

Buddies Without Borders Pairs International and American Students

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For international students, there's more to adjusting to college life than getting to know their roommate or learning their way around campus. Fitting in—making friends, having plans for Saturday night—can be a unique challenge. There's the cultural challenge; the language.

In 2013, colleagues from the Office of International Students and Scholars, the ESL Institute, and Residential Life came together to help smooth the way for students from other countries, and Buddies without Borders was born. The new organization matches American students with international students, one on one, to make their acclimation to UNH a little bit easier.

Buddies are paired based on similar interests, and spend time doing such things as playing sports, learning how to cook each other's favorite foods, listening to music, watching movies, going for coffee, and just hanging out.

During the spring semester 2013, Buddies without Borders connected 200 American and international students. In addition to the time the buddies spend together, the BWB staff holds monthly lunches that give students another chance to socialize.

"Being a part of this group creates a place where you can feel comfortable around people you might not get the chance to talk to because they are nervous that you will not be able to understand their accents. It is a place where everyone's walls are down and you get to see the person for who they are," says Sarah Malagodi, a senior from Methuen, Mass. Her buddy, Thanh Dinh, is from Vietnam.

"Buddies without Borders has been an amazing experience for me," Malagodi says. "Thanh is an amazing person and has such an awesome story. He has taught me about his culture and upbringing. We grab lunch, talk around the dorm and enjoy each other's company as much as we can with our busy schedules. We even tried Zumba for the first time together. That was a very interesting experience."

Sambid Wasti, a graduate student from Nepal, had a buddy last year. This year, he was able to be matched with someone again, giving him another perspective, and another friend.

"I changed my buddy so that I would make a new friend," Wasti says. "I usually meet my buddy in a coffee shop or somewhere to get lunch. We talk about various stuff, including our school life and personal life. This helps us learn about the each other and about the different culture we come from."

And the monthly meetings offer an even broader community experience, he says. Malagodi agrees.

"I did not just meet one buddy; I have met many from the meetings we have every month. It gives me time to meet people from different countries. I have never been out of the country and it is eye opening to hear about different cultures, and that makes me think about where I would like to travel one day," she says.

The organizers of Buddies without Borders are equally pleased with the program's success and the relationships it has helped foster.

“The program is a great opportunity for international and American students to integrate, become friends, learn about different cultures and languages, as well as become more a part of the UNH community,” says Sara Miller of the Office of International Students and Scholars.

Information on the monthly meetings and how to participate can be [read here](#).

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INCLUSION



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