

Counseling

Former infirmary treats emotional ailments

Only the uncovered sinks and metal doors hint that the new home of the University Counseling Center might have had a previous incarnation.

Bright colors, modern paintings and a soft rug have almost transformed the top floor of the student health center, used just three years ago as a student infirmary.

After a \$50,000 face-lift, the counseling center looks and feels like the professional facility it is.

"It's like being in a monastery," says Bill Kirtner, the bearded, soft-spoken director of the center.

Kirtner appreciates the snappy new offices, but says he misses the "homey" feel of the center's old office on top of Susan Campbell Hall.

"I've found myself getting used to this," he says. "Some like it better."

Although the locale changed with the center's move last May, the underlying philosophy is the same.

Kirtner targets students with "any lacks in their life" — personal or emotional — as prospective clients.

Intern Greg Alexander explains the center's focus a little differently.

"We're not a clinic here. This is a place for people to come and work through important issues," he says. "The

word 'clinic' is too impersonal a word for me to describe what goes on here."

The center's staff includes five professional counselors and six interns who are students in the University's doctoral counseling program.

An individualized approach allows all students to see a counselor at least once, Kirtner says. There is no limit to the number of times a student can see a counselor, but with about 600 clients spent an average of 10 hours each last year.

"We try to encourage brief therapy," he says, although each problem is given as much time as it takes.

The number one problem on campus? Depression, Kirtner says — "and reasonably so."

College is a difficult time for young adults, "a time when you're moving away from what was before a developmental womb," he says.

Students encounter many new groups at a university, creating problems for those not used to such a variety of opinions and values, he says.

The counseling process begins with a one-on-one meeting in which counselors help students talk about their problems. After finding the root of a problem, the counselors look for a way to change the troublesome behavior.

But don't expect a "Dear Abby" approach of just giving advice, Kirtner says. "You can always tell within two or three hours what a person should do," but it's helpful to find out why they're doing something, he says.

The staff recognizes that each student is different and needs a different way to handle his or her problem, Kirtner says. There are no "stock" solutions.

"I believe in choice and freedom and things like that," he says. "I'd like to think we offer at least some tidbit of that here."

Counseling services are free — at least for now — to registered students. Considering the University's budget problems and an increasing case load, students may one day have to pay, Kirtner says. He hopes they don't have to, though.

"It really would punish the people who need it most," he says.

Few of the center's clients have serious mental problems, but several students require hospitalization each year, he says.

Kirtner says he doesn't want to see only "really disturbed" people. The counselors like to see students with "small, short-term problems," too — the kind of problems that eventually go away by themselves but could be resolved more productively with counseling, he says.

All counseling is completely confidential. A signed release is required before even partial information is given out, Kirtner says — no exceptions.

The counseling center also offers vocational guidance, group therapy and placement testing — the only service that isn't free.

Appointments are easy to get until toward the end of fall term, when a waiting list starts that lasts until summer, Kirtner says. For an appointment or more information, phone 686-3227.



Counseling intern Greg Alexander is among 11 counselors helping students of all ages find ways to fulfill emotional needs.

Center offers fall-term counseling groups

Many students could benefit from the five counseling groups offered this term — if they knew about them.

"I'd like to see all the needs that people might have that could be met by these groups to be met," says Greg Alexander, an intern at the Student Counseling Center.

Fall term groups — free to registered students — will focus on weight control, eating disorders, assertiveness, academic survival for older-than-average students and personal growth.

All groups are conducted by counselors or interns, Alexander says. Groups meet once a week during the day, with five to 15 students in each session.

Meeting times are somewhat flexible, and students should call if they can't make the scheduled meeting of a group, Alexander says.

Fall term groups include:

- **Here-and-now therapy** — A problem-oriented group in which people exchange their feelings and thoughts about each other in a non-judgmental way and without bringing in any past history. Tuesday, 3 to 5 p.m.

- **Older-than-average student** — A peer-support group devoted to working through difficulties experienced by the

older-than-average student (age 25 and up). Issues include adjusting to college life, loneliness, relationship problems, marital and family concerns and self-development issues. Thursday, 3 to 4:30 p.m.

- **Psycho-social aspects of weight control** — Educates group members about the social and self-concept issues related to weight control. Provided especially for people preoccupied with food and their weight. Monday, 3:30 to 5 p.m.

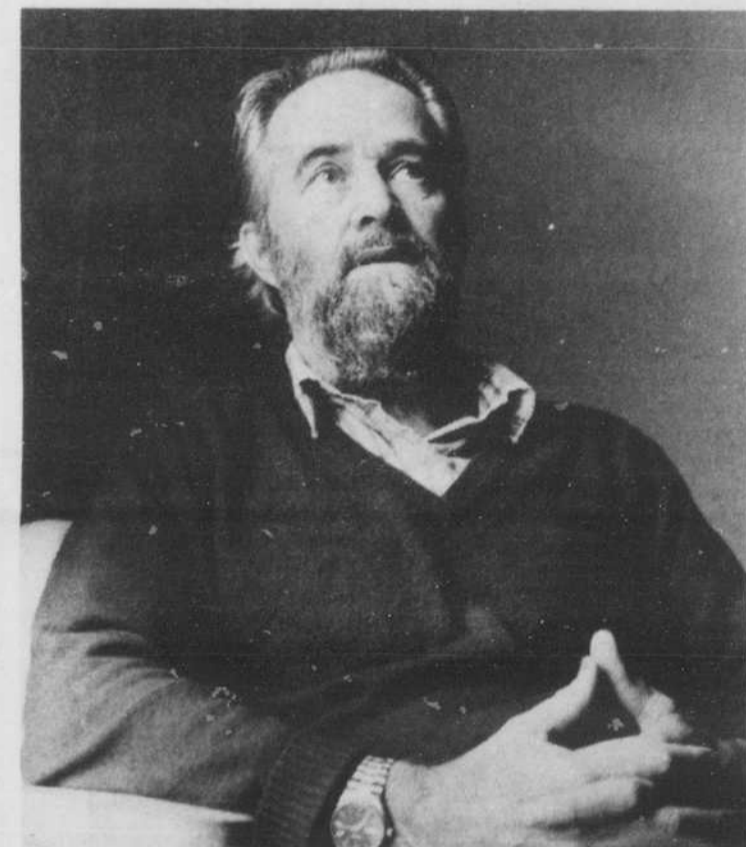
- **Eating disorders** — For people who have problems with binge eating and vomiting or the use of laxatives or diuretics for weight loss. Tuesday, 1:30 to 3 p.m.

- **Personal growth through artistic expression** — A structured series of exercises designed to develop creative resources, explore relationships with yourself and others and explore intuitive ways of working with problems. Thursday, 10 a.m. to noon.

In addition to the counseling groups, a workshop on Nov. 3 from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. will focus on reducing test anxiety.

Stories by Ann Portal

Photos by Bob Baker and Kevin Clark



Bill Kirtner heads the 11-member staff of the University Counseling Center, which provides free counseling services to students.

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UO STUDENT HEALTH CENTER

FLU VACCINATION

Influenza vaccinations will be given at the University of Oregon Student Health Center every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 8 to 9 a.m., beginning October 13th and continuing until the end of fall term. Only one injection is needed. Students may receive the vaccine at a cost of \$2.50. Faculty and staff are charged \$3.50.

Annual flu immunizations are recommended for people with increased risk of complications from lower respiratory infections, including:

1. Persons 65 years or older.
2. Persons with any of the following: heart disease, compromised lung functions, chronic kidney disease, diabetes, chronic severe anemia, and conditions which compromise immune mechanisms.

For more information call the Student Health Center at (686)-4441

CONGRATULATIONS

to the new members of the freshman honoraries, Alpha Lambda Delta and Phi Eta Sigma. These are non-profit service oriented organizations whose major purpose is to promote scholarship and leadership in University activities.

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Certificates and jewelry will be distributed today, October 8, in Oregon Hall Rm. 164 from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The first meeting, open to all members of both organizations, will be held on Oct. 12 at 3:30 p.m. in Oregon Hall Rm. 164.

A pizza feed is planned for Oct. 24 at 6:30 p.m. in the Carson Gold Room.

For more information, call Jack Bennett at 686-3211.