshmen are subjected to endure. I use the word “subjected” purposely because, compared to IO, Freshmen Orientation is a total drag.

As an Egyptian citizen and permanent resident of the US, I was invited to participate in IO. At the outset of my journey, I wasn’t sure if I should be attending IO, since I’ve lived in the States for the past 15 years. Visions of boring information sessions where clueless international students would be learning how to navigate themselves through the American system flooded my brain. Luckily, this was not the case. Instead, I ended up forging what hopefully will prove to be lasting friendships, and I had a great time while I was at it.

IO and regular Orientation are at opposite ends of the spectrum. Understandably, the focus at Orientation was mainly on academic and specific social issues, such as alcohol consumption, drug-use, and date rape. Though the manner in which these issues were presented was indeed innovative, the sheer number and length of the seminars we were forced to attend made many heads nod off in the audience. As a result, we were left with almost no free time for practical needs, such as unpacking and getting to know one’s roommate. Being forced to eat almost every meal with one’s advising group didn’t leave much time for meeting different people either. After all, how many times can you go through an awkward “getting acquainted” conversation with someone?

IO, on the other hand, was a chance to meet people from all over the world, including the United States, interact with some genuinely friendly upperclassmen, and get useful information at the same time. Some of the highlights included a scenic cruise ride on the Charles River, comedic skits on college life performed masterfully by our host advisors, and a surprisingly good party to cap off an overwhelmingly successful International Orientation.

IO facilitates easy transition

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I have heard many IO participants exclaim that they have yet to have as enjoyable an experience as the IO party since they have been here, and while I’m sure that this sentiment will change in the near future, it proves what a good job the organizers and host advisors did in making us feel at home in what was for some of us a very long way indeed.