

CAMPUS

Students gain practical job experience

BY JULIE POUCHER

Decisions. Decisions. Junior economics major Christopher Garcia says he thinks he wants to go to law school, but senior sociology major Gretchen Koch is unsure about her post-Trinity plans.

Since 1977, Trinity students have participated in off-campus practicums, interning at juvenile detention centers, battered women shelters, the State Human Services Department, the Christian Assistance Ministry and law offices.

"It's a chance to try out a career," said Professor John Lindquist, who has overseen the practicum program for the past seven years.

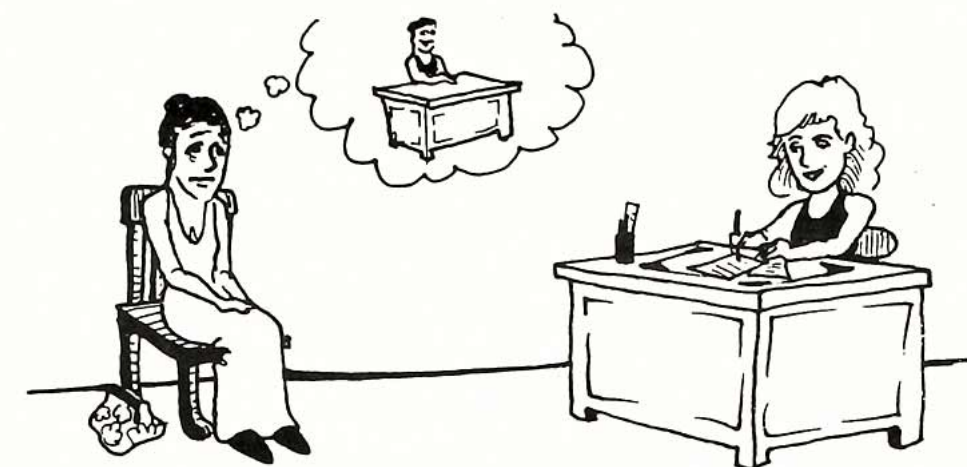
Working 150 hours per semester, sociology interns Koch, Garcia and Gail Thom are also earning three hours of class credit.

"It is enough hours to know what's happening so [students] can make a judgment [about the career]," Lindquist said.

According to Lindquist, any student can participate in a practicum. The hours may be counted as an elective for non-sociology majors or minors.

Because learning is the most important objective of the program, Lindquist has a policy of not offering paid internships.

"Payment changes their role. There is always that chance that [the student] will become a gofer. These people are treated as



interns. They are there to learn what that person knows," Lindquist said.

This semester, Garcia is working with attorney Dennis Bujnoch. Garcia worked at a large corporate law firm this summer, but he said he is enjoying working in the "more human, more laidback" atmosphere of Bujnoch's personal injury office.

"The attorney is willing to talk about where his thought processes come from and is willing to talk about the case," Garcia said.

Although he said he is not sure he wants to practice law, Garcia said he appreciates the opportunity his practicum has given him to explore the legal field.

Koch is also examining career possibilities in her internship at the Christian Assis-

tance Ministry. Koch interviews people to determine the amount of financial aid the ministry can give them. She said her job can be frustrating because it requires her to follow guidelines to restrict the amount of aid she can allocate to applicants. For example, the ministry can only give monetary aid once a year to each family (\$20 for utility bills or \$25 for rent). Koch also has to verify the number of members in a family in order to fairly distribute groceries donated by HEB, Kroger and the San Antonio Foodbank.

When the ministry gives out bus tokens for trips to the doctor's office, Koch must verify that the trip took place. "[Recipients have] been caught selling bus tokens to buy beer," she said.

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According to Koch, social workers have to counsel their volunteers, who become frustrated when they feel they cannot help enough.

"I'm helping a little bit who I can, but I can't help everybody," Koch said.

Still uncertain whether she wants to pursue social work professionally, Koch said she is gaining a valuable learning experience from her internship.

In order to receive a grade for their educational experiences, students are required to keep a running journal of their experiences and turn in a critique at the end of the semester for review by Lindquist.

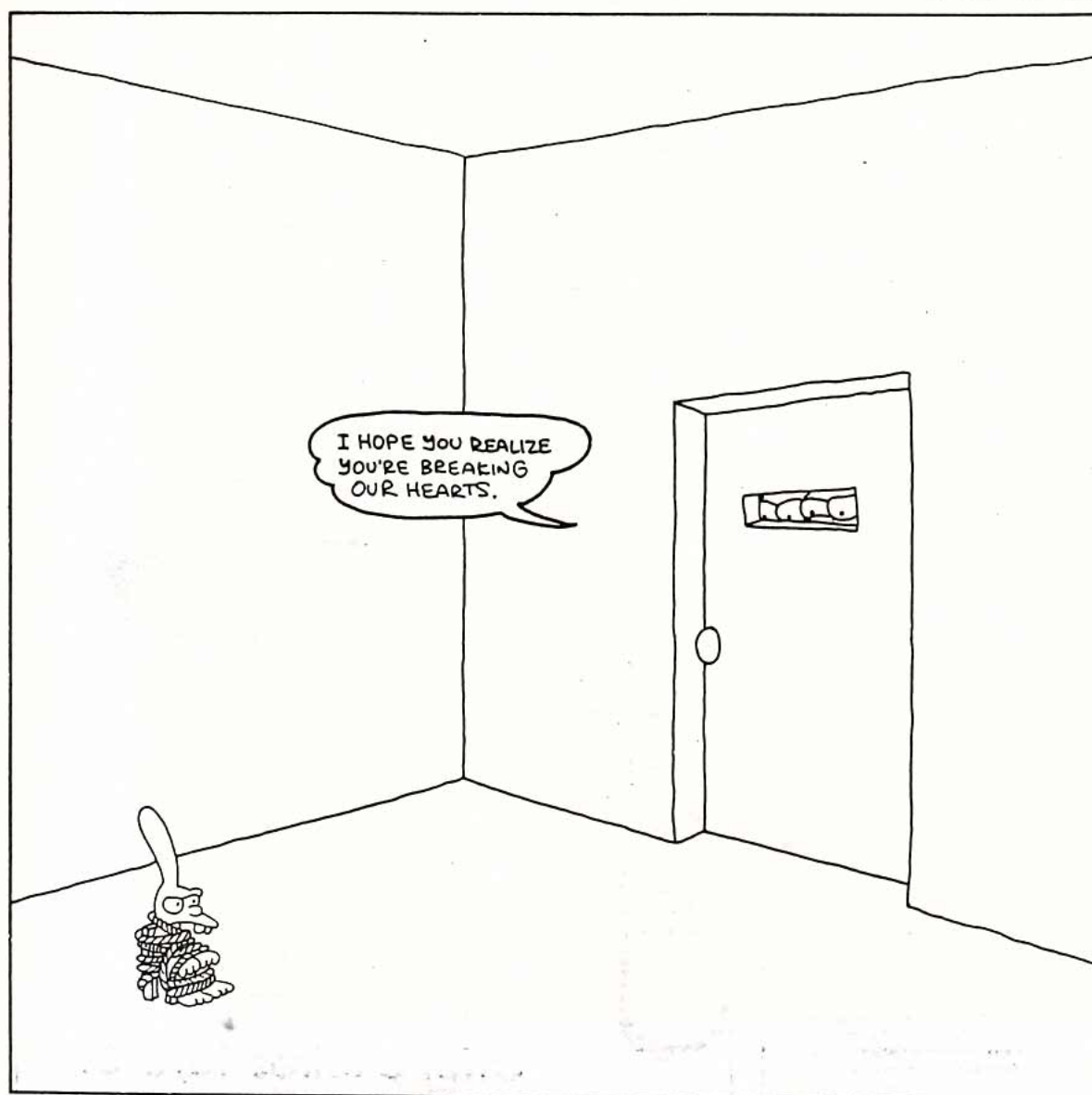
Lindquist said he has received praise from the organizations who have sponsored internships for Trinity students. He said the groups characterize the participants as "motivated, capable, punctual, hard working students."

According to Lindquist, Trinity students are well-matched for the challenges that sociology practicums can present. "Any student who comes in, I'm confident they can do the work. In fact there are more requests for students than I can fill."

Lindquist advises students interested in practicums to try an internship for a week. If, after that time, a student is dissatisfied, she can transfer to a different practicum, he said.

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