

Center teaches new outlook on faith

By SALLY HODGKINSON
Of the Emerald

The McKenzie Study Center is slowly and cautiously bringing a "Christian perspective" to University studies and the campus community.

"We hope to offer the Christian student a resource center and a curriculum of studies which will provide a Christian perspective to academic and world issues," says Wes Hurd, director of Christian Alternatives, an interdenominational ministry that operates the center.

But providing that perspective to students at a state institution has its restrictions and hurdles.

"Most people believe that once someone is committed to the Christian faith... their objectivity is lost."

CA is currently offering three courses; two through the center and one SEARCH course for University credit. Hurd says CA is planning to add more courses to its curriculum winter and spring terms but adds that he is cautious about expanding the number of SEARCH classes because of potential negative reactions from faculty members.

"We feel privileged that the SEARCH program is available to us," he says. "We don't want to abuse that privilege."

Wayne Miller, director of SEARCH, says the program hasn't had any problems with offering classes on religion for credit.

"I wouldn't want people to start using SEARCH to recruit for their religious group," he says, adding that chances of that happening are slim since SEARCH classes require a department's approval and a faculty sponsor.

But Miller says that if he received any complaints or reports about students being

pressured in a religion class, he would talk to the instructor and may cancel the course.

"It would definitely be a touchy situation," he adds. "I hope it doesn't happen."

"We're not coming on with a 'this is the way it is and nobody else has anything to say' attitude," Hurd explains. "We say this is the Christian perspective."

The center has a "good relationship" with a number of faculty members, says Hurd, adding "that doesn't mean that they all agree with what we stand for but they welcome our contribution to the University setting."

CA courses are designed to fit into a student's budget and time frame, says Hurd, adding that many Christian students just don't have the time or money to attend a traditional Christian college.

"We're trying to serve the Christian student who's going through a state institution and who, under normal circumstances, wouldn't have access to quality undergraduate evangelical courses," he says.

The center wants to provide encouragement to Christians attending a state university who are sometimes "blown away by the persuasion of secular humanism, the dominant agnostic or atheist perspective

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that says that man is the beginning and end of all reality," Hurd says.

Hurd adds that many people in the academic community believe that neutrality is lost if someone has religious faith.

"Most people believe that once someone is committed to the Christian faith or some theology that their objectivity is lost and they don't see things the way they really are," he says. "That's a myth because

everyone brings their own perspective to any issue."

Hurd began thinking of creating a program that relates Christian perspectives to social,

This "whole view" of Christianity may offend some "hyper-fundamentalists" in the church who feel that Christians shouldn't be "contaminated by

where we'll be in a year. We have basic ideas but we're sensitive to community response."

The center is planning

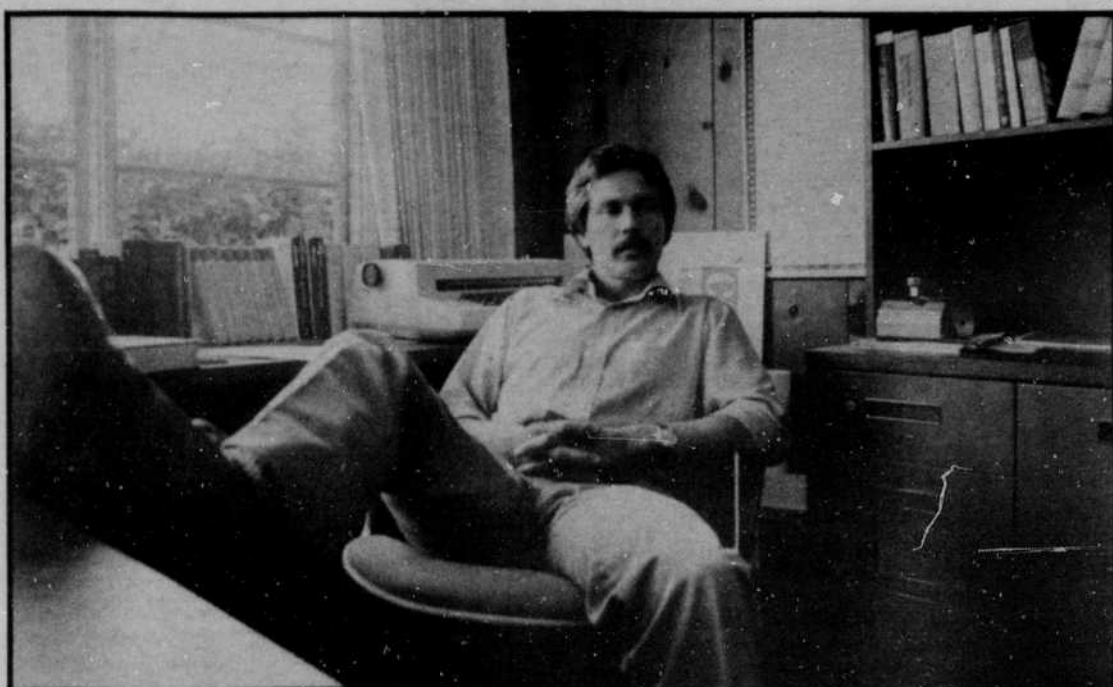


Photo by Keith Allen

Wes Hurd, director of the Christian Alternative ministry, is trying to dispel the myths held about Christian faith in the predominately secular atmosphere of the University. Hurd believes

"everyone brings their own perspective to any issue," and, contrary to what many non-Christians think, a studying Christian perspective isn't likely to affect a person's conception of reality.

cultural, political and personal problems when he first began to study theology in 1972. The idea continued to grow throughout his seminary studies in Portland but the program "just didn't come together in Portland."

Currently, Hurd is working on his doctorate in educational policy at the University in addition to directing the CA program.

Similar programs in North America and Europe are "beginning to crack the door open" on the belief that there is a Christian perspective to everything, not just a Sunday service, says Hurd.

"It's an idea that has come of age in the evangelical community," he adds. "It's a different view but I wouldn't call it radical. I'd call it an idea that's long overdue."

world things," says Hurd, but response from community churches has been good, he adds.

"We don't presume that we have all the answers," he says. "Our first year will basically be spent establishing our track record and we don't know

seminars and lectures that "address fields of study or discussion from a Christian perspective," says Hurd, adding that response to a September CA seminar, "A Christian Mind in a Secular Age," was good.

Anyone interested in more information can call 485-4801.



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