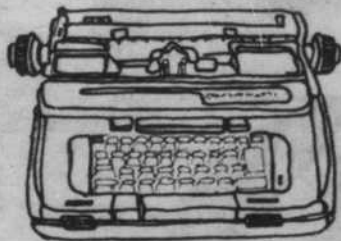


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Services available for older students

By Guy Maynard
Of the Emerald

When Joanne Lawson came to the University as a transfer from Lane Community College in 1976 she felt out of place. She was over 25.

"The University is a very fearful place for older students. You feel like you don't belong," says Lawson.

Then she discovered Lifelong Learning Services, a University office created to aid older students.

"Lifelong Learning Services was the first indication that I belonged here. It was 'my' place," says Lawson.

Lawson, a mother of five who attended a speech class with her son Benjamin during her senior year, graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1979. She is now a graduate student in industrial organizational psychology.

Call them 'older-than average,' 'non-traditional,' or 're-entry' students, people over the age of 25 make up a growing portion of the University population. In 1976, 15 percent of University undergraduates were over 25. By spring term of 1983 that figure increased to 21 percent.

Lifelong Learning Services tries to help older students find their way around campus, to direct them to University services and programs, and to ease personal problems which are usually of a different nature from those faced by younger students.

"Our main function is to offer options, referrals, ideas," says Judy Wood, former student program co-ordinator of Lifelong Learning Services.

An "Older-than-Average Students Information Faire" held during orientation week helps introduce older students to the University. This informal gathering gives new students, or perspective students, a chance to meet faculty members, department heads, and other older students.

"It was a nice feeling to realize there were all these people older than 18, that I'm not the only one here. I made some lasting friends," says Wood of the faire she attended when she first returned to the University.

This year's faire will held Sept. 20 at Gerlinger Hall Alumni Lounge from 5:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. Interested people should contact Lifelong Learning Services, located in Oregon Hall.

Lifelong Learning Services, with its slogan "A Place to Start," tries to encourage older students to

seek financial aid, to take advantage of child-care and housing opportunities available through the University and to sort out their priorities to find some workable balance between school, work and family.

Although students over 25 are divided about evenly between men and women, women tend to be older and are less likely to have the support of a spouse in the home. The particular needs of older women students led Lawson and another woman student to form Women in Transition, a personal support group.

Many of the older students attending the University are going through some mid-life change, whether because of a changing family situation or because of the desire or need for new skills. The advisers at Lifelong Learning Services strongly encourage career planning.

A career planning workshop specifically aimed at mid-life career changes will be conducted from Oct. 10 through Oct. 31 at no charge to University students.

Career planning "includes not only what you do for a living but also planning in the areas of rela-

tionships, leisure and how to find self fulfillment," says Theresa Ripley, who will conduct the workshop.

Similar workshops in the past have been very successful for non-traditional students, says Debbie Chereck of the Career Planning and Placement Service.

Some of the difficulties older students have when they first come on campus come from a lack of confidence because their study skills are rusty and they have not been in an academic environment for awhile.

But older students tend to do very well at the University because "the older students bring a lot of skills they don't realize they have — a certain wisdom that age brings," says Lawson.

Getting over the initial psychological and bureaucratic hurdles is the hardest part.

"Just hang in there and tough it out for the first couple of months. It's hard, but things will begin to fall in place," says Lawson to those just beginning the challenge that she met so successfully.

And older students should find out the resources that the campus offers to make their older than average years here easier and more fulfilling, say the people at Lifelong Learning Services.

'The University is a fearful place for older students'

— Joanne Lawson

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