International Orientation becomes Global Orientation

Aaron Pomerance

International Orientation (IO), one of the five pre-orientation programs Tufts offers for incoming first years, recently changed its name to Global Orientation (GO) as part of a strategy to encourage wider participation in the program.

Lauren Kulwicki, the International Center Intern and a graduate student at Lesley University, explained that the name change is part of a modification to the pre-orientation in order to be more diverse and inclusive, especially for American students who were not previously aware that they were eligible to participate.

"IO gives it this vibe that [the program] is only for international students … [GO is] expanding global perspectives in a world that is so interconnected," Kulwicki said.

Though IO began in 1987, International Student and Scholar Advisor at the International Center Pat Himes is still frequently asked if Americans are qualified to be host advisors for the program.

Himes hopes that the cross-cultural aspects that GO provides will appeal to prospective participants.

"If you do GO, you will have a couch to stay on in any city of the world," he said.

Student coordinator and junior Mengqi Sun, who planned the program last year, echoed the sentiment that IO has been inadequately advertised to American students.

“American students don’t usually know that they can do it,” she said.

Along with the name change, the program is looking to reduce its focus on immigration and instead put more of an emphasis on helping students orient themselves to life at Tufts, according to Sun.

Himes explained that the lower number of participants in IO this past year led to the decision to revamp the program, describing the lower numbers as “an impetus for change.”

He added that he wants to continue to “help [participants and host advisors] become good facilitators of cross-cultural interaction.”

This past summer, Sun estimated that IO had around 100 participants, which is lower than the average of 130, but that there were a larger proportion of American students. Sun described this year’s group as “smaller” but “with a stronger bond.”

Himes, who served in the U.S. Peace Corps from 2008-2010, helped plan the pre-orientation program last year, along with Sun. Himes explained that he was very busy with transitioning into this new position last summer.

“[Sun] had to do a lot more than she should have,” Himes said.

Sun added that her duties included video marketing and talking to vendors — tasks which required working very closely with the Office for Campus Life Director, Joe Golia.

“I selected and helped train the host advisors,” Sun said.

Sun said that participants in last year’s group especially enjoyed the scavenger hunt, dubbed the “Amazing Race.”
portion of the program. She explained that the participants had to demonstrate leadership skills during this activity and added that this part of the program will remain unchanged in GO.

“Freshman year, I didn’t realize how important [the program] was to me,” Sun said.

She added that she now recognizes the program as a key part of her Tufts experience.

Looking forward, Kulwicki said that she is “ready to do it again,” and that “people find lifetime friends [in the program].”

“We have a strong team going into next year,” Kulwicki said.