

# COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CX, Number 97, 21 March 1986 — AIDS group takes stock of previous conclusions  
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## AIDS group takes stock of previous conclusions

By **AMY BAYER**

The University AIDS Committee has announced it is compiling a document summarizing AIDS policy agreements made at meetings over the past few months.

Committee member Richard Carlson, director of University Health Services, has already completed a draft of the document, which the committee will begin reviewing at today's meeting.

Carlson said some members of the committee wanted to see their decisions on paper to make certain their viewpoints were accurately represented. The committee has not recorded official minutes from its past meetings.

Senior Vice President Joseph Mullinix, the committee's chair, has criticized the group's slow progress in the past. But despite his criticism, Mullinix said he thought the docu-

ment would require a lot of time to review.

“We are going to have to look at the document closely and gradually enlarge and refine it,” Mullinix said.

“There’s something to be said about getting out a quick and dirty policy, and something to be said for going slowly. If we sit down and see what we have done so far by carefully reading this document, then we will have a sense of what the open issues are,” Mullinix said.

The committee is also planning to publish a formal report of its findings sometime in the future.

The committee’s final report will not focus on specific issues but will state more of a comprehensive policy, according to Mullinix.

“I think what we will find is that the AIDS committee’s general conclusions will all fit on one piece of paper,” Carlson said.

Carlson said it was important for the committee to issue a formal report because other universities are looking to Columbia to see what it is doing about the problem.

“We must realize that we are in an area that has a lot of AIDS patients. Although AIDS cases have been found in all 50 states, they have clustered in a few centers and we are in one of those centers,” Carlson said.

One of the issues facing the committee is the “monitoring” of AIDS patients affiliated with the University. According to Mullinix, committee members were concerned about the ambiguity of the word “monitoring.”

These concerns led the committee to decide that a monitoring system that follows or screens AIDS patients should not be established at Columbia, Carlson said.

“Committee members felt they did not have a sense of what monitoring means. I have the sense that it means people should be followed, but I am not clear how long and how far they should be followed. I think in some of the literature we have read on AIDS policies, the word “monitoring” has been used with no obvious justification,” Mullinix said.

“‘Monitoring’ has a connotation that people on the committee weren’t crazy about. It is an authoritarian kind of word as opposed to the terms ‘health education’ or ‘counseling’ that do not sound as threatening,” Carlson said.

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The committee has also discussed the potential for discrimination by insurance companies towards AIDS patients.

Mullinix said the nature of the contracts Columbia has with its insurance carriers makes it impossible for the carriers to lose money from benefits paid to AIDS patients. But he said Columbia should still be aware of the discrimination that occurs.

"There is a real potential for discrimination by insurance companies with lab test information and demographics available. Insurance companies are businesses and the temptation is there to exclude people who might cost them money," Mullinix said.

"Our sense is that the carriers we deal with would not be inclined to do this. If the insurance rates go up, this would be a burden we would want to accept," Mullinix said.

The AIDS Committee also plans to examine the first draft of an educational pamphlet on facts about the disease, which they eventually intend to distribute.

"Besides offering health facilities for AIDS patients, health education is the University's primary job. It is the University's role to make accurate up-to-date information available," Carlson said.

The committee does not know when this pamphlet will be ready for distribution, Mullinix said.

"I think it is fair to say that the pamphlet will take less time to discuss and complete by the committee than the [policy] document," Mullinix said.

The pamphlet was put together by the Gay Health Advocates, (GHA) the only existing AIDS education group on campus. Recently, Mullinix rejected a GHA request for additional funding to continue their projects.

Mullinix said he does not think the AIDS Committee ought to discuss the financial problems of the Gay Health Advocates.

"I don't think that discussion has anything to do with committee projects," Mullinix said.

According to Mullinix, a lack of funding is a problem for many campus groups and is not unique to GHA.

"None of us have quite enough money, unfortunately, to do what we have to do," Mullinix said.

Michael Dowling, AIDS Committee member and GHA coordinator said he thinks the AIDS Committee and GHA should try to work together again on some educational projects.

"I would like to see collaboration in the future between the Gay Health Advocates and the AIDS committee. The committee will have to discuss if this collaboration should take place and if so what it will be," Dowling said.



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Joseph Mullinix