

CITY NEWS

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AIDS Prevention Has Low Priority at Cabrillo

With AIDS moving into the number six slot as a leading cause of death among the 13 to 24 year old age group, critics charge that Santa Cruz County's largest college is doing little to stop the spread of the disease.

Cabrillo College, with almost 14,000 students, has been unable to approve any policy guidelines or implement any organized educational effort regarding AIDS. Apathy seems to reign at all levels of the Cabrillo population.

"I'm very frustrated with the Cabrillo system in terms of making sure there is enough education," said Ruth Mota of the Santa Cruz AIDS Project (SCAP).

There doesn't seem to be any AIDS education in the classroom according to student Julie Carroll, who, with another student, organized the AIDS Awareness Week in February. In her three years at Cabrillo, Carroll, who hopes for a career in public health education, hasn't experienced any in-class AIDS instruction.

This doesn't surprise local AIDS activists who have been trying to increase educational efforts at Cabrillo for years. Sharon Martinez, director of community services for Planned Parenthood, said historically there has been resistance to outreach efforts by Cabrillo's administration. "It's really rare to get invited [to Cabrillo]," she said, adding that her organization has not gone to Cabrillo for AIDS education this year.

Capturing students' attention outside the classroom is also difficult. Carroll called the response to AIDS Awareness Week "disap-

pointing." Few students showed up for the extracurricular presentations. A table set up by SCAP during the week in the Fireside Lounge which adjoins the cafeteria was no more successful at attracting student interest. "Although the cafeteria was packed, very few students approached us," said Mota.

Perhaps more distressing to Mota were the interactions she had with students. "We were very clear that there was a tremendous amount of misinformation and admission of risky behavior," she said.

"It's unfortunate," Carroll said. "Students working toward bettering their lives, toward their future, ten years down the line will turn up HIV-positive."

Because voluntary student education has reached only a small audience, Mota and Carroll stress the need for classroom involvement. But for the most part the faculty at Cabrillo have not demonstrated a commitment to the effort. A summer seminar offered to Cabrillo faculty by SCAP drew only seven participants.

Meanwhile the Cabrillo administration appears to have little sense of urgency regarding the problem. Elaine Deitch, a clinical nurse working for Cabrillo's Health Services, served on a task force charged with developing policy guidelines for AIDS education. The recommendations of the committee were submitted to the administration in January and have yet to be approved, she said.

As of press time, Cabrillo officials had not responded.

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