

"People to People" program continues in summer

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The "People-to-People" program at the University of California, San Diego, designed to bring community and student/faculty groups together for down-to-earth discussions, has proved so successful that it will continue to operate during the summer months.

The program has not shut down this summer even though classes are not in session in the hopes that useful discussions will continue to improve understanding in periods of relative calm just as they did during recent crises.

In recent years, most issues of vital concern to the nation have resulted in some form of expression of concern on the college and university campuses. Unfortunately, the form of expression which the general public most frequently hears or reads about has been destructive, generating a hostility between the academic community and large segments of the public.

During the past school year, when a great many crises plagued the majority of U.S. campuses, several student and faculty groups at UCSD began to organize direct discussion sessions between academic and community groups with the aim of developing a better flow of information, greater understanding, and a mutual recognition of sincere concern on both sides.

The discussions operated on a small scale until last spring when the U. S. involvement in Cambodia triggered campus upheavals across the nation. UCSD Chancellor William J. McGill, realizing that lack of communication and understanding existed, announced the existence of the discussion groups over television and urged that students and faculty be invited into the homes, churches and meeting halls of the community.

The program immediately jumped to over 100 groups a week being invited into the community bringing nearly 3,000 persons into direct communication with students and faculty, something that had never been done before in the San Diego area. At last count, some 75 faculty members and nearly 400 students had taken part.

The program functions simply by receiving calls from the public at the Student Information Center, 453-3362 (453-EDNA is an easy way to remember it) requesting a group for a discussion session. In most cases the groups meeting in private homes consist of 15 or 20 friends and neighbors who gather to talk with 2 or 3 students and one faculty member. Church groups and clubs often involve more students and several faculty members.

Since no attempt is made to screen the students or faculty members with regard to their views on issues, the programs have not functioned as a campaign for specific purposes. Better understanding by each side toward the other is the aim and so far, almost without exception, has been the rule.