

# Legal Services is busier

But delegating workload saves time, director says

By Richard Burr  
Of the Emerald

Increased efficiency during the past two years has enabled Legal Services to handle its increasing caseload, says Charles Spinner, Legal Services director.

Legal Services offers students a wide range of non-litigatory services, including legal advising and handling civil suits, but rarely takes major lawsuits. The program's services are funded through incidental fees, but students pay expenses other than attorney's time, such as filing fees involved.

"We see a tremendously larger amount of people than we did when I started here five years ago," Spinner says.

Spinner says he has noticed the increase, but didn't have specific statistics to support his observations.

Specialization may have something to do with the increased business. Spinner deals with similar kinds of legal problems, so he can handle each case faster.

Assigning some paperwork and the simpler cases to paralegal staff instead of Spinner was another method used to increase efficiency. This leaves Spinner free to see more clients and handle more complex cases like contract disputes and property damage.

Training Off-Campus Housing and Office of Student Advocacy staff to handle more cases pertinent to their programs has also reduced his workload, Spinner says.

The office also hired a legal secretary who doesn't have the school worries that plagued the workstudy secretaries who formerly worked there, Spinner says.

The program withheld pay increases and cut some budget items to get the Incidental Fee Committee approval for the legal secretary, Spinner adds.

Word-of-mouth and paid advertising also has contributed to the increased caseload, Spinner says.

After checking the current budget for overruns, Spinner says he may ask the IFC for more money to pay for office materials used due to the increased caseload.

He will also ask for a cost-of-living salary adjustment.

The "cost of living goes up every year, and I feel it's appropriate for me to request that," he says. "Whether they want to give it or not is their business, but I think that the support staff ought to receive it."

Although the office's limited budget usually keeps him from taking litigation cases, he says sometimes he gets "suckered" into handling litigation for students.

"Once in a while I'll see something going on that strikes me as an outrageous injustice, and the person just has no ability to get any kind of legal assistance," he says. "I'll get involved."

Besides these infrequent cases, Spinner says he handles a "tremendous number of divorces."

"It's one of the primary reasons why I need a legal secretary," he says.

About 90 percent of the documents his office files in court deal with domestic relations, Spinner says.



Emerald Photo  
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