

Although the statistics are national, Wilson says the University reflects a similar percentage.

"We're very concerned about these statistics and now our goal is to inform the faculty to make them more aware," Wilson says. "So far the faculty has been really supportive and is making an effort to help students feel more comfortable with the University."

And administrators aren't the only ones who worry about the problem.

History Prof. Glenn May is particularly concerned about the poor retention rate. "I wonder if the problem is that students are pushed into college against their will and just aren't ready for it, or if the University isn't succeeding in making freshmen feel comfortable. I think it's definitely a question that needs to be raised," May says.

For the most part, freshmen comments about college are not unique. The dorm food tastes bad, dorm rooms are too small and, according to Ames, "there's never enough quarters (for washing machines, telephones, parking meters and vending machines)."

One freshman who asked not to be identified, says "it's a new concept drying off my shampoo bottle after each shower and making my bed every morning because it doubles as a desk in the afternoon."

But the biggest complaint voiced by freshmen is the difference between studying for college as opposed to high school. "There's a lot more reading and perhaps more competition because most students at college want to be here. In high school we had to be there," says Kathy Bruce, a freshman from Portland.

But not all freshmen complain about the work. Geo Keng Ho from Singapore thinks the American education system is more flexible and a lot easier than what she's used to.

For Ho, the hardest thing to adjust to is being away from her family. She estimates she won't see her family for another two years because of the expense involved in traveling to Singapore and back.

Like Ho, most new freshmen experience loneliness at first and each has a different way of coping. Erik Holt, of Lake Oswego, says he handles loneliness by going on long bike rides, while Pete Johnson of Winston writes letters home.

Holt says the hardest thing to accept is that "nobody really gives a damn about you."

Still, the major problem for troubled students is not knowing about available resources. When students get depressed, become confused about requirements or feel pressured by exams, their biggest problem is not knowing where to turn, says Andy Thompson, a counselor at the University's Student Health and Counseling Center.

For depression, the Counseling Center is an ideal place to seek help. But Thompson says many students are confused about the purpose of the Counseling Center. "We do personal counseling, not academic advising," Thompson says.

Because the students he sees have a variety of problems, Thompson often refers his patients to other agencies.

For example, students with problems studying or taking exams are sent to the Learning Resources Center. May, as well as other professors who teach large classes, are offering extra study sessions and reinforcing that help is available.

But Wilson knows that the faculty alone can't solve the problem. She believes that encouraging students to get more involved in groups is the best solution. Within the

last four years several programs have been initiated at the University.

"Early Orientation and Registration Program has been very successful. Students aren't so freaked out. They get registration out of the way in the summer so they get the opportunity to participate in more activities during new student week," Wilson says.

Another program is the New Student Host Program. This event takes place during new student week and is a series of outings and seminars designed to familiarize freshmen with the University and Eugene area.

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— Shirley Wilson

Other ways new students can learn more about their chosen field are through the Peer Advising program and internships, Wilson says.

"I can't stress enough how important it is to get involved in a smaller group," she says. "It's a fact that those students who are involved in the Greek system have the lowest drop out rate. But the Greek system isn't for every student. We want those students who aren't interested in the Greek system to find something else to get involved in."

Wilson isn't the only one pushing involvement. Sinda Hodge, a resident assistant at Dymont dorm, believes freshmen need something to identify with. Hodge, like many other RA's, urges her residents to

take part in Ad Board, a form of dorm government, as well as plan social activities such as dances.

While most people agree that involvement is the solution, there seem to be many theories on what the problem is, or more specifically, what kind of students the problem affects.

"It's hard to be in a new environment away from everything that's familiar," Wilson says. "You just can't expect a student who has left everything and is constantly experiencing something new not to be at least a little confused and insecure."

But obviously, some are more confused than others. Thompson believes that the size of students' home towns is a major factor in determining how easily they will adjust to college.

"It seems that students who come from small towns will have a harder time adjusting because they have more changes to deal with," he says.

Besides hometown size, distance from home could also be a contributing factor, Hodge says. "I've noticed that freshmen from out of state tend to be more secure than those who are from fairly nearby places like Portland. In-state students talk about home more and actually get to go home more, whereas those from out of state or even foreign countries have accepted the idea that they can't go home, so they don't think about it."

Age is another important factor in determining how students will adjust to college life, Wilson says.

"Older students are much more alienated than those who come to college right out of high school. It's very stressful for the student who has been away from the classroom for several years and might have some kids, to adjust to a school situation."

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