ISO helps 350 foreign students at Tufts

BY UGO PLEVISANI

The social comfort and the lawful immigrant status in this country of the more than 350 foreign students at Tufts this year is insured by the International Student Office (I.S.O.) located in Curtis Hall.

Run by Mary Hecht, who holds an M.A. in Asian studies, the office is under the overall supervision of the Director of Overseas Programs Dean Jack Kelley. "International Mary," as Hecht is often called, is a well-travelled young woman who receives $7000 a year for what she calls "a busy but fun job." She is assisted by two students who work part-time.

The office's primary goal is to ensure that the foreign students comply with U.S. immigration regulations. The I.S.O. also assists international students with peculiar housing and administrative problems at Tufts. On the academic side the office provides some advising and the coordination of tutorial programs in English as a second language. It also works with the Boston Area Seminar for International Students (B.A.S.I.S.), part of Host Family Programs for interested prospective foreign students. This involves such services as meeting them at the airport and providing tours.

The office's social activities, along with anything of interest to Tufts' foreigners, are published in the I.S.O.'s monthly newsletter. Despite some foreign students' claims that the university policies oppose non-integration, the Office has sponsored an International Student House, functioning for the first time this year. Housing eight foreigners and 13 Americans, the House provides premises for some of the International Club's activities and cultural exchange over coffee at any time. It is situated at 13 Sawyer Avenue. One of its new members said, "he house is working out fine. We enjoy each other as a group." Referring to the integration subject, he said, "How can you achieve total integration among 5000 students?"

Another foreign student considered the I.S.O.'s bureaucratic function essential but thought it had little to do with the social events it sponsors. He said he was perfectly integrated at Tufts.

The International Club is coordinated by the I.S.O. because no faculty members would sponsor it. Funded by T.C.U., its function is mainly distributing money and promoting social events among the diverse nationality clubs. The International Club president is Merhdad Toofanian, a member of the second largest nationality group -- the Iranians. Chinese students comprise the largest group among Tufts foreign students, who represent nearly 50 different countries. These clubs have provided social interaction among foreign and American members of the Tufts community.

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