

ESL students share culture and common ground

The ESL club hopes to help students make an easier transition into a new culture

By Aleza Goldsmith
Features Editor

College life is challenging enough without the added pressure caused by the limitations of speaking a foreign language. Yet, over 300 students in the English as a Second Language program at UNLV face this barrier every day.

Many ESL students, coming from over 50 different countries, are apprehensive about getting involved with campus activities because they cannot hold a conversation in English yet. Meanwhile, others experience extreme culture shock.

"This culture in America is very different than ours. Not better or worse. Just different," said Arturo Aguirre, a senior majoring in communications.

Aguirre is the president and one of the founding members of the ESL club. He started the club in order to provide ESL students with the security of other students with cultural similarities.

"We want to help (ESL students) overcome their culture shock," he said. "I experienced it myself. I tried to join some clubs but my English level wasn't high enough to get along with regular students."

"Sometimes we feel like we are alone and put aside from the university," added Aguirre.



ESL club members relaxing after a long hike up Bridge Mountain

Photo: Courtesy of the ESL club

His ultimate goal is to integrate the students in the ESL program into the university, by helping them make an easier transition into a new culture.

"We are sort of a university within the university," he explained. "But we want to break this shell, spread our students throughout the university and help them to overcome their fear."

The ESL club was formed in the Fall '96 semester, but has just been recognized as a UNLV club.

"We submitted all the requirements to be recognized as soon as we started the club and everything was fine but somehow we never got a response," explained Aguirre.

After submitting two constitu-

tions and leaving several messages Aguirre said the group began to feel very down.

"I heard from a friend that they thought there was no meaning for this club," he continued. "So, I decided we should start fighting until we were recognized."

Finally they have become a recognized organization. "Now we are a part of the university," Aguirre concluded.

Yvonne Bondzio, a senior ESL student pre-majoring in communications, can identify with the meaning of the ESL club. "I know how difficult it is to move to a new country," she said. "Not only do you go through a culture shock, but you... don't know anyone."

Although Bondzio admits she

speaks English better than most foreign students, she said she still feels more comfortable around them, because there is a common ground.

Members of the ESL club hike together, have parties, and go to the movies, just like any other social club. But at the same time, the

members are given the opportunity to practice speaking English.

"We try to organize activities that involve cultural things in order to integrate international students into the culture here in Las Vegas," said Bondzio.

Last Saturday the club went hiking at Bridge Mountain.

Jo Chou, an ESL student, was one of the 20 members who went on the trip.

"When I finish my classes I just go home," said Chou. "Every weekend I just watch TV and talk to my friends in Chinese... I don't have family here. Sometimes it's very lonely. But last Saturday we went hiking—it's a different experience."

Chou explained it is difficult to find time to do things like hike in her country, and said that she welcomes experiences such as this one.

The ESL club is also involved in community service projects. Last Christmas they collected over 200 toys to donate to economically-disadvantaged children. Tomorrow, they will be meeting with a Catholic charity to discuss what they can do as an organization to help out.

"It's an opportunity to find a little community," Bondzio concluded. "Come join us, it's a lot of fun."

For more information about the ESL club call 895-3925.

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—Arturo Aguirre,
communications major

Student health care cure

The Student Health Center is a low cost health care alternative

By Angie Douglas
Staff Features Writer

Are you feeling too sick to go to your classes? If so, the UNLV Student Health Center probably has a cure!

Composed of a team of physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses and support staff, the non-profit operation provides services similar to those of a family practitioner. The difference here is the cost.

"For your 20 bucks, you get a lot," said Ken Tomory, business coordinator at the health center.

According to Tomory, the center caters to students, faculty and

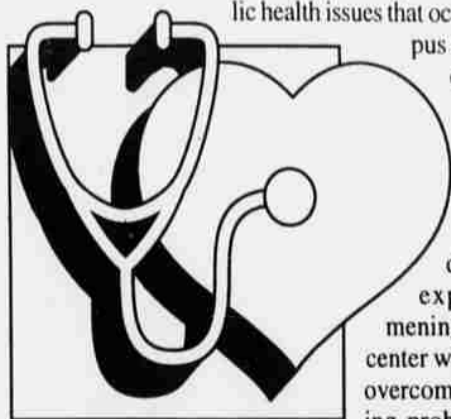
almost anyone who is affiliated with the UNLV campus. "We've gone from a four room exam clinic, to 10 rooms and an observation area with two beds", said Tomory of the growth that the center has undergone since he began working there in 1989.

"The health center's mission is to fulfill three functions," said Lori Winchell, director of the Student Health Center. "To offer health care, to provide students with Education, and to respond to the public health issues that occur on campus such as disease outbreaks."

Last year students living in the dorms were exposed to meningitis and the center was at hand to overcome the resulting problems. Also,

the center was able to take measures to prevent the disease from spreading throughout the university.

Among the staff is Health Educator, Bridget Monahan. She



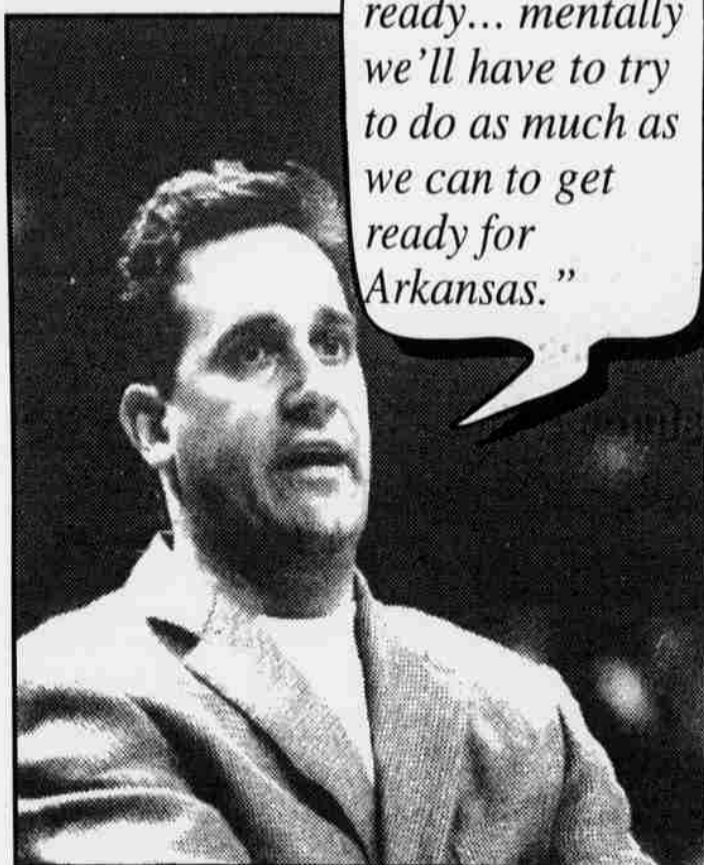
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THE REBEL YELL Campus Quote

Editor's note:
This week's "Campus Quote" was taken from "Runnin' Rebels one step away from New York" an article appearing in the March 18, 1997 edition of The Rebel Yell.

Campus Quote:

Bill Bayno,
Runnin' Rebels head coach said about the Wednesday game against Kansas.



"We're physically ready... mentally we'll have to try to do as much as we can to get ready for Arkansas."