International Insight
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International Athletes
Enriching Diversity and Competitive Edge

Working to Effect Change in Medellín • How an Academic Advisor became the “Tokyo Guy”
Vice President of Alumni Relations Ken Lawrence, Jr., meets his TemPAL Kiwan Kim for lunch on Temple’s campus.

By Lisa Z. Meritz

Vice President of Alumni Relations Kenneth E. Lawrence, Jr. (College of Liberal Arts ’95) loves Temple and football, but even more he loves sharing his passion for his alma mater, and its sports teams, with his TemPAL Kiwan Kim.

Kiwan, an exchange student from Soongsil University in Seoul, is at Temple studying business and economics. To prepare for his studies in the U.S., he crammed about football, making him the perfect TemPAL for Lawrence.

This year, when Lawrence’s responsibilities shifted from leading Government, Community and Public Affairs to heading up Alumni Relations, he quickly requested a TemPAL. He wanted to become part of this program that his office manages.

“1 requested someone from Korea because I felt synergy there, since I recently accompanied the President on his very successful South Korea trip,” said Lawrence.

The TemPALS Program pairs international students with Temple alumni, who serve as personal ambassadors to students who are new to the U.S. As ambassadors, alumni guide students’ American, Philadelphian and Temple experience. The Office of International Affairs recruits the students. Word-of-mouth praise from both the international student and alumnus sides of the program makes recruitment easy.

“My friends’ friend who participated in TemPALS last year said, ‘The program is a great opportunity to enjoy life in Philadelphia with a mentor,’ so I joined,” said Kim.

“When I first came, I had no friends or family here. Phil used to take us out on Saturdays and Sundays. Through him I met a lot of other international students, including my boyfriend. And I feel very happy my TemPAL invited me to Thanksgiving and Christmas.”

Lixin Zheng (CST Ph.D. ’20)
Her TemPAL: Phil Sheau (MPA ’80)
This year, 51 alumni (several alumni are serving as TemPALS to more than one student) and 78 international students are participating.

“It really helps international students get through the difficult adjustment when they first come here,” said Erika Clemons, director for Global Programs in the Office of International Affairs, the office that oversees the student side of the program.

Benefits of Belonging

For the alumni who serve as TemPALS, the benefits are myriad. “For me, particularly introducing Kiwan to my family sparked some good conversation. My kids (age 11 and 14) are now starting to ask, ‘Can we go overseas when we go to college?’” said Ken after hosting Kiwan along with his family at a Temple football game.

The good match between Kim and Lawrence is no accident. “If you tell us you are interested in movies and we have a film student, that’s who we’re going to try to match you with,” said Alumni Volunteer Coordinator Michelle Nicoletto.

Nicoletto explained that TemPALS originally matched students to alumni who were age 50 or older, but now the program is open to alumni of all ages. One such young alumna is Kaitlyn Sutton, who, like Lawrence, is a Temple employee.

“It’s about honing in on why I love Temple and making sure that anyone, whether it be an international student or a student from a half-hour away, gets the same experience that I got,” said Kaitlyn, a digital marketing specialist at Temple.

“We mostly talk about food. I love food,” said Sutton explaining how she took her two TemPALS, Vietnamese student Hoa Nguyen (School of Media and Communication ’19) and Chinese exchange student Jinghua Feng, to Shake Shack, an American experience they won’t forget.

Along with fun, says Nguyen, “The program is helping me to adjust. I have a lot of friends who study elsewhere and they are not really engaged in American culture. They stay with Vietnamese friends in the dorm and in classes. They have no chance to reach out or to be involved in American culture.”

And reaching out to American culture and learning about new cultures is what TemPALS is all about.

From left to right: Hoa Nguyen (SMC ’19), Anh Van Tran (Fox ’19), Kaitlyn Sutton (SMC ’14), and Jinghua Feng (Exchange student: Zhejiang Normal University) enjoying a very “American” meal of burgers and fries at Philadelphia’s Center City Shake Shack.

“Knowing that I can create a personal connection with a Temple alumna is a great relief. My TemPAL Louise is a very kind, generous and caring person who has made sure that I know I can count on her.”

Noemi Tavitian
University of East Anglia
Romanian Exchange Student
Her TemPAL: Louise Naklicki (SMC ’80)

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