**Student Organization Spotlight:**

**International Student Organization Brings Cultural Awareness to Metro**

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The International Student Organization (ISO) is a student group that strives to bring cultural and international awareness to our campus and its members. The students that make up this organization work hard to advocate diversity and promote a variety of cultural programs for students—both on and off campus. “ISO has a false image that it only supports international students, which causes many students to be discouraged to join [our organization],” said Tina Martinez, ISO’s student president. However, what most students don’t realize is that ISO encourages students and alumni from all walks of life to attend events and make a difference. “ISO supports all students, staff, faculty, and alumni that have an interest in bringing about awareness,” said Martinez.

ISO’s other focus is to help bridge the gap between incoming international students and Metro. They give these students the links and resources they need to get settled into their new “home away from home.” “[ISO] strives to build connections with international and local students,” said Martinez. “[We] work closely with the international student services director and advisor, to provide memorable experiences to the … international students through our Welcome Night and other programs,” she added.

It is not surprising that the students who make up ISO take their job of welcoming students from different cultures and countries very seriously. They are a cornerstone resource for students who are looking for help from their neighbors, and Welcome Night is just one of many ways they work to extend their help and friendship to others. “[We] organize many events that are beneficial to staff, faculty, and students,” said Martinez. They host International Game and Movie Night, for example, which helps break the ice between new and returning students in a safe, fun setting. Some of their other hosted activities are more serious. “One of [our] more successful events … is the International Connection Series, a three part series, where student volunteers from a certain region are asked questions about their experiences between their home country and the U.S.” Students, staff and faculty often attend this event (which will be held later this year) because it promotes cultural awareness and attempts to debunk common cultural stereotypes between U.S. students and international students.

At its very core, ISO is a group that supports Metro’s international students. But, it doesn’t stop there. It digs deeper into the social and cultural issues that affect our communities and strives to provide our campus with cultural enrichment. “The reason I joined ISO is because of how diverse the organization is as a whole. It is a place where every member can get cultural and educational experience,” said Azamat, one of the students involved with ISO. “ISO is a place where students can express themselves, in all types of ways,” Martinez added.

Students interested in ISO and its mission are invited to attend any and all events and meetings (which are posted on their OrgSync page). If volunteering is more your style, ISO is always looking for students to help with event planning and setup. ISO is currently planning some fun events for the fall semester, so keep an eye open!

For more information on this student org, contact Tina Martinez at xl2071at@metrostate.edu or visit the advisor’s office on the Saint Paul Campus, Founders Hall Room 112.