

Tibetan monk brings Buddha's message to University

Seung Kim

For the Oregon Daily Emerald

Before arriving in Eugene five months ago to serve as a visiting professor to the University, Thubten Tashi had lived a quiet life as a Tibetan monk.

For 25 years he tirelessly dedicated his life to learning the Buddha's way at the Sera monastery in Southern India. When he was 13, he unwillingly began his life as a monk at the request of his parents. Like most teenagers, he just wanted to play and certainly did not want to think about the rest of his life.

Looking back, however, Tashi said he has no regrets and believes his parents' decision has given him an opportunity to lead a life of peace and eventual liberation from all suffering.

How Tashi arrived in Eugene is a story of friendship. In 1991, Ken Lieberman, a



TASHI

sociology professor at the University, came to the Sera monastery to study Tibetan Buddhism. Tashi, one of the few monks who spoke a little English, befriended Lieberman and introduced him to teachers who Tashi thought could help him best.

Before returning to the United States, Lieberman invited Tashi to visit America. Tashi explained that he knew little of American culture then. He envisioned this country to be wealthy and developed, and he had heard that Americans worked hard and stayed very busy. Though he was content to stay at the monastery, he saw a great opportunity to improve his English.

In the past few years, Western interest in Tibetan Buddhism has sharply risen. Unfortunately, language has been a barrier to accurately communicating Buddha's doctrine. So, Tashi took the chance to better communicate Buddha's teachings and accepted Lieberman's invitation.

This term, Thubten Tashi is teaching an introductory course on Tibetan Buddhism. Because of the inherent difficulty of communicating ideas such as emptiness, suffering, and cyclic existence, students cannot expect to comprehend Buddhism in one brief term. Also, Tashi's English vocabulary is still limited, so students often find it difficult to clearly grasp some of the terse and almost untranslatable concepts.

Tashi said he does not consider himself just a teacher. He simply wishes to share his experience and knowledge with friends while having an opportunity to

improve his speaking skills. The students help him with pronunciation and word usage, and he generously shares his words of compassion. The other joy for Tashi is seeing many students from different religious and non-religious backgrounds come together to learn about Buddhism. Christians, atheists, Taoists, Moslems, and Jews all relate harmoniously and share each others thoughts and feelings.

Buddha encouraged his disciples to become familiar with other religions and to learn from them, Tashi said. So as he shares Tibetan Buddhism, he gains a perspective of many different religions as well.

Tashi said that this cooperative fusing of thoughts could be a wonderful model for how religions can be discussed peacefully without hostility and criticism.

Bill would allow students to arrange health-care coverage

Mara Stine

Oregon Daily Emerald

The state House Commerce Committee unanimously passed Senate Bill 503 Wednesday but the entire House will probably not vote on the bill until next week, said Jane Lesser, the legislative director of the Oregon Student Lobby.

If passed, the bill would allow university students to arrange student health insurance, policies and eliminate non-compliance with current state insurance regulations.

Oregon State University is the only state school where students are in charge of administering insurance policies.

"It's good hands-on experience to know how the insurance policies affect people," said April Waddy, OSU's student body president. Insurance is not as complicated as people think, she said, and students find it easy once they become familiar with the system.

A committee composed of five students, a student health clinic representative and the student body president bids on policies and decides which company to buy from. A consultant researches insurance companies and advises the committee.

Students have administered health insurance at OSU for 20 years, she said.

In 1986, the University administration gave students the responsibility of administering student health insurance. In 1992, the administration reassumed responsibility for the programs and the health center has since taken over that task.

Bob Petit, the University health center's medical administrator, said this is advantageous because professionals who are committed to the health-care field can deal with insurance full-time while students can't.

"These plans are much more complex than they were 10 years ago," he said. "The insurance industry went through

tremendous convulsions with higher premiums and bidding wars."

The University hires an insurance consultant and a student health insurance coordinator, and students help develop insurance policies through a committee of nine students, four faculty members and five representatives from the health center and the University. The committee then tells the health center what it wants to see and the health center works out the details.

"If we were running it contrary to what [the students] wanted to see and/or gouging the student, it would be another story," he said.

However, Waddy said students know what students want, so it makes sense for them to administer the policies.

For instance, OSU students wanted to be insured by a Health Maintenance Organiza-

tion, or HMO, which contracts doctors and hospitals and puts them on a list of preferred providers. HMO's provide coverage to people with insurance who then pay a small fee called a co-payment. The rest of the bill is paid by the insurance company.

OSU signed a contract with SelectCare this fall and students now pay \$150 a term for coverage. With this program, students pay no deductible; clinic visits are free, and students pay \$5 per visit to doctors and hospitals that are on the preferred providers list.

"The students said, 'It's quick; it's easy; it's cheap, and it's everything we want in a plan,' but the administration and health center weren't in favor of an HMO," Waddy said. Now they see the benefits of the plan, because every doctor and pharmacist in Corvallis has a contract with SelectCare, she said.

At the University, the insur-

ance company pays 70 percent of the bill, and students pay a \$200 deductible and any remaining charges. In addition, students must also pay for the plan. A single student plan costs \$572 a year.

"I'm not convinced there is any one approach that is necessarily better than another," Petit said. "Ours is actually cheaper than [OSU's]," he said, referring to a plan for international students, which costs \$492 a year with no deductible.

Bids from HMO companies on next year's policies were more expensive than current ones, he said.

OSU students who pay \$150 for insurance during the summer can go to non-preferred providers anywhere in the United States, Waddy said. SelectCare pays 70 percent of the bill and the students pay the rest.

The University's policies also cover students during the summer, Petit said.

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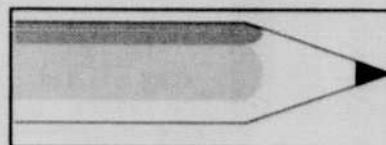


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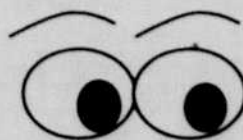
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