

Women in Transition group supports returning students' needs

■ **CHANGE:** Coordinator understands difficult balance between school, work and family

By **Angela Benintendi**
Freelance Reporter

Busy Women in Transition might be a more appropriate name for the ASUO Women's Center support group for returning students.

Lynn Sweet is the new Women in Transition coordinator and the first to make a one-year commitment to the organization.

Sweet, a 46-year-old journalism major, understands the issues facing women who are returning students. Sweet said it is difficult to balance a family, school and work, but more women are making the decision to follow their dreams by going back to school.

"Nationally, we are the fastest growing group of college students," Sweet said.

There are approximately 3,000 women older than 25 who are studying at the University.

Sweet said. The large number may be linked to increasing job opportunities for women or the necessity to become more employable.

Whatever the reason, these women are putting everything on the line to achieve their goals.

"You have to accept that you're taking a vast amount of risks — there is no safety net," Sweet said.

However, there is support. Every Wednesday at noon, the Women in Transition support group meets for an informal brown-bag lunch called NetWIT (Networking Women in Transition). The lunch provides an opportunity for the women to meet and talk about career options and academic planning.

Sharon Bice, a 39-year-old returning student, said sometimes she can't attend the meeting because she just doesn't have the time.

"Some days I just want to say forget it," Bice said.

A single parent, she has a full course load, which means she only sleeps about five hours a night. It is her dream of becoming an artist that keeps her going.

This year, Sweet would like to define the issues that face these women and build a continuous program of workshops that address them. She also hopes to network within the community and develop a program of women helping women to address post-graduation concerns.

Angie Hansen, the co-coordinator for Women in Transition, agrees women returning to school have special needs.

"A lot of women have a perfectionist attitude ... I can't be neurotic about cleaning house and getting good grades anymore ... [Some] women need to learn to be more realistic," Hansen said.

Bice said her children are very supportive of her. They now share the responsibilities of household chores and have accepted the sacrifices for Bice to get an education. Although it is tough, Bice finds time to spend with her family.

"As soon as I get home I sit down with my daughter," Bice said.

Hansen faces the challenge of balancing studying, a working a part-time job and being newly married; which, she says, puts a strain on the relationship.

Hansen, 45, is a psychology major who came back to school to attain a more fulfilling career, but she misses the autonomy that she once had.

"Leaving my job left me dependent upon someone else," Hansen said.

One thing has not changed for Hansen. Before she came to school she was working 55-60 hours a week, which limited her social life. As a student, she still struggles to find time for socializing. The difference is that her present situation is only temporary.

Sweet said that most professors are very understanding when it comes to returning students. Although she always completes her assignments without deadline extensions.

"[I am] operating on guts — it's not a matter of choice and there is no margin for failure," Sweet said.

The pressure is intense. Sweet's day starts at 5:30 a.m. and does not end until 12:30 or 1 a.m. She works in the Women's Center 9 to 12 hours per week, takes 18 credit hours and is a single parent.

However, the sacrifices do not come without rewards. She has seen herself grow and discover worlds that she knew nothing about. She said the learning never stops.

Bice and Hansen agree that it is never too late to continue an education. Many women put their own aspirations on the back burner for the sake of their families, until their children grow up or a marriage fails.

"A divorce can be a very liberating experience," Hansen said.

Sweet wants women to know the Women's Center is a place for women to talk about their concerns anytime they have a spare moment.

In the future, Sweet hopes to establish a class designed for returning students that focuses on the problems which challenge these women daily.

MEChA appeals department for explanation of Spanish instructor's unrenewed contract

■ **DISPUTE:** MEChA members question why Armando Morales' contract wasn't renewed

By **Cindy Long**
Higher Education Editor

After teaching for seven years at the University, Spanish instructor Armando Morales' contract was not renewed by the romance languages department. The department notified Morales' of their decision about one month before this school year began.

Morales, who received his Masters degree at the University, began teaching Spanish as a Graduate Teaching Fellow. He is currently the community advisor for MEChA and continues to participate in student activities.

Twenty members of MEChA, the Chicano/Latino student union, met with Francoise Calin, head of the romance languages department, to ask why the department did not renew Morales' contract last Monday.

Elvia Aguilar, a senior majoring in history and Spanish and MEChA member, said Morales told the union members his contract was not renewed. She said the student group went to Calin on their own and not at Morales request.

"He didn't ask us to do anything about it, but he wanted us to know," Aguilar said.



MORALES

Because individual personnel records are not public information, Calin was restricted to explaining Morales' case in general terms of the department's hiring procedure. "We try to take just the best people," she said. "The best departments are those that have a variety of cultures."

Morales said he was given several different reasons for why his contract was not renewed. "Why?" he said. "That is my question."

Morales said he was told he was not rehired because of three reasons: a lack of student enrollment, his teaching ability and because he was close to reaching senior instructor status.

Calin said senior instructor status had nothing to do with the decision. Morales has taught Spanish for 11 terms, and an instructor must teach for 18 terms before they are even considered for senior instructor status, she said.

In addition, Calin said the only advantage senior instructors have over other instructors is that they must be given a full year's notice if the department is not going to rehire them.

Calin said the department advertises every year for instructors to teach the different romance languages, and from the people who respond to the advertisement, the department creates a hiring pool.

The pool of applicants are ranked in order of ability and each year's instructors are chosen from that pool. The number of students who sign up for classes each term determines the number of instructors the department will hire and often results in last minute hiring decisions, she said.

"Not renewing a contract is always a painful thing," Calin. "We have to consider the good of [all students]."

Morales said the process the department took to inform him he was not going to be hired is one of the things that upset him.

"One of the things that hurt my feelings is the way they treated me," Morales said. "That wasn't fair. If they didn't want to hire me, why didn't they tell me in May?"

However, Morales said despite his difficulties with the department, he does not have any ill feelings towards Calin.

"I respect [Calin]. I don't have anything against her," he said. "But I don't agree with her."

Morales said he currently has a part-time job and has not yet decided whether or not he will file a grievance against the romance languages department.

CORRECTION

It was incorrectly reported in a story about an Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group lawsuit last Wednesday that 65 percent of the student body voted to

fund OSPIRG last year. Only 56 percent of the student body voted to fund OSPIRG. The Emerald regrets the error.

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