

SEARCH hires director

Miller opposes spoon-fed classes

By SALLY HODGKINSON
Of the Emerald

Alternative education is more than just rock and roll classes says the new director of SEARCH, the ASUO office of innovative and experimental education.

"These types of classes are important," says Wayne Miller, who started his new job this week. "SEARCH has great potential to enhance the process of learning by allowing more input, understanding and application of knowledge. Unfortunately that potential has never been tapped."

Miller says alternative education should allow students to apply the knowledge they learn in the classroom to non-academic situations or individual projects.

"Too many students are caught up in a lecture, mid-term and final set up," he says. "They're faced with a pot of gold (education) and only use a handful. They don't use very much of the energy and resources available."

The reason for this spoon-fed education is the structure of society, Miller says.

"Students are told throughout their lives that they can't learn on their own."

By the time you get to a University that idea has been reinforced so much that students have a hard time with independent reading and papers. They're used to someone telling them what to do."

One area Miller would like to see SEARCH tap into is the community.

"There's an incredible amount of resources out there," he says. "People in real life situations could be



Photo by Dennis Hickok

Wayne Miller, director of the SEARCH alternative education program, is striving to tap students' potential and apply it in everyday, non-classroom situations.

teaching students skills. For example, a banker could teach a course on banking. I think that kind of education is more valuable than structured education."

SEARCH is the only alternative education program in the nation that allows credits toward a degree through its classes, says Miller, adding that this is a major benefit to the University.

"The administration should take an active interest in innovative education," he says, explaining that this would draw more students to the campus and result in more money.

"Not only will the University benefit, but students, the community and teachers will too. They can't lose. So far we have added to the University but we haven't gotten anything back."

Miller, 23, graduated from the first public alternative high school in the nation when he was 16. Three years later he began researching neurophysiological effects on mental and physical disorders and was a member of the New York Academy of Scientists. He quit his job to travel in Europe and Africa, then came to Eugene. He was hired as assistant director of SEARCH last fall.

"I gave up a lot to come back to school," he says. "I was making \$15,000 a year when I was 19, now I can barely pay my rent. Sometimes I wonder what I'm doing here. It sounds like I'm nuts."

"But there's a part of me that really enjoys turning people on to possibilities of expanding their worlds. That's why I'm here."

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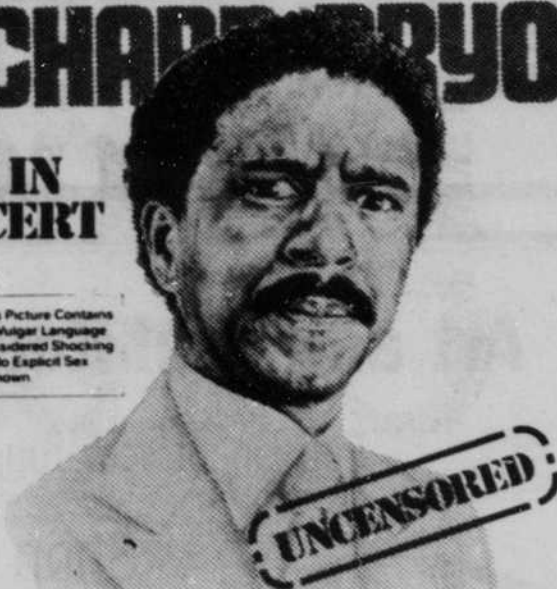
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