

Some seek growth, others want cuts; mixed support for:

By LINC MANN
Of the Emerald

During the late sixties and early seventies, America's colleges and universities began feeling pressure to offer ethnic studies programs; many universities succumbed to the pressure.

But now the turmoil of that time has somewhat died down, and agitation for minority rights is less noticeable and not as frequent. Lewis Merrick, the University's coordinator of programs for special students, does not believe the enthusiasm for ethnic studies has died down as a result. But he says there are many things wrong with ethnic studies in general.

Merrick said that many minority students come to universities seeking traditional educations, and that they shy away from ethnic studies because "they have been brainwashed into thinking that ethnic studies is not job-related." But the problem goes much deeper than that.

The courses in most ethnic studies programs, said Merrick, explore the problems and histories of different minority groups from a European point of view.

Merrick says he just doesn't see much value in the programs. "I think most ethnic studies programs are interesting and quite often entertaining," said Merrick, "but are not grounded in the philosophy and history of the years of cultural development of the ethnic groups. I don't like most of them. I find them entertaining, but rootless."

Edwin Coleman, a teacher in

the ethnic studies program at the University, is very enthusiastic about the program, which was begun in 1972. "I think enthusiasm for the courses has increased to a certain degree," said Coleman.

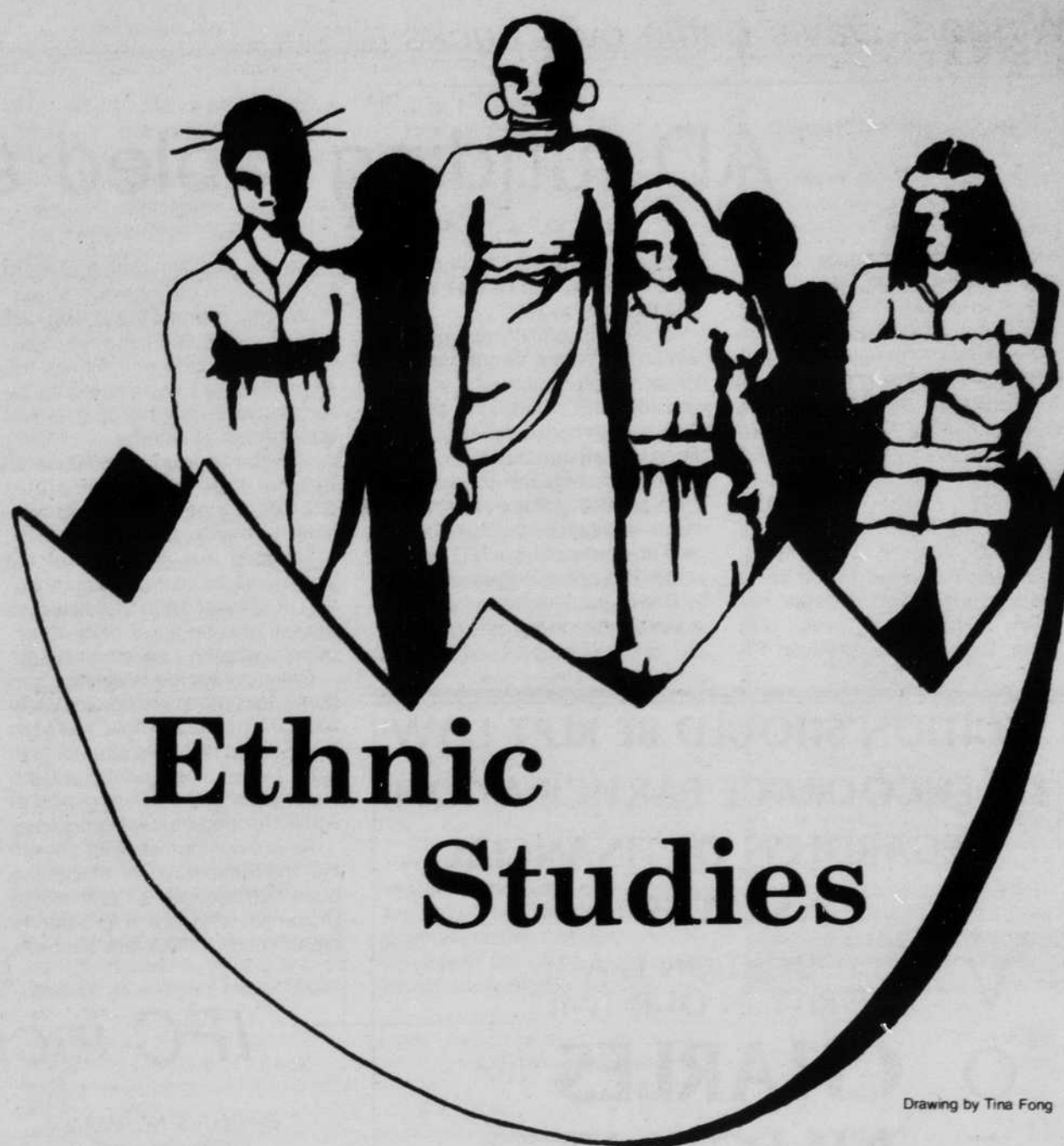
But if enthusiasm has increased, enrollment in the courses isn't any indication. Coleman said the enrollment has stayed about the same since the program began. In fact, this term enrollment took a heavy dip. Coleman attributes this to the fact that students traditionally take a lighter study load in the spring.

Currently, students at the University can only receive a "certificate" in ethnic studies. The certificate is not a degree, but is equivalent to minoring in a field of study. To earn the certificate, students have to pass the program's core courses, (ES 101, 102, 103) and complete at least 21 hours of related courses in the College of Liberal Arts.

Coleman said that since the program began in 1972 only three or four students have earned certificates in ethnic studies.

Only a small percentage of students in the program, said Coleman, are members of the ethnic groups being studied. "My classes are 85 to 90 per cent white students, because we run out of minority students."

The faculty involved with ethnic studies is also predominantly white. In fact, there are only seven black faculty members at the University, and only two of those are full professors. Among the



graduate teaching fellows there are no Chicanos or Native Americans, and only one Asian.

The original director of the program, George Mills, died in 1975. A new director has not yet been appointed, but Coleman said that in about two weeks a list of candidates for the job will be submitted to John Baldwin, dean of the College of Liberal Arts.

Coleman is very optimistic about the future of ethnic studies at Oregon. He hopes that the program will be enlarged so that the University will eventually be able to grant degrees in ethnic studies.

But if Coleman is optimistic about the program, there are others at Oregon who are more critical of it. One is Dennis DeGross, the executive secretary of the Oregon Indian Higher Education Association and director of the University's Native American Program.

DeGross thinks that the University's ethnic studies department should not be expanded. "I hope to God that it's not made into a major department," he said. "It should be terminated."

The role of the ethnic studies department, said DeGross, should be to get other departments to teach ethnic studies courses. "You shouldn't teach history of black culture in an ethnic studies department," he said. "You should teach that in the history department, where history is taught."

DeGross said the ethnic studies program at Oregon exists so that other departments "do not have to deal with people of color." He said

that as long as the department exists, other departments "don't have to do anything in terms of pluralizing their curriculum."

The courses that an expanded ethnic studies program would offer, said DeGross, should be spread out among the departments that already exist. But he believes that the University should terminate rather than improve the program. "I think the whole concept of an ethnic studies department is an abomination."

Mexican study still open

An opportunity for students to study in Mexico, announced earlier this year, still has several vacancies, according to director David Hudson.

The program spans four weeks of study at Cuauhnahuac, a specialized language school in Cuernavaca, Mexico. The instruction offered is intensive, says Hudson, and excursions and conversation hours are also part of the curriculum. Grades are assigned by the director of the program, based on information from Cuauhnahuac and a personal evaluation.

The basic program, for which the student earns six undergraduate credit hours, lasts from July 1 to August 1, excluding

travel time. Students wishing to stay longer can earn nine hours credit for six weeks and 12 hours credit for eight weeks.

"A student needs to have successfully completed one year of college Spanish and, if he wants University credit, he must be enrolled in the University's summer session," says Hudson.

Total cost for the four-week program, including transportation, tuition, and room and board, approaches \$800. Scholarships are available from the Romance Languages department and Cuauhnahuac.

Further information can be obtained from Hudson in the Romance Languages department, 686-4021.



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