

Center's program trains students as "natural helpers"

By Lisa Nelson
Emerald Contributor

A program sponsored by the University Counseling Center has improved 52 students' skills in counseling and crisis intervention.

The "Natural Helpers" program, a three-day workshop with two follow-up sessions, focused on teaching students with varied interests and backgrounds more effective listening and counseling skills.

It is a program meant to help participants "feel unafraid to approach someone with a problem," said Nancy Taylor Kemp, program developer.

The term "natural helpers" describes the natural process by which people listen to and counsel each other, she said.

Kemp added that many people are natural helpers in that they listen attentively and handle problems well, but the program further hones their skills and makes listening and counseling a more conscious process.

Participants earn three upper division credits and refine counseling skills such as paraphrasing, active listening, and feeling checking.

Students in the program are encouraged to use their new skills to refer other students to campus services.

About 100 students applied for the 60 available spots in the program, originally used in high schools. It was approved by the COSAFE Committee after talking to students who had participated in it at the high

school level.

Kemp said the applicants were chosen to represent a variety of the student population. "The best natural helpers are not always the leaders," she said.

Workshops are led by Kemp and Richard Francisco, University psychologist.

They also conduct follow-up workshops during spring term, which reunites participants to share experiences in which they have used their new skills.

They also design activities demonstrating a variety of these basic skills.

In one exercise, the importance of good communication was shown when students had to stand in a circle and join hands with people in the circle across from themselves. The students then had to untangle themselves with help from a coach outside the group.

Participant Kathy Sherman said her experience with the program was very positive.

"It helped me to recognize others that might need help or referrals," she said.

Kemp stressed the students in the program are now trained and among the student population. She believes the participants can be very effective in helping peers with problems.

The students in the program can be identified by buttons that say "I'm a Natural."

The program is a "pilot" project funded by a government grant for one time only. In the future staff and faculty training may be available, Kemp said



Photo by James Marks

Sun Daopin (left) and Xin-nian Wang are two of forty Chinese students at the University who are expressing support for their comrades in Beijing by writing letters.

Students write letters to China

By Sing Chan
Emerald Contributor

Forty University students from China have signed two letters supporting the recent demonstrations for democratic reform by students at China's Beijing University.

One letter, sent to the Standing Committee of the People's Congress, stressed that the students have rights to free speech and assembly that are guaranteed in the Chinese constitution. It also urged the government to listen to the voice of the people and to take steps toward the democratization of China.

The other letter was sent to the students of Beijing University to express strong support for the peaceful demonstrations.

"The letter (sent to the students) will have an impact because we are giving them confidence through our support," said Xin-nian Wang, a physics graduate student who wrote the original drafts of the letters.

However, he doubts that the letter sent to the government will receive any reaction. "But it's something we have to do," he said, "...whether or not they will respond."

"Because of limited time and resources, we cannot do anything more than just writing letters," Wang said. He added that more letters will be sent if the government begins arresting the

demonstrators.

Wang pointed out that the students who signed the letters risked facing reprimands once they return to China.

The students involved with this letter-writing campaign were not organized by any University association, but were united because of a collective desire for democracy in their native country.

According to Daopin Sun, a physics graduate student who signed the letters, the student protests in Beijing began after the death of Hu Yaobang on April 15. Yaobang, the former General Secretary of the Communist Party, was ousted from his office in 1987 because he sympathized with student demands for freedom of speech, press and assembly.

In addition to these demands, the current student demonstrators want the financial records of government officials to be made public. Human rights and the release of political prisoners also need to be addressed, Sun said.

"We really hope that the government takes this democratic movement seriously and treats it in a positive way," he said. "We care about our country and want a democracy."

All students interested in the Chinese democratic movement are welcome to participate. Contact Wang at 345-3211 or Sun at 484-5425 for more information.

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