

Lawyer gives free advice

By Dane Claussen
Of the Emerald

All University students are eligible for free legal advice from Legal Services, an ASUO-funded program located in EMU 334.

That legal aid amounts to about \$350,000 in services provided for the 1,700 to 2,000 students using the service, according to program director Charles Spinner.

Services include just about everything except tax preparation, copyrights and patents, profit business matters, representation in contested litigation or representation of a student or student group against another, Spinner says.

"We don't do written work product for students in a business for profit," Spinner says, adding that he will assist non-profit corporations.

The subjects that students most often seek his advice on include landlord-tenant disagreements, divorce and property settlement and insurance claims.

"We do some adoptions, some land sales," Spinner says, giving evidence of the wide variety of matters he deals with.

As a privately-retained attorney, he can also represent a student, a student group or the ASUO in claims against the University.

One such case, appealed to the Oregon Supreme Court and currently awaiting final action by the Court of Appeals, involves University due process procedures, Spinner says.

Legal Services, in addition to supervising the student defenders hired by ASUO Executive Coordinator John Moore, helps ASUO President by offering opinions and researching legal questions.

A project beginning later this month will concentrate on "who has the right to hold incidental fee money," Spinner says. At present, the state system of higher education has ultimate control over incidental fees, and the ASUO can earn no interest on it, he says.

If seven to ten years of incidental fees could be put in a



Photo by Elisabeth Podesta

Legal services is pre-paid legal insurance, says Spinner.

trust, however, ASUO funds could be self-generating from the trust's interest alone, Spinner says.

Legal Services has also given advice to the ASUO Executive on open meetings policies, alleged elections rules violations and other matters, he says.

Spinner also trained and consulted with the staff and director of Off-Campus Housing, and reviewed parts of the new edition of its Renter's Handbook.

Changes in the Legal Services this fall will include planned "drop-in times," periods when students can see him without appointments on a first-come, first-served basis, he says.

The system, tested during the summer, helped free up time for appointments, Spinner says.

The program will continue to have a professional legal secretary — new last year — for many hours each week, something that he feels significantly improved the quality of service.

Spinner says his legal secretary's skills are "far superior" to those obtained from the pool of available work-study students.

"It gave me more time to see

clients," he says.

Spinner says he also will continue to be in a "dramatically expanded supervisory capacity over student defenders," third-year law students who represent students charged with Student Conduct Code violations.

The number of conduct code proceedings against students charged with cheating, plagiarism and other alleged offenses went up "50-fold" last year, he says.

Spinner, who received his law degree at the University, has been director of the program since 1977.

He readily admits that he could be making more money if he concentrated all of his energy on his private practice. Spinner says, however, that there are a number of reasons why he decided to direct Legal Services — at a net annual salary of only \$19,000 — and stay with it.

"Legal Services is essentially pre-paid legal insurance," he says about the \$30,000 program. "I like that as a political concept."

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