

Students angered by program cut

University's decision to drop American Studies leaves many wondering

By Marina Swain
Emerald Contributor

American Studies Graduate Teaching Fellow Kevin Donald has looked around the University and does not like what he sees.

"It reflects a direct interest toward the hard sciences and business and a neglect of the liberal arts," Donald said. "I see the actual demise of certain areas of liberal arts at the University."

In particular, he is saddened by the University's decision to cut the American Studies program. University officials recently announced the closure of the five-year-old program this fall.

The plight of AMS majors is a prime concern of Donald, who is nearing his second year of teaching for the department.

"They're the ones paying for their education...a well rounded education," he said. "Yet the administrators of higher education seem to be biting or cutting of the hand that feeds them."

With tuition set to increase by 10 percent next year, AMS major Jay Pentheny wonders where the money is going.

In fact, Pentheny said he asked this question of Arts and Sciences acting dean Theodore Palmer. He and a group of students intercepted the dean before he entered a meeting Wednesday night.

"He evaded every direct question," Pentheny said. "He pointed the finger of blame elsewhere but he said he made the decision."

However, Palmer said the students seem satisfied by his answers. The meeting which was to determine the course of American Studies, was inconclusive, he said. Further meetings are planned to address the issue of next year's limited offerings, he said.

"There's no question that we will be providing a program," Palmer said. What shape the weakened program will take is unknown but it clearly will only be temporary, he said. The University will continue the program through next year to permit AMS majors to continue their coursework and complete their degrees by next spring.

Pentheny and other concerned students have been lobbying to keep the American Studies program since they heard it was in danger two

months ago.

"We made petitions, phone calls and personal visits," Pentheny said. "They didn't really take any consideration of students."

Pentheny estimated that 10,000 students enrolled in core classes during the past five years. This generated approximately \$500,000 in tuition, he said.

"It's surprising to me that they can find millions to build science complexes and yet can't find \$127,000 to fund the American Studies program," Pentheny said.

Pentheny referred to a departmental budget figure that includes a tenure professor, seven GTFs, a secretary and everything from films to paper clips.

American Studies GTF Michele Conte is wary of what form the cutback program may take. "It's like waiting for the ax to fall," she said. "I don't think it's a farsighted decision."

Conte pointed out that American Studies is flourishing "back East."

"Their programs are growing," she said. Conte said other Pacific 10 schools such as the University of California at Berkeley and Washington State University are attempting to implement American Studies as part of their curriculum.

"It's a shame when they're putting theirs together, we're dismantling ours," she said. Conte has been a GTF for the program the past four years but she said the removal of the program accounts for more than just a personal loss.

"We know all the majors personally," she said, of the approximately 60 students who intend to receive AMS degrees. "It's very much a family."

Conte is especially concerned for sophomores who will have to accelerate their studies to complete their major before the program is entirely shut down.

"What are you going to do with a thesis written a year and a half early?" Conte asked. "And who's going to read it?"

Normally the head of the department and another professor of a similar subject read through theses. Most are written during a student's last term of study and are supposed to reflect a culmination of knowledge in a particular subject, she said.

Senior AMS major Leroy Ale said he feels embittered by the University's decision to cut the program although he will graduate this June.

"I guess the faculty thought this major is useless... so I've been going to school for nothing," he said.

Immersion school teaches Japanese

By Bob Waite
Emerald Contributor

Komae Mori's spoken Japanese sounds rapid and strange to the un-trained ear, but her 25 second-grade pupils at Yujin Gakuen respond in Japanese because they are acquiring her native fluency.

Mori is one of three native Japanese teachers at the School District 4J Yujin Gakuen — friendly people in the garden of knowledge — Japanese immersion school which shares the grounds of the Corridor Alternative Elementary school in Santa Clara.

Lily Ota, Nancy Imamura and Mori are the school's faculty, but Yujin Gakuen plans to grow.

Their teacher leading, students count colored paper fish hanging from the ceiling in unison. Next Mori calls on students who stand before the class, bow, and recite science lessons about fish.

Occasionally a student lapses into English and Mori patiently responds in Japanese. English is for first graders. Everyone is expected to study school lessons in Japanese only.

The two-year-old program is based on 4J's belief that, "It is important to prepare students for a world that is increasingly interconnected, to appreciate those who are different," said Darby Gianonne, Yujin Gakuen and Corridor Alternative Elementary school principal.

"It's really important for the students to learn the language and the cultural nuances from a native Japanese teacher," Gianonne said, and finding teachers has been a big challenge.

Mori, who speaks and reads English, is a certified teacher and has taught in Japan, Mori said, but "English is so hard for me. I cannot pass it (Oregon's required teaching certification test.) But I don't need English in my Japanese class."

The difficulty for Mori is the test's cultural bias, Gianonne said, explaining that Mori failed the test because she was unable to understand the non-literal subtleties of some of the questions.

With the help of tutors she has hired, Mori said she hopes to improve her comprehension of colloquial English to prepare for the next certification test.

"If I cannot teach at Yujin Gakuen next year I have another job, but I would like to stay here," Mori said.

And Gianonne would like to keep her because losing qualified teachers like Mori "... is not good when building a core of qualified teachers. It takes three to five years — under good conditions — to start refining a curriculum," she said.

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Speak Out!

Tell it to the president. All students are invited to an open forum with President Myles Brand, 3:30-5:00 p.m., Wednesday, May 9, Room 150 Columbia Hall. Speak out. It's your future.

Moderator, Marlene Drescher, Director, Office of Student Advocacy. This is another in a series of opportunities for students to meet with the president to discuss issues of mutual concern.

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