

# Peer counseling attacks problems

By MELODY WARD  
Of the Emerald

Nobody can help a student get through this University better than another student, says Richard Francisco of the University Counseling Center.

Francisco and Jane Farrand DeGidio, Student Services, are implementing a paraprofessional program that will allow students the chance to work in several administrative areas and alleviate understaffing due to budget cuts.

"It's been a failure on campuses for a long time to give students responsibility," Francisco says. "The program can provide advisers with some relief. It's practical experience and it's also a break from the books."

Most students involved in the program have received training in the Student Helping Skills course taught by DeGidio and Francisco.

"We figure if we can get students trained, it will make the services a lot more professional," DeGidio says.

Student Helping Skills will be offered again fall term so those students involved will have two terms to put their skills into use by doing a practicum project within the paraprofessional program.

"We want to build in steps that people can take throughout the program, so that they have career ladders," DeGidio explains. "We're constantly making people think about what they want to do in the end and think about what kind of experiences can be built in to make that goal possible."

Francisco believes "trained student counselors out where students are" prevent serious psychological problems from occurring.

"Friends sometimes give sort of bad advice," he observes. "It's hard for them to be objective. But students can empathize more in many cases because they are students."

Francisco says although the program is just starting, it is expected to become a major part of outreach efforts by the counseling center.

"I figure that if students can help each other, it's very good preventative psychology," he adds.

Students involved with the counseling center are also receiving training in the use of biofeedback equipment.

"Biofeedback has been proven very useful for helping people relax," Francisco explains. "I'm exploring possible uses of having paraprofessionals in counseling to be biofeedback technicians."

Francisco thinks many students would stay at

the University if they possessed the necessary "survival techniques," which are acquired through experience.

"Freshmen who aren't equipped with them get really frustrated," he says. "I really believe that if students had a satisfying experience here their freshman year, less would leave."

"We want to make it a more friendly experience," DeGidio says. Student Services is presently taking applications for all the programs.

Paraprofessionals will participate in a peer advising program in the fall and a student host program for Early Orientation and Registration (EORP). Student services is also planning a similar program for older students who are returning to the University after establishing families or working at careers.

Other assignments handled by paraprofessionals include helping minority students refine job placement skills, revising the University time schedule and conducting a study of why freshmen drop out of the University.

While most paraprofessionals will get practicum credit, some will receive a stipend (about \$100) from the office for which they work, according to Robert Bowlin, Dean of Students.

Bowlin says the program is a way of creatively using existing resources to cope with a "University budget crisis."

DeGidio says all paraprofessionals will not be limited to administrative work. "Some coordinate other services, like Maria Rojo, coordinator of minority placement for the Career Planning and Placement Center," she explains.

One of the most critical aspects of establishing the paraprofessional program, Francisco says, is "building readiness" for it in the departments and campus offices.

"Ideally, I'd like to see paraprofessionals working in every large department," he says. "But in order to take on a paraprofessional, you have to be willing to provide some supervision. The students are quite capable, but they do need training."

Before students actually go to work in an office, they receive basic orientation in the Student Helping Skills course, and more focused training. They also spend time observing the work situation and asking questions.

"I think the program will make the University a more humane place to be," Francisco says. "When you have problems, it's nice to know there's a body there listening."



Photos by Erich Boekelheide

Jane Degidio and Richard Francisco of the University Counseling Center are directing a new paraprofessional program aimed at offering students experience in the areas of administration and counseling. Biofeedback and peer counseling are among the methods employed to help students survive the University experience. The directors say the program will also be effective in lessening the burden for overworked faculty advisors.

Notice  
U. O. Bookstore's  
Annual Meeting

Thursday  
April 20, 1978

3:30 PM, 138 Gilbert Hall on the University  
of Oregon Campus the University of  
Oregon Bookstore, Inc. will have its  
Annual Meeting.

The purposes of the annual meeting shall be to receive annual reports of officers of the corporation, make such recommendations or proposals to the Board of Directors as the members may deem advisable and to receive nominations for membership on the Board of Directors.

## Nominations Open:

- One (1) freshman for a two (2) year term of office.
- Two (2) sophomores for two (2) year terms of office.
- One (1) student-at-large for a one (1) year term of office.
- One (1) graduate student for a one (1) year term of office.\*
- One (1) graduate student for a two (2) year term of office.\*\*
- One (1) faculty member for a two (2) year term of office.

\*Candidate receiving second highest number of votes cast for graduate student position.  
\*\*Candidate receiving highest number of votes cast for graduate student position.

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## Wesley retreat to be Saturday

A "spiritual life" retreat will be held at the Wesley Center Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and reservations can be made by calling the center at 344-4219.

The retreat is sponsored by the Campus Christian Ministry, as led by Cliff Custer, who has a retreat center at Rogue River and has conducted retreats on three continents.

Custer is a Presbyterian minister whose experience includes work with alcoholics, drug addicts and prison inmates.

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