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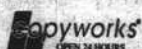
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Attitude toward classes changing

CLASSES from page 1

an insight on other races or cultures," Adkins said. "But when you know you have to come and do it, it's tough."

Brett Davis, a junior business administration major, sits next to Adkins in Kaye's class.

Davis said the class would not be his first choice, if not for the requirement.

"I don't think it's worthless," he said. "I'd just rather be learning other things."

Both Adkins and Davis said they would prefer taking ethnicity classes within their major field of study.

Though the university-wide requirement wasn't instituted until 1995, at least two colleges were ahead of the game.

The College of Arts and Sciences, began requiring three credit hours in non-western and minority cultures in 1983, said Anne Kopera, director of advising for the college.

The Teachers College instituted a requirement for multicultural classes in 1990, said Jim Cotter, director of advising for the college.

Smith has been here through all the changes.

After his undergraduate work, he worked as a graduate student with the Lincoln Public School system.

In 1973, he was hired in the Office of Minority Affairs, and he has been at UNL ever since.

Students today are different than they were in the '60s, he said.

"Today's student does not understand the value of diversity," Smith said. "They blindly take the classes because it meets an academic requirement."

"It is only after you get out in the real world when you say 'Oh, man, I wish I had.' That's a shame, but a lot of education may fit under that."

When Smith was a student, it was different, he said.

"In the '60s, our nation was young," he said. "We believed in the ideal that America was for everyone and in the concept of democracy."

Smith said people threw those dreams away in the '70s and '80s.

"In the '60s, we were innocent," he said. "We tested those beliefs and found out people didn't believe. We're in a middle ground now. Some believe, and some don't."

Diversity classes are a positive step toward convincing more students, Smith said. They bridge the knowledge gap and promote awareness.

Kaye has taught Native American Literature at UNL for 23 years. She has noticed a difference in the attitudes of students in her classes.

In past years, many students were angry at her for making them feel guilty, she said.

But this year, students have been much more curious and receptive.

"I just want people to be aware of what happened (to the American Indians)," Kaye said. "Before, people were saying 'I didn't do anything. It's not my fault.' Now, it's more of 'why didn't anybody tell me this before?'"

Tom Calhoun, director of the Institute for Ethnic Studies, said gender and ethnicity classes prepare students for a global economy.

"We live in a very complex society," he said. "The courses should enable students to appreciate differences and help them to overcome the idea that difference implies inferiority."

"The classes expose students to the lives of people normally left on the outside."

Progress has been made since the 1960s, but it is still not a perfect world, Calhoun said.

"The '60s was a very stressful time," he said. "We were undergoing a shift in paradigms. People were challenging segregation and trying to get people to look at other people in a new way."

Smith said the best way to learn more about minorities was to associate with them.

"Students should know and associate with such persons," Smith said. "But students are looking for the shortest way through. Just doing the course work is not enough. It's never been enough. That's just the beginning."

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