

Director of International Student Services

Ghent retires after 24 years of service

By SANDI McDONOUGH
Of the Emerald

For the past 24 years, Kenneth Ghent, math professor, has played an important role in the lives of hundreds of students. He's director of the International Student Services and has held that post from 1952 until his retirement this month.

From his office in Oregon Hall, Ghent guides the admission and subsequent academic progress of the University's foreign students. That means he's responsible for more than 700 students this year, and in the past that number has climbed beyond 1,000. For Ghent, the high number of foreign students means personal achievement — it's increased 10 times since he took the job.

Part of the increase in foreign student population can be attributed to action by the Oregon Legislature, Ghent says. After World War II, legislation was passed granting partial tuition scholarships to foreign students studying in Oregon. The reduction in costs made Oregon an attractive place for foreign students to study, Ghent explains.

From 1971 to 1973, however, the University faced a drop in the foreign student population because the legislature discontinued the partial tuition scholarships.

"They thought it was necessary for the economy," Ghent explains. "We finally convinced them that foreign students bring money into the state with them, so it's to our advantage to give them the scholarships." When the tuition

scholarships were reinstated, the number of foreign students at the University again began to climb.

Besides the reduction in costs, Ghent says the University's academic stature has attracted many of its foreign students. At the same time the tuition scholarships were instituted, the University expanded its degree program, offering science as well as liberal arts degrees, Ghent says. The wider range of academics made it possible for more foreign students to study in Oregon.

The increase in foreign students since 1952 has been gradual, Ghent says, but almost every year the foreign student enrollment has gone up at a faster rate than regular University enrollment. That phenomenon is even more interesting considering that Ghent's office has never actively recruited students.

"We've depended on word-of-mouth," Ghent says. "Students pass the information about Oregon on to friends in their own countries."

"For instance, we first had two Australians in 1954. They sent word to friends in Australia. Then those students told friends and now we have 51 Australian students."

Ghent's office has helped all those foreign students secure their visas and become situated in the United States. Interest isn't restricted only to the students' academic progress. Ghent says the office tries to ensure the students personal as well as academic well being. Since he became

director, the office has provided personal counseling to the students who seek it.

Another helpful program, Ghent says, is the friendship-family service, which he instituted. In that program, students are assigned to families in the Eugene area which provide them with a "home" base.

"That program has been very successful," Ghent says. "Some of our families keep in touch with the students for many years after their stay in the United States. We have one lady who's still writing to her friendship-family student from 20 years ago. The student was in the United States recently and she visited the lady."

Another program Ghent says he's tried to push is the fraternity-sorority room-and-board scholarships for foreign students. The number of participants in that program has decreased in recent years though, as the Greek population has decreased. But Ghent says most students who have been able to participate in the Greek program have been happy.

Ghent's understanding for foreign students' problems goes beyond the normal advisor role. He was a foreign student himself in the 1930s when, as a Canadian, he studied at the University of Chicago. In the early 1960s, he moved to Dacca (now Bangladesh) where he lectured at a university. He has also traveled extensively — and has been able to visit many



Ken Ghent

of his former foreign students in their own countries.

"I've enjoyed this job," Ghent says. "I've come in contact with a great group of people. And they're usually superior students. They have to be if they're going to make it studying in a foreign country."

Ghent's retirement from International Student Services becomes effective June 30. He's taking summer and fall terms off, then is returning in winter term, 1977 to teach math. He has spent half his time teaching math and half directing International Student Services.

Tom Mills, assistant director of International Student Services, will replace Ghent upon his retirement. Mills' replacement has not yet been named.

Forum counters confab

As an alternative to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlement taking place in Vancouver, British Columbia, a consortium of groups and individuals have initiated a "people's" forum.

The "Habitat Forum," which runs through June 11, focuses on building non-exploitive methods for developing resources of non-

industrialized countries without destroying native cultures.

The "Habitat Forum" is meeting in the abandoned hangars of a seaplane base. The hangars were donated by the Canadian government and adapted as exposition halls by 2,000 persons who came to clean and prepare for the conference.

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