

Dropouts cut red tape by cutting out school

By TOM WOLFE
Of the Emerald

Marginal academic commitment and the impersonality of the University are two major reasons that one-third of the entering class probably won't be back next term, say two University counselors.

Last year 900 freshman dropped out after their first term at the University.

Richard Francisco of the University Counseling Center says the "impersonality of the University" is one major cause.

"A student goes to Mac Court, gets shuffled about; goes through more hassles with financial aid and housing, takes a bunch of large courses and just gets blown away."

"If a person doesn't feel like someone, it's hard to stick around," adds Andy Thompson, also of the Counseling Center.

Francisco cites the grueling registration procedure as an example of the University failing to treat students as people.

Robert Bowlin, dean of students, confirms that complaints about the registration procedure head the list in surveys polling freshmen students who drop out during the term.

"Seniors eventually learn how to manipulate the system. They find the short-cuts, but for most of them it's too late," says Francisco. He suggests using more upper-class students in the registration process, maybe on a work-study basis.

Thompson agrees that impersonality causes dissatisfaction, and says factors other than institutional impersonality are also involved. "Everyone in Oregon is

Frustrated students turn a cold shoulder to college

superficially polite. They say 'See ya later,' 'Take care' and it doesn't mean a damn thing.

"Then, partly it's luck. If you by chance get some great professors and meet the right kinds of people, it can make all the difference."

Thompson also cites lack of commitment and parental pressures as reasons for students leaving the University.

"Parents will say 'Look, we'll support you if you go to school, but you'll get no money if you don't.' As a consequence students drop out because they haven't thought out the reasons why they're here.

"Dropping out isn't really a sin," Thompson adds. "There's no need for it to be a dramatic event. It could be a rational, clear decision."

Jane DeGidio, a counselor in student services, agrees: "A lot of students come into our office during the term to withdraw from the University and many for plain, simple reasons." But many more have vague, poorly thought out reasons for leaving, she says. And for them, there may be an alternative.

University rules require a visit to a counselor in student services for any student who decides to withdraw during the term.

"The interview may affect the life of the student and have serious implications for the institution as well," she says.

A case in point began in 1972 when interviews with withdrawing students revealed an increase in the number of women leaving the University because they were

pregnant.

The dean of students' office worked with the Campus YWCA, Planned Parenthood and the Student Health Center to talk with 200 dorm residents about family planning. In addition, family planning information was distributed from the Student Health Center.

As a result there was a subsequent decrease in the number of students withdrawing due to pregnancy.

Records kept by student services show that financial and personal concerns are major reasons for withdrawal from the University.

Scholastic deficiency accounts for only a few percent of several hundred students who withdraw each term.

"The weeding out process doesn't occur as much anymore," says Thompson. "There's not a significant difference in the grade point average or SAT scores of students who leave school and those who chose to stay."

His comment is an understatement when applied to women.

Traditionally, the enrolling freshman class has slightly more women than men, but women drop out faster and subsequent classes have 10 to 15 percent more men than women. That drop occurs in spite of the fact that women, on the average, do better scholastically than men.

"One reason for this may be that women are more concerned with social acceptance kinds of

things," says Thompson. For women, the four-year commitment to a University is often less clear.

A study group from students visiting the counseling center found men who visit the center more career-oriented than women.

Thompson says studies show that many of the students who withdraw eventually come back for more schooling.

Both Francisco and Thompson say the drop-out phenomenon is partly caused by too many students coming to the University for the wrong reasons or without thinking about the reasons.

"Our population should really be older, not 18, 19 and 20-year-olds who haven't decided what they want from the University," Thompson says.

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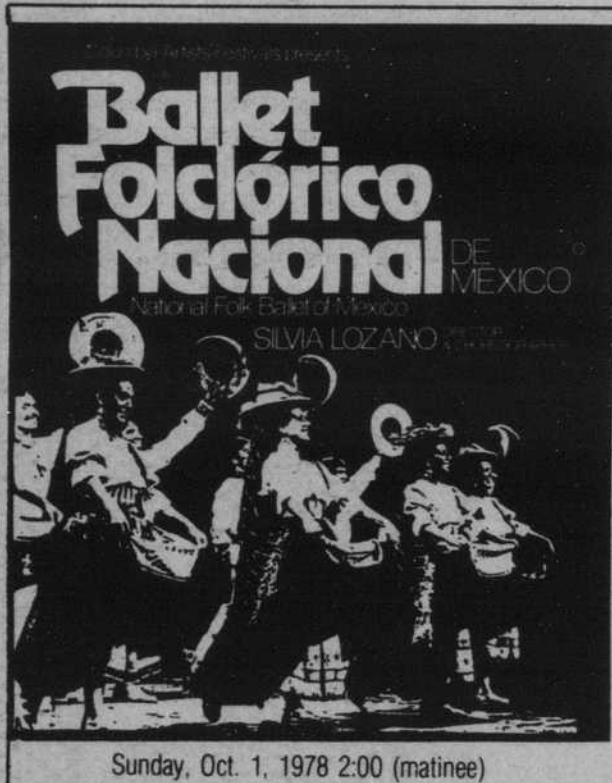
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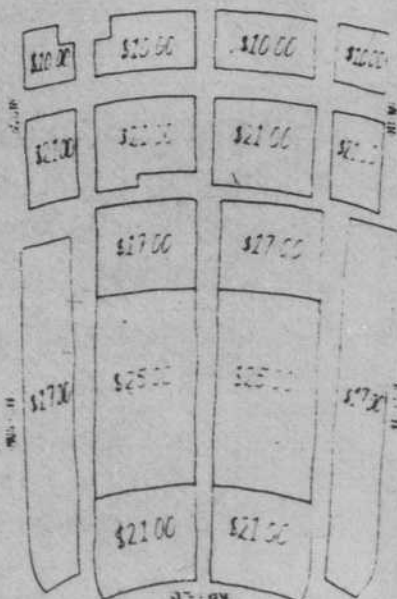
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