

# Special Services helps disadvantaged students

By Susie Reitz

Started in 1970 to help educationally deprived students, Special Services has grown into a department serving hundreds of students a year.

"We are getting more student referrals now," said Joe Renteria, Special Services coordinator. He said many students who come to his office are minority students, but explained that the office helps any financially disadvantaged students. Those referred to the office are checked for financial eligibility by government standards, but Renteria said, "we hardly ever turn people away."

The service has three counselors who work with ethnic minorities. Annette Hudson works with black students, Marty Ramirez with Chicanos and Gordon Kitto with Native Americans.

"I think that much of what we do is not actual 'counseling,' it's more advising and helping students cut red tape," Kitto said.

#### Immediate concerns

"Trying to help with immediate concerns—in academics, housing, or whatever, is the most important thing we do," Hudson said. Students work with her through organizations, she said, and though she does some one-to-one counseling, most of her time is devoted to helping identify and solve minority student problems on campus. Hudson estimated that she sees more than 75 per cent of the black students on campus at one time or another in their college careers.

In addition to seeing individual students, she advises the Minority Roundtable, which advises the chancellor on minority situations and problems on campus. The Roundtable has faculty, administrative and student members.

The most immediate problem for many minority students is finances, Ramirez said.

"Most minority students don't have anything to fall back on. If parents can't come through with money, they don't have any other sources," he said, adding, "the biggest problem comes when the student

is just above the federal poverty standards for financial aid, but his parents are not able to give any money."

Many minority students have work-study jobs or other jobs, Ramirez said.

#### Bureaucracy fight

"Students don't usually come to me with personal problems; they discuss those with peers," said Kitto. "They can get along fine until they have to fight the bureaucracy and that's when I can help them."

Indian students declared a boycott on the Minority Affairs and Special Services last summer because they said they were receiving "insensitive" treatment from the University, Kitto said.

"I think a lot could have been solved if they had gotten the chance to sit down and talk with administrators about their problems before they declared the boycott," Kitto said. Kitto, a graduate student working on a Ph.D. in education, started as Indian adviser last fall and said he is not completely familiar with the situation.

One of the demands, a Native American studies minor, is being developed through Ethnic Studies, Kitto said, but there is still more to do with student input before the program is started.

#### Subtle racism

Any minority student has to put up with a subtle racism, said Ramirez, a graduate student working on a masters degree in Vocational Rehabilitation. Until the student accepts his ethnic background and is proud of it he cannot confront racism, he said.

"Some students come totally unprepared for college academically and socially. Chicano students coming from western Nebraska have a special difficulty," Ramirez noted. "They see high school friends ignoring them and can't understand why," he said. "Others who are average students get the feeling they are expected to perform above average to prove themselves as normal students."

Each minority has one or several organizations

which work with the advisers to meet minority student needs.

Black students have several ethnic-oriented organizations, Hudson said. She works with the leaders of most groups to find out student needs and work on problems.

Black History Week, an annual ethnic-awareness event, was extended to the entire month of February this year, she said, because there were so many activities planned that they would not fit in one week. Programs, movies, concerts, speeches and several parties are scheduled through this month. Students have also made arrangements with residence hall food services to serve "soul food", she said.

#### Working together

The groups have worked closely together this year to prevent overlapping activities, Hudson said. One goal is to acquaint nonminority students with the black culture and to increase their awareness of black students on campus.

Ramirez is the adviser for MASA (Mexican-American Student Assoc.). MASA is the only Chicano organization on campus, he said.

Various cultural and social activities are planned to help the Chicano student develop pride in his ethnic background, he said.

Most minority students have expressed the need for more minorities on the University staffs and are interested in developing more programs in minority studies, Ramirez said. He said more awareness of minorities and their ideas would help eliminate minority stereotypes.

Although most of the Special Service program is minority-oriented, Kitto said, "Special Services is not set up just for minority students, like some students think. We are here to serve all students on the campus who have a need for aid."

Special Services is under the "umbrella" of Minority Affairs, Renteria explained, but is specifically for the "economically disadvantaged minority of students, not the ethnic minorities."

## Awards based on student opinion

Student opinion plays a large role in selecting distinguished teaching award winners, said Jim O'Hanlon, acting chairman of the UNL Teaching Council.

A faculty member cannot receive the award if he doesn't have strong student evaluations, he said.

Distinguished teaching awards have been given since 1954. In earlier years two awards were given but the number was increased to five in 1967 and six in 1973.

The character of the awards has changed since they were started, O'Hanlon said.

There recently has been more emphasis on teaching quality at UNL, O'Hanlon said, so teaching is the sole criterion for the awards.

Since 1971 the teaching council, a committee of the UNL Faculty Senate which has three student members, has assisted the vice chancellor for academic affairs in selecting winners.

The council reviews nominations and makes recommendations to the vice chancellor.

Recipients of the awards, which will be presented at the spring honors convocation, receive a medallion and \$1,000.

Nominations for the six awards are being accepted until Feb. 15 in the various colleges. Nomination procedures differ—information can be obtained at the deans' offices.

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