

# Women's Center to tap students' ideas

By Lisa Millegan  
Emerald Reporter

When asked to describe what they want to accomplish this year, most student leaders at the University's Women's Center were not able to produce a detailed plan. It's not that they haven't had time or that they don't have ideas, they just don't want one.

What they do want is plenty of student input.

"It's a dynamic process," said Andrea Coukos, co-director of the center's Women In Transition program. "We don't have an agenda that's cut in stone."

The leaders' worst fear is to give the impression that the center only serves a specific group. They want to get the greatest number of people involved, including community members. And, contrary to popular opinion, they welcome men to help work on any program.

"If anybody came to the center with energy, we'd find some way to use that," Coukos said. "Part of what a women's organization is about is to put women in leadership positions ... but that does not mean we don't welcome all members of society."

Coukos' group, one of four independent organizations housed at the center, focuses on serving the needs of non-traditional students. Holly Stegner, co-director of WIT, said the organization is for any student who feels her experience is different than that of most students on campus. Users of the program in the past have included women older than 25, single parents and disabled students.

The program receives \$3,492 from the Incidental Fee Committee, \$1,620 of which goes toward the co-directors' stipends. Students shouldn't worry that the two are overpaid, Coukos said.

"We're doing really professional-level work for peanuts, in addition to some of us being full-time students," she said.

The program spends \$600 on special services such as child care, speakers, films and conference dues, with the remainder of the money spent on administrative costs such as telephone and postage.

Stegner said 200 students and community members per term participated in support groups offered by the program last year. Made up of 4-10 women each, the groups dealt with such topics as self-esteem, sexual identity and child care.

She said many of the groups will continue this year and new ones will be added depending on student interest.

Women In Transition also sponsors guest speakers and workshops from time to time on issues of interest to nontraditional students. However, in the recent past, more students have been using program workers as sources of advice.

"We do lots of on-the-spot crisis counseling," Stegner said. "On a slow night we get about eight calls."

Workers at Women's Resource and Referral, another program housed in the Women's Center, avoid providing direct counseling over the phone. Instead, they try to steer women toward the organization that can most effectively help them.

"We're here so women can come in if they're having problems," said Lisa Albrich, co-director of the program. "(Women's Resource and Referral) is there to be of assistance to women and help them help themselves."

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— Holly Stegner,  
WIT co-director


Albrich said she encourages non-student women to also use the services since the program works with community resources.

Perhaps the best known service Women's Resource and Referral offers is its constantly-updated lending library of magazines, books and pamphlets dealing with issues such as birth control, abortion and sexual harassment.

"When the program first started, the shelf was this big," said Albrich as she motioned with her hand at waist-level. "Now it's at least four bookshelves, about six feet high."

Funded by the IFC, \$2,886 of the program's \$4,845 budget goes to stipends for co-directors and workstudy students. Administrative costs eats up \$1,109, and \$850 is set aside for speakers, films and conferences. The program hopes to raise more money by doing several fundraising events throughout the year.

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