

Center helps disadvantaged students cope

By KATHY CRAFT
Of the Emerald

"We don't deal with our students in a formal, didactic fashion. We give them feedback, we give them rewards and we help change their heads so they can go other places and do well."

So says Mitch Melson, a clinical psychologist at the University's Center for Self Development (CSD), a federally-funded program designed to help financially and culturally disadvantaged students cope with academic life at Oregon.

dial," for although they don't satisfy University group requirements, they are offered for credit. To maximize personal attention, classes generally are limited to 15 students, with one instructor and one instructional aide. The center also offers "a variety of skill-oriented workshops," Melson adds.

CSD also provides tutors for its students. Currently the center employs 85 tutors (they receive two to four credits through the curriculum and instruction division of the College of Education) to help

throughout the University and the community," he explains. "We help them deal with the financial aid office, the scholastic deficiency committee, really any area they need help with."

All CSD services are free to students accepted into the program. Entrance is determined primarily according to financial, educational and cultural background; handicapped students are also eligible. Students are accepted for one academic year at a time, and most, explains Melson, are freshmen and sophomores. "We work with older students too," says Melson, "but generally if they've gotten that far they'll probably make it anyway."

Melson emphasizes the CSD program is not termed a minority program, although "50 per cent of our students are from the minority ranks. But many of our students are low-income whites as well," he points out.

The target population for the CSD program is 420 students. Presently the center is serving approximately 50 students, but Melson predicts that after the first midterm examinations, the number of CSD students will begin rising rapidly.

CSD also administers a veterans tutorial program, separate from its other services. "Veterans are provided with \$700 by the government to hire tutors," he explains. "We do all the paperwork for them and set them up with tutors — who are paid." (CSD receives no reimbursement for this service.)

The latest project at CSD is the multi-ethnic encounter group the staff is currently organizing. The group, which is open to all CSD students and will meet for six to eight weeks, is designed to help

students from different cultural backgrounds meet with one another and overcome the culture shock and problems they frequently experience at the University.

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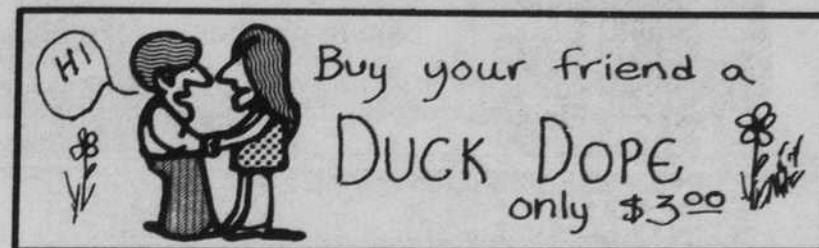
According to Melson, CSD students have considerable "academic potential," but because of their backgrounds need "some special attention" to succeed at their studies at the University.

At CSD, that "special attention" takes three basic forms — instruction, tutoring and counseling.

On the instructional level, CSD offers courses primarily aimed at improving communication skills — reading, writing and speaking. Melson emphasizes, however, that "these courses aren't reme-

CSD students with special problem areas.

Counseling is also provided for CSD students who desire it. "This is the first year we're offering counseling on a formal basis," Melson says. "Although it's not really our business — we're basically an academic program — we offer it because solving personal problems often enhances a student's ability to do well at the University." Counselors also provide referrals for CSD students to services both on and off campus, according to Melson. "We act as advocates for our students



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