

METROPOLITAN

PSU program aids disadvantaged students

by Nathaniel Scott

Portland State University's (PSU's) Director of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, Major Morris, said, this year's spring term pilot project, Big Sister/Big Brother, is paving the way for academic year 1984-85.

The course, to be offered as a three term sequence next academic year, "Will construct a big sister/big brother relationship with an educationally disadvantaged minority group high school student," Morris said. The objective is to help youngsters understand that they have the "capacity to make positive contributions to society."

Ten PSU students are taking part in the pilot project, which, has been working with students from Jefferson High School since last fall. In fact, Morris said, the idea sprang from Nathan "Nate" Jones' concept of "Project Pride."

Two years ago when Jones became principal of Jefferson High School, he began to search the bins of his mind for ways "to get the school involved." And from an earlier concept of "Image Awareness," the more successful, "Project Pride" evolved.

Helping the "educationally disadvantaged" is wonderful, but the under-currents of conversations with Morris goes much deeper than that.

As equal opportunity and affirmative action director at PSU, Morris has a recruitment responsibility. Throughout most of Oregon and parts of Washington, his office concentrates on minorities to "let them know there are specific programs for minority students at PSU." And, from that recruitment responsibility, evolve trends that are detrimental to minority growth.

To begin with, Morris said, "Minorities seem to have the greatest difficulty in getting their financial aid applications in on time." He believes the lack of knowledge, and the understanding of that knowledge, are the reasons

why minorities apply late.

Next, he said, "Minorities lean more towards the liberal arts and social science programs." Which, in effect, are causing minorities to be passed over when opportunities are there, he said. "There are a lot of opportunities, in engineering and business, but you need early course work" to qualify.

"Blacks," he said, "need to look at where the job markets are and where the demands are," adding, "high tech is going to dominate (the future) and many of our kids are not aware (of that fact)."

PSU's minority breakdown, according to Morris, is 11 percent: Blacks 2.2 percent; Native American .9 percent; Asian 6.6 percent; and, Hispanic 1.3 percent.



Major Morris, Director of PSU's Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Program, explains to PSU's big brother and big sister, Xavier Browning and Pamela Simpson, the objectives of the Big Sister/Big Brother program. (Photo: Jerry Taylor)



(l-r) Front Row - Avel Mayfield, Ivy Boslough, Jean Vessup, Phyllis Jackson, Star Waters, and Back Row - Jannice Scroggins, Bobbie Nunn, Marveita Redding, Chris Poole and Michelle Gerald were among the 400 women who attended the second annual Black Women's Gathering on Saturday. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

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Nurses challenge degree requirement

A newly formed nurses' group says that a proposal by the Oregon Nurses Association, to require a four-year degree for nursing, will make the profession accessible only to a small white elite.

Concerned Nurses of Oregon picketed the Oregon Nurses Association convention at the Portland Hilton on April 26th, where the proposal was being discussed. The ONA has been working for the degree requirement since 1966. They say the Baccalaureate of Nursing Science (BSN) is necessary to prepare future nurses for an increasingly complex profession.

But Concerned Nurses of Oregon co-founders Margie Gaul and Kathan Zerzan, both RN's at Bess Kaiser Hospital in North Portland, say the proposal, if successful, would divide the nursing profession into a well-paid white elite with degrees and a majority of lower-paid minority and "technical nurses" without degrees.

Only 20% of nurses have the four-year degree now, they say, while 80% graduate from community college and other less expensive programs. "What they're seeking to do is promote the interests of the 20% at the expense of the 80%," said Gaul.

"Black nurses are under-represented in the profession, and that situation would be extremely aggravated by this proposal," said Zerzan.

Citing U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare figures from 1973, Zerzan said that Black graduates totaled 6.3% of all nursing program graduates. Five percent of four-year BSN graduates were Black, she said, while 10.1% of community college nursing program graduates were Black. Most Black nursing students graduate from non-BSN programs and they would be eliminated from the professional category the Nurses Association wants to set up, said Zerzan, together with its better wages and privileges.

Minority and low-income nursing hopefuls cannot afford the time or money, up to \$10,000 per year, necessary for a four-year degree, she said. Even if they enter four-year colleges, she said, Black nursing students would face a predominately white environment. If the proposal were to go into effect, she said, the percentage of non-white nurses in the professional category would drop to 1%, according to the study.

Most minority nurses work in inner-city hospitals and clinics caring for low-income and minority patients, she said, and less minority nurses would probably mean lower quality care for those patients.

Also, said Gaul, if the law were passed, existing four-year degree programs, already hit hard by budget cuts, would be hard pressed to meet the demand for nurses in the decades ahead. A nursing shortage could result, she said. Nurses would be overworked and patients would suffer from lower quality care.

Nursing practice and on-the-job training is at least as important as a college education, said Gaul. Much of today's sophisticated health care technology can only be learned on the job, she said, and nurses who learn on the job are often more qualified than nurses fresh from a four-year degree program. "It's not only the degree, it's also what a nurse wants to put into the job," said Gaul.

The Nurses Association, say Gaul and Zerzan, is a small, elite and essentially white organization which represents only a minority of nurses, including many nurse supervisors and nurse educators. The degree proposal is an outgrowth of the Nursing Association's elitism, they say.

Gaul and Zerzan say the ONA has met with the governor in the first step of a lobbying effort to make the four-year degree required by state law. Nurses Associations in other states have attempted the same, they say.

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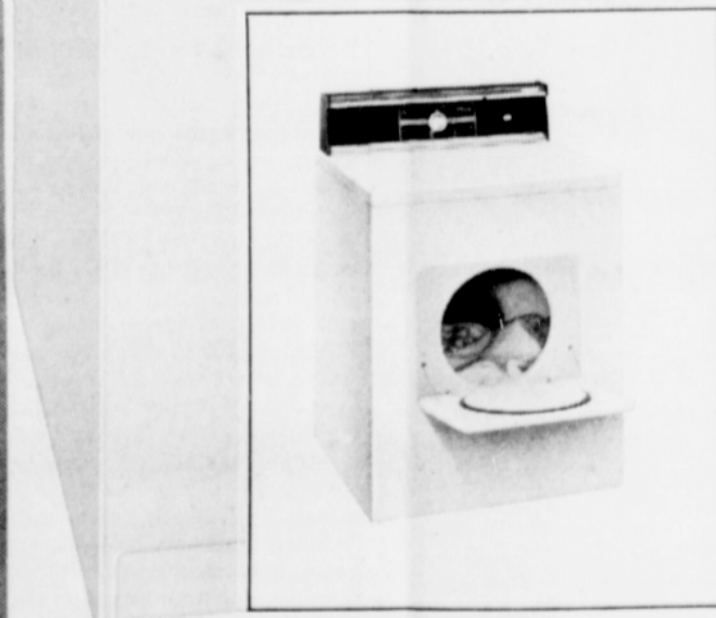
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