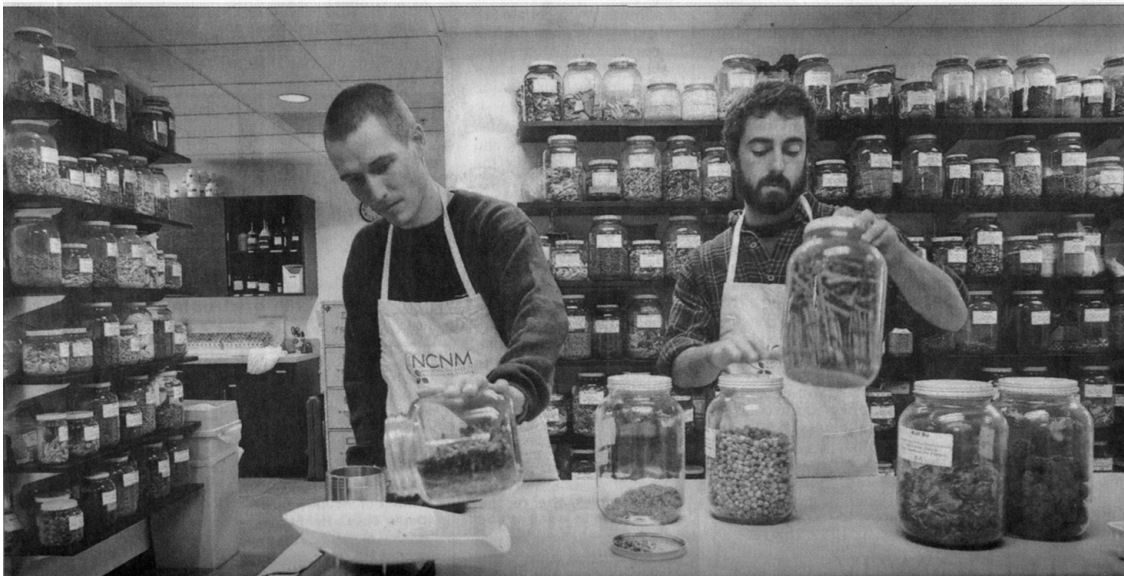


"Oregon can take some pride in nurturing naturopathic medicine for as long as it has."

David Schleich,
president, National College of Naturopathic Medicine



A home for healers

A clinic brings natural medicine to the campus of a Portland college that turns out holistic practitioners

By ANDY DWORKIN
THE OREGONIAN

The health clinic opened like many new buildings: The college president thanked dozens of people, the mayor cut a red ribbon with oversized scissors, the crowd cheered.

But the clinic that opened Friday is at the National College of Naturopathic Medicine, the main U.S. school for naturopaths. So the ceremony also featured a drum circle and a "corporate shaman" — also the college board chair — who talks about quantum physics and has anointed the campus with cornmeal.

This mix of business-as-usual with ancient instruments and New Age ideas captures the spirit of the \$2.2 million clinic, the biggest natural medicine clinic in Portland and maybe in the world, said the college's president, David Schleich.

College leaders say the clinic will



ABOVE | Students Tim Rudowsky (left) and Matt Elliott weigh and mix kun bu, or medicinal kelp, and other Chinese healing herbs in the medinary of the new clinic at Portland's National College of Natural Medicine.

LEFT | The new NCNM clinic will treat roughly 20,000 patients and train hundreds of students like Alysha Barbour, who gives an acupuncture treatment as instructor Youping Qin watches.

Photos by
DOUG BEGHEL
THE OREGONIAN

offer about 20,000 patients holistic health care, from throat cultures for strep to moxibustion, a Chinese treatment that uses smoldering mugwort to affect the flow of energy. A large "medicinary" holds jar after jar of shaved water buffalo horn, blue cohosh and other Chinese and Western

medicinal herbs.

The clinic will also help the school increase the number of healers it trains. The college grew from about 400 students in 2000 to 517 today and aims for nearly 600 students by 2011. That will help fill a shortage of

Please see **MEDICINE**, Page C2

Medicine: Sliding scale on fees reflect income level

Continued from Page C1

primary health care providers in Oregon and nationwide, college leaders say.

"We have grand plans for a research center, a library and a community cafeteria," as well as a garden and student life center, said Nancy Garbett, board chairwoman and president of Corporate Shaman Inc. "So watch us grow."

Portland's an appropriate home for a large natural health clinic, said Schleich, a medical historian. State rules and the rise of scientific Western medicine made it tough for naturopaths to practice in some states in the

20th century. But naturopathic medicine has fared well in Oregon, he said: The state's naturopathic physician association celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, and naturopaths will get broader prescribing powers in January.

"Oregon can take some pride in nurturing naturopathic medicine for as long as it has," Schleich said.

And the college nurtured natural medicine nationwide. More than half the naturopaths now practicing in the United States trained at the college, Schleich said — though just where they trained has changed from the postal building downtown, where students saw patients one floor above the cadaver lab, to an outer Southeast site where patients were treated in trailers.

"The medicine grew fast, especially in the '90s, and we outgrew that (Southeast) clinic. It was small. It was out of the way," said Jill Stanard, the college's clinical operations director.

In 1996, classes moved to the

college's current home near the west end of the Ross Island Bridge. But the school's clinics were split, with Chinese medicine practiced in Northwest Portland and natural medicine downtown. That meant long commutes and inconvenience for students and patients alike, Schleich said.

The best thing about the new clinic, he said, is that it unites the college's treatment programs "under one roof, so that patients can get those services conveniently in one place."

The new clinic covers 18,000 square feet, more than both old clinics combined. Its 34 treatment rooms are large, to comfortably hold students, faculty, patients and companions. The building also holds conference rooms where students and faculty can consult on treatment plans, and a new lab.

Architects and a feng shui consultant helped the college gut out the blocky 1960s industrial building, which previously held software offices, to

make a light-filled, sustainable space. White walls, skylights and transom windows brighten the building. Eco-friendly finishes include soy-based concrete stain and nontoxic paint donated by Portland's Miller Paint Co. The Chinese medicine rooms have extra ventilation systems to clear smoke made by moxibustion treatments.

The clinic has already treated some patients, Stanard said, and is ready for more. About half the clinic's patients have some insurance coverage for natural and Chinese medicine. The rest are charged on a sliding scale, with lower prices for people whose incomes are less than twice the federal poverty level.

"There's a great need for really good, prevention-oriented medicine," which Stanard said the college can fill. "Healing is just too big to fit into one paradigm."

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