

Centennial College— A different type of community

By Dianne Barry

It's a community of the moment, a completely different, nonstructured, interdisciplinary, interpersonal community...The community, by its very nature, is changing...There is no such thing as the Centennial way," said Gene Harding, senior fellow of the Centennial Educational Program.

Senior fellow means that Harding is the chief professor in the program. All the professors, women included, are called fellows.

Centennial Educational Program, often referred to as Centennial College, offers six hours credit a semester, generally with a focus in English, the humanities and social sciences. The student's remaining hours are taken outside of the program in regular university courses.

Centennial's students must register pass/fail in Centennial courses until they reach 24 pass/fail hours.

"We want students to be involved with learning, with no hang ups with grades," Harding said.

Community decisions are made at Town Hall meetings once a week where every student and faculty member has one vote.

"It's an interesting way of administration," Harding said. If a student or faculty member wants something changed, he must go before the meeting and argue his case. Harding said he thinks it's a "healthful way" of working together.

"More people care about the place, but it is more cumbersome," he said.

In Centennial College, ("We're not formally a college, just spiritually," Harding said.) not only do the students change, but the faculty also changes every two years.

"We don't have a lot of stability...it's constantly in flux," Harding said.

He said there's a lot of trial and error and modifying, but by putting the faculty in a position where they change as the students do, it helps to insure Centennial's instability.

"It keeps the place dynamic, exciting and frustrating," Harding said.

Karen Hardy, a senior in anthropology and English, agreed. Hardy has been in the Centennial program four years.

"Some very basic structural things remain stable, but the content and people change. That's good because it's refreshing," she said.

Hardy said she likes the supportive atmosphere for things she wants to do. She said she also likes the informality of men and women living together in one community. The men's rooms are on one side of the building with the women's rooms on the other.

"I'd say it's cohesive in that the people are supportive of each other in an accepting atmosphere," she said.

Cary Peterson, a sophomore in journalism and integrated studies, said he thought the most positive aspect of Centennial was its faculty and student relationships.

"You can work with a fellow very closely or not if you want to. And I think that's very good," he said.

Sue Miller, a junior in English, said she used to be in the Centennial program, but that she still comes back to visit.

"Here there is a basis for people interacting and people that don't live here can react to those that are here," she said.

Linda Young, a freshman in English, agreed, adding that she was not lonely in the program.

"I didn't know it was going to be so friendly," she said.



Gene Harding