

Embrace your inner "thetan"

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Scientology, long a fixture in downtown Clearwater, has recently started to make its presence felt at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg.

On several occasions last month, Scientologists handed out fliers offering a free personality test called the Oxford Capacity Analysis in front of Davis Hall and on the corner of Second Street South and Sixth Avenue South.

They also set up a table in the student lounge once a month where they offer a stress test and pass out literature.

Linda Tucker, director of the Scientology Life Improvement Center in downtown St. Petersburg and a church member for 20 years, said Scientology offers tools to help students cope with the stresses of study relationships.

Some students do not welcome Scientology on campus.

Ryan Carpenter, a freshman at USF St. Petersburg from Spring Hill said a woman handed him a flyer as he walked to class and asked if he wanted to take a free personality test.

He took the flyer, but when he realized it was Scientology literature he handed it back.

"Go away and leave us alone," he told her.

Students who complete the personality test may mail the completed form to the outreach center in downtown St. Petersburg, and a Scientology representative contacts the student to set up an appointment for an analysis.

Tucker said the Life Improvement Center opened in March and offers a range of services to the community in addition to the personality test, including IQ and aptitude tests, all free of charge.

She said student response to their presence on campus was good.

Scientology, a religion founded by science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard in 1954, studies the spirit's relationship between itself, others and all of life, according to an official Scientology Web site, www.scientology.org.

Scientologists believe a person's spirit can be cleared of past painful experiences through a process called "auditing," freeing the person of the burdens that interfere with happiness and self-realization, according to the Columbia Encyclopedia.

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The Oxford Capacity Analysis, also called the American Personality Analysis, contains 200 questions and claims to accurately measure personality traits, according to the flier.

Tucker said she did not know the origin of the test or how it got its name.

The Church of Scientology's Religious Technology Center holds the copyrights for both Oxford Capacity Analysis and OCA, according to the trademark notice on its Web site.

Scientology critic Andreas Heldal-Lund said on his Web site that the test has no association with Oxford University, but was developed by psychologist Julia Lewis and later adapted by Scientology as

a recruiting tool. He said the church uses the test to pressure those who take the test into buying expensive courses.

Heldal-Lund, a Norwegian, created a Web site critical of Scientology called Operation Clambake in 1996 and news organizations including the New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and Associated Press have cited his work.

Google removed all links

to Heldal-Lund's site for a brief time when Scientology threatened to sue for alleged copyright violations in March 2002, according to a CBS report.

Although Google later restored the links, Heldal-Lund told the New York Times the incident highlighted the church's pursuit of its critics.

"This is a public institution and there is public access," said Don McCarty, coordinator of

student life at USF St. Petersburg. "Any group is welcome as long as they don't interfere with the mission of the university, which is education."

McCarty said Scientologists follow the same policies as any organization wishing to set up a table on campus. They must make a reservation and pay a \$25 fee.

USF St. Petersburg follows a similar guideline for distribu-

tion of literature on campus. The policy allows distribution of non-commercial literature in any location open to the general public.

McCarty said he has received no feedback—positive or negative—from students regarding the Scientologists' presence on campus.