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## 02/24/1989 - Chen Makes International Students Feel At Home

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EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
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news

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CHEN MAKES EASTERN'S INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FEEL AT HOME

CHARLESTON, IL.--Coordinating the recent visit by a Japanese educator and researcher to Eastern Illinois University is just one of the milestones in Brigitte Chen's 11th year as Eastern's international student adviser.

Chen met with Masanori Murakami, assistant professor of English and school affairs representative from Senzoku Gakuen Junior College in Kawasakishi, a suburb of Tokyo, and Mitsuaki Matsuo, senior researcher in the international division of the institute for Social Engineering, Inc., who have been exploring a student-faculty exchange with Eastern.

Although Chen serves as a liaison between Eastern and administrators and educators from abroad, the main thrust of her job centers around providing support services to international students who come to Eastern to study.

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Chen said the International Student Services Office at Eastern serves as a central support unit for international students. Chen and her staff familiarize the students with the American education system and do what they can to make their experience at Eastern successful.

They also work closely with academic advisers and counseling staff, provide an orientation program for new students and initiate relationships with local host families, who help familiarize the students with the Charleston community.

Chen's achievements as Eastern's international student adviser have won high praise from the University and the students she serves. When the Charleston Rotary Club hosted the recent international tea, Rotary Club President and Eastern Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs and Director of Summer School Dr. Charles Switzer, said, "Mrs. Chen has done an excellent job of planning activities for international students. Participation in these activities makes the students feel like they are a part of the community and gives them a chance to make new friends."

Eastern Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Glenn Williams echoed Switzer's comments. "We are very pleased to have the number of international students on campus and to have an adviser, although half-time, to assist with problems. In the future, we hope to expand the number of students and services."

Overall response from the students to the program is exemplified by Marilyn Lin of the People's Republic of China, a graduate student in political science and president of the Chinese Association of Scholars and Students at Eastern.

Chen and her staff have made Eastern a home away from home. They have assisted us in many aspects of our educational experience from learning about registration to finding housing. They constantly keep us informed about immigration laws and try to find solutions to problems if they arise," Lin said.

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Chen, designated school official for immigration matters, works as a liaison between Eastern and the U.S. Immigration Service and keeps abreast of changes in immigration laws.

She said, "It is the responsibility of the student to comply with U.S. immigration laws. I do keep the students informed and updated about these regulations.

"Occasionally, a person will find himself/herself in violation of his/her visa status for one reason or another. Of course, I would prefer to prevent such situations for the student's sake. But, if there is a problem, we will work with the student to get him/her back into good standing with the immigration service. That is not always easy because we are dealing with a strict set of rules set by the U.S. government."

Despite the difficulty of obtaining visas and other hurdles an applicant needs to overcome, Chen is pleased at the steady enrollment of international students at Eastern.

This semester, Eastern has 20 Malaysian students--the largest representation in a long time. The People's Republic of China, Taiwan and Canada are also well represented. "I am really pleased with the quality of students we have," Chen said.

"Many international students come to Eastern as a result of personal recommendations from family, friends or Eastern representatives who travel abroad. I think this speaks very well of the University."

The students say it is the personal attention they get from Eastern faculty, staff and students and the University community, as well as Eastern's learning environment and quality programs, that make their college experience worthwhile, she added.