

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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Expedite AIDS education

To the Editor:

We are writing to clarify many of the points Spectator printed in the Jan. 31 article, "AIDS Peer Educators now a CU group" and its accompanying sidebar "Groups at other schools are affiliated with health services." Spectator was extremely biased in its selection of programs to represent AIDS education. Our advisor, Marc Ostfield, provided Spectator with a long list of contacts. Unfortunately, Spectator chose to discuss those groups with health service affiliations.

Many schools including Sarah Lawrence College and Stanford and Temple Universities have AIDS education programs

that are not affiliated with a health service. Moreover, all of the programs Spectator mentioned were advised by a health educator. Barnard does not have a health educator which the AIDS Peer Educators (APE) have continually cited as a problem.

In addition, Spectator asserted that "APE members...demanded that they be allowed to conduct educational forums without health services supervision." We did ask medical staff from Barnard Health Services to join our advisory board in October. They refused this position. We are a highly supervised group and our advisors are on the cutting edge of AIDS education and information.

Furthermore, Barnard Health Services has chosen to distribute information that is highly alarmist and misleading. For example, on Oct. 17, 1988 a flyer distributed to all Barnard students contained information which was misleading and inappropriate. At the time, no AIDS education was available on campus. We, as a group, will not give out information which is unsound or inappropriate. Many other arguments over substantial issues in the curriculum were not resolved because Barnard refused to allow professionals knowledgeable about AIDS to be present at meetings between APE and administrators.

Barnard would have Spectator and the University community believe that we ended discussions prematurely. Our purpose has been and always will be to provide responsible, accurate, and understandable AIDS education for our peers. It is a shame that Barnard chose to deprive students of critical information during an epidemic in which losing time can mean losing lives.

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The Columbia AIDS Peer Educators