

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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Health Area Receives Face-Lift

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Students already fighting off sniffles, coughs, and headaches as they returned to Columbia this fall discovered a larger and more organized area in which they could await medical attention.

Renovations to the waiting and reception areas of the Health Services offices on the third and fourth floors of John Jay Hall continued from May 20 to Aug. 21. Changes were made in response to criticisms in a recent accreditation report. Health Services passed every standard but was faulted for a lack of space. The renovations, meant to provide for greater patient access and privacy, were also undertaken in response to student complaints.

Health Services had a \$150,000 budget for the project, supported by surplus money from previous years. According to Margo Amgott, executive director of Health and Related Services, they did not use all the available money, but the exact amount spent has not yet been calculated.

When counseling and psychological services moved to Lerner Hall last year, the John Jay offices were provided with the necessary space to go forward with what Amgott called "modest renovations." They waited until the summer, when the flow of students is lightest, to begin expanding the area.

A wider reception counter close to the office's main entrance makes it the first thing people see when they enter. The triage area, where health practitioners tend to patients needing immediate care, is also closer to the main entrance. Previously, it had been hard for a triage patient to see a doctor alone. Now, there is a private examining room and two new rooms with doors that give patients additional privacy.

The appointment phones were also moved from the main reception desk to three side alcoves in order to provide privacy. The nursing clinics, such as the travel clinic, were moved from the third to the fourth floor, as were the reception area for HIV testing and the enrollment and insurance office. The third floor now has more exam rooms devoted to patient care, and 90 percent of the health care providers are located there. Small cosmetic changes, such as new paint and carpets, were also made.

Employee Mary McKercher said that in the previous area, "[Patients and staff members] were all on top of each other." The changes were made, she said, in order to "improve

the flow of patients and make the place run more smoothly." She said that so far the staff is satisfied with the changes and that students are moving through the clinic more quickly and in a more private fashion.

Joanna Kolb, CC '03, said that Health Services now seems "more efficient," and that she has received "more personal attention."

Dr. Jane Bidell, associate director of Health Services, added that the changes are just one step toward making the medical system at Columbia more "user-friendly." The staff members are also working on improving their brochures and website.

Additionally, they are in the process of adding a conference table in a central location where doctors and nurses can consult medical reference books.

Amgott said that student feedback and suggestions are encouraged. She said comments have generally been positive. Suggestions can be sent via phone or e-mail to Amgott or Bidell or to the Student Health Advisory Committee. There are also suggestion boxes around the health offices for written comments.