

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXII, Number 179, 18 November 1988 — Rodgers optimistic about talks with peer educators
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Rodgers optimistic about talks with peer educators

By Rachel Hall

While refusing to comment on the status of current negotiations, Kathryn Rodgers, general counsel and vice president of Barnard College, says she remains optimistic about working out an agreement with the Barnard AIDS Peer Educators (APE).

“I suspect there is much less disagreement than people really think,” Rodgers said.

On October 20 Rodgers ordered the group to discontinue its informational sessions until it agrees to supervision by Barnard Health Services. Rodgers said she imposed the moratorium because doctors, not students, should have the last word on medical information relayed to students.

“The issue here is that the college administration has the accountability for information like this relayed on our campus,” Rodgers said.

However, APE Coordinator Leslie Kantor, CC '89, said at an APE meeting Wednesday night that the administration is not responsible for the information peer educators relay.

Group members assert they are continuously updated by experts who are more knowledgeable about the subject of AIDS than Barnard Health Services personnel.

Members said in Wednesday's meeting that one reason they have refused to work with Barnard Health Services, in addition to disagreements over the curriculum, was an uneasiness with at least one piece of medical information distributed to students by Barnard, stating that twice as many women who use oral contraceptives contract AIDS than those who don't.

"What we've discovered when we investigated the study was that it was a survey of 1,000 prostitutes in Nairobi," Kantor said Wednesday. "We're very hesitant to work with a health service that thinks that kind of misleading, alarmist information is okay."

Rodgers countered that "AIDS research and AIDS information is very complex, and misinformation can come out of that easily. That's why we're having discussions."

Rodgers refused to comment on any of the medical issues on which APE and the administration disagree, their continuing discussions about the curriculum or on petitions circulated in Wednesday's meeting which expressed dissatisfaction with the moratorium.

Dr. Harriet Mogul, assistant clinical professor of pediatrics at Barnard, who has been a liaison between the group and health services, could not be reached for comment.