

# Students learn by advising others



Photo by Jimmi Harris

Peer counselors may not have all the answers, his student discovers, but it's always helpful to talk to someone in your major.

By NANCYANN LOFGREN  
Of the Emerald

Peer advising not only helps students learn the workings of the University, but it also teaches the student advisers valuable helping skills while providing on the job training.

Peer advising is part of the University's para-professional training program, offered through the office of Academic and Student Services, the psychology, sociology and gerontology departments.

Student advisers help other students with questions about University procedures, policies and departmental prerequisites. "Students are more sensitive to the little rules and regulations that faculty advisors might not know," says Marliis Strange, associate director of academic advising.

"We're able to relate to other students, if not better, than on a different level than faculty advisors," says Gail Thomas, a peer adviser from the Office of Academic and Student Services. Students can help other students effectively because they have dealt with the same sorts of things and are "closer to home," Thomas says. But peer advising doesn't supersede faculty advising, Strange says. Because faculty advisers don't have to spend time

explaining such things as what the pass no pass grading system means, whether a student can chew bubble gum in class, or how many P.E. courses are needed for group requirements, they can do a better job counseling students in their majors, Strange says.

"Peer advising bridges the transition from where students are coming from and where they are going," says Jane DiGidio, instructor and coordinator for the student para-professional program.

"People need a place to feel connected," say Karen Likens, a peer adviser in the psychology department. Sometimes departments can be a little cold and removed," she adds.

"I think we are very approachable. Sometimes students are afraid to approach faculty and we help them with that," she says. In the psychology department advisers help students plan a preliminary schedule and come up with questions about their academic program before going to their faculty advisor. "We try to be aware of the best ways to enhance the new students' experiences."

Peer advising has its limitations. The student advisers do not give in-depth counseling, financial aid counseling, or analyze transcripts. In situations beyond their capability, advisers act as a referral

and point students toward departments or professors qualified in those areas.

Each department develops a peer advising program differently and autonomously of the other departmental programs, DeGidio says, with herself acting as a consultant.

"Training and supervision are the key aspects to success," DeGidio says. Departmental development of peer advising should be done carefully so that there is never a "slip-shod program," she adds. The faculty must know the students are not going to give wrong information nor harm the faculty's advising role.

Advisors receive extensive training. They receive on-the-job training because each peer advising program is supervised by a faculty member. Additional training comes from the departments, previous experience and through a class called "Paraprofessional Interpersonal and Organizational Skills," taught by DeGidio. The three credit course teaches communication skills, organization skills and interpersonal communications through theory and practice. DeGidio says it's a "fun class" because "people want to be there."

Advisors can receive small stipends, work study or up to three hours of credit.

## Awareness can arrest sexual harassment

By TAMARA SWENSON  
Of the Emerald

Sexual harassment can occur, will occur and does occur on university campuses in both

education and employment, though they seem to be the centers for enlightenment.

Sexual harassment can be defined several ways, says Norma McFadden, affirmative ac-

tion compliance officer. "But basically it's unwanted, non-reciprocal, non-coincidental, one-sided, repeated sexual attention."

But most people are unaware of exactly what sexual harassment is. Legally it is sex discrimination, handled by the Oregon State Bureau of Labor in both education and employment.

The University Affirmative Action office is willing to process illegal discrimination suits, but, says McFadden, "sexual harassment will stop only when society begins to educate people to the fact."

"Harassment and fear of reprisal exists with males as well as females," says William Boyd, University president, "but women are much more subject."

Only recently have people begun talking about sexual harassment, says McFadden. "Women are beginning to

realize that little things they were raised to accept are damaging to themselves and to an entire sex.

"Sexual harassment isn't related to sex though," she says. "It's related to power. Sexual harassment is basically a power issue."

The Project on the Status and Education of Women, of the Association of American Colleges, says that sexual harassment includes:

- Subtle pressure for sexual activity;
- Verbal harassment or abuse;
- Unnecessary touching, patting, or pinching;
- Leering or ogling of a woman's body;
- Sexist remarks about a woman's clothing, body or sexual activities;
- Demanding sexual favors accompanied by implied or overt threats concerning one's

job, grades, letters of recommendation;

• Physical assault.  
"When an employee is in a subordinate position they usually don't feel comfortable about speaking up," says McFadden. "They become afraid of saying 'get your hand off my arm' because they might lose their job."

The fear of reprisal has kept many people from reporting cases of discrimination, she explains. This unwanted, repeated sexual attention is annoying to the person, but they often don't know how to deal with it.

"As more people become aware of it cases of sexual harassment will decrease, but people need to know how to deal with it effectively," says McFadden.

Sex discrimination and sexual harassment can be handled under the University's affirmative action office grievance procedures.

"If sex discrimination is perceived by a person they can call the affirmative action office," says McFadden. "Sexual harassment charges have a great need for confidentiality, and often we can reach a resolution with both individuals satisfied with the outcome."

There is a definite need to have a "reasonable way to accommodate both needs," says Boyd. "Increased sensitivity to the issue has to be achieved, even if we just raise the issue to the level it is talked about."

Sexual harassment is something people shouldn't have to put up with, and should refuse to put up with, McFadden says, but "people should know it exists."

"If people examine actions and reactions to what they say and how they perceive what they say, they would become more aware of sexual harassment around them," says McFadden.

People want to be perceived by their ability as people, not by something "superficial. It's a matter of awareness."

"This is a society that is not used to thinking about women very much, or not very highly," McFadden says.

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