

ADAPT program copied by other colleges

Freshmen learn through experience, not textbooks, in 11-year-old program

By Milli King
Staff Reporter

Incoming freshmen at UNL could avoid overcrowded classrooms, boring lectures and endless textbooks by taking the ADAPT program.

The program — Accent on Developing Abstract Processes of Thought — is the first of its kind in the United States. It encourages students to reason and think — not just memorize. Robert Fuller, a UNL physics professor, pioneered ADAPT in 1975.

ADAPT students assume responsibility for their own learning, and classes emphasize experience, not textbooks or lectures, Fuller said.

"The ADAPT classes stress the importance of learning from other students," he said. "Many small-group learning activities are carried out in the ADAPT program."

The students work closely with both their peers and professors, he said.

ADAPT, which offers courses in social and natural sciences, humanities and math, is designed to contribute to students' general education, Fuller said.

"While ADAPT is neither an honors program nor a remedial program," the ADAPT brochure says, "it has proved beneficial and stimulating to a wide range of students as they enter university-level work."

ADAPT enrollment increased from 44 to 66 students this semester.

Acts as model

ADAPT has become a model for U.S. education programs, Fuller said. ADAPT staff members have been hosts at many workshops at U.S. colleges and universities, he said.

"We've been everywhere," Fuller said. "We've had a lot of influence on the curriculum" at other colleges and universities, he said.

However, many of the ADAPT-like programs have died because their federal funding has been cut, Fuller said.

ADAPT, which received federal money in the past, now relies on Rudy Lewis, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, to allocate about \$10,000 a year for the program.

"ADAPT is not a budgeted program," Fuller said. "If the vice chancellor says, 'No money,' that will kill the program the following year."

Fuller said ADAPT faculty members make a commitment to the program to get support from departments.

Questioned low grades

Kurt Krugerud, a past ADAPT student, said he was impressed with the program.

"The instructors stressed a format of learning by interaction, not just a passive atmosphere where the student merely takes notes," said Krugerud, a senior psychology major.

Fuller said he began examining classroom behavior more than a decade ago, when he questioned students' low grades in his classroom.

"I wondered what was going on," he said. "How come students aren't doing better than that?"

At a conference, Fuller discovered the work of Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, who emphasized cognitive development.

Piaget said people progress from being "concrete thinkers," who manipulate symbols and organize data, to "formal thinkers," who deal with hypothetical situations and the effects of variables.



Andrea Hoy/Daily Nebraskan

Professor Robert Fuller explains a telephone survey to ADAPT students Jennifer McDowell and Ron Dote during their computer class.

With other UNL professors, Fuller explored the use of Piaget's theories in the classroom. The professors met on Friday afternoons and taught one another, using Piaget's methods, as though they were standing in front of a freshman class.

Eleven years ago, the ADAPT program, based on Piaget's learning-theories, started with the aid of an Exxon Educational Foundation grant.

Fuller, whom The Chronicle of Higher Education called a "pioneer in the application of Piaget's theories to college teaching," said

teachers must listen to students in their own language to determine what type of reasoning the students are using — concrete or formal.

Many college freshmen have not progressed from concrete thinking to formal thinking, he said.

ADAPT students are expected to take an interdisciplinary nine-hour package of special ADAPT courses aimed at teaching them to think better.

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Broyhill Fountain spouts last splash

From Staff Reports

Several things mark the change from fall to winter at UNL: the last home football game, the first snow, and the draining of Broyhill Fountain outside the Nebraska Union. All three finally have occurred.

The fountain splashed Tuesday morning while snow blew and people huddled against the cold. But early in the afternoon the fountain was shut down for the winter.

The fountain usually is turned off after the last home football game of the year, said Harley Shrader, director of the physical plant.

"They just didn't get to it until today," Shrader said.

He said UNL tries to keep the fountain running as long as weather permits.

The water was drained Tuesday afternoon, he said, and the fountain pipes should be damaged by the cold.

Front row best, UNL official says

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He said it takes good actors to get the audience to be a part of the stage.

Wright said students need to realize that they are partly responsible for student-instructor interaction.

She suggested that students should sit near the front of the classroom where there is the best chance of clarity and less distraction.

Ward Sybouts, interim dean for the UNL Division of Continuing Studies and professor of educational administration, curriculum and instruction, said students often are too shy to speak up in class. Many students don't ask questions because they don't want to show their ignorance, he said.

"On the other end of the scale," Sybouts said, "students' mouths may run when their brain stops."

Students can get to the point of asking too many irrelevant questions, he said.

Good communication skills are important for jobs, Wright said. Such skills are a prerequisite for many jobs.

Robert Brown, professor of educational psychology, said the participants are most likely to be the achievers. But not all jobs require the "risk-takers," he said.

"It is a manner of balance when you go out for a job," Sybouts said. "In the classroom, you should talk just enough to get that A. When you go to apply for a job, you should talk just enough to get that job."

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