Coffee House to Brew Talk

By Noelle Selb
Staff Writer

It is a new brew. Slated to open Dec. 4, the EMU coffee shop is expected "to be a place where the EMU community gathers," said Barbara Rowan, Lilly Project director.

The coffee house will be located in the basement of the Old Gym portion of the Old Gym portion of the Commons. Formerly an old locker room and laundry/storage space, Physical Plant and work-study students have labored since last summer for its grand opening.

The space is on loan from the Theater, Art and Communications departments. The coffee shop is a temporary, four to five year project. Funding for the coffee shop comes from the $2 million Lilly Grant that EMU received last year. It is one of 13 projects funded by the grant.

"The part of the grant that this comes out of is the campus dialogue piece of the Lilly Grant," said Rowan. "The goals that we have would be for the faculty, staff and students to use this space for conversation. It's purpose is to promote campus dialogue to promote conversation on whatever issues we need to talk about," Rowan said.

"The coffee house will provide a new venue for interaction on campus," said Harry Hart, director of University Accords. "There's not many places where there's a place to go to sit and talk with your friends and converse, or even meet a professor for coffee to continue a dialogue."

The coffee shop will not only be a meeting place for students and their friends, but for students and professors as well. It is based on the model used in Japan where students and teachers gather weekly to discuss issues as if they are professors "were just amazing" during her first-year difficulties. She agrees that the formation of social groups based on ethnicity is "natural," though Uehira has already completed IEP; he said he seeks out fellow Asian students because "it's hard for me to explain my emotional problems in English."

Nevertheless, Ameka and his Japanese roommate, Kou Uchita agree that the formation of social groups based on ethnicity is "natural," though Uehira has already completed IEP; he said he seeks out fellow Asian students because "it's hard for me to explain my emotional problems in English."

Lauren Darby, a first-year student from the Bahamas, says that her professors "were just amazing" during her first-year difficulties. She feels comfortable with the faculty at EMU because of their openness and broad experiences.

One of the most obvious obstacles international students face is learning English. As a Japanese student in the Intensive English Program, Nozomi Asoi has difficulty both finding words to express herself and understanding peers who "speak too fast." Linda Gragge, director of the Academic Support Center, says a significant number of international students take advantage of the writing tutors' assistance when completing papers for class. Yet in overall academic ability, international students generally excel and work hard to stay on top of course material. "Very few international students are lagging behind in their classes," said first-year student Frank Anka from Kenya, adding that "they need to be recognized for the work they do."

What goes on outside the classroom can make or break one's college experience. Ameka has observed a certain degree of racial bias on campus. When a mixed group of students are grouped together for the first time, at lunch for example, he says the American students often converse more readily with light-skinned international students than with dark-skinned ones.

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