Buckminster Fuller

Photo by Matt McCormick

Fuller's broad vision apparent in talks with students

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Of the Emerald

In separate talks Tuesday before an architecture class and a group of geography students, Buckminster Fuller demonstrated the broadness of vision which has made him famous.

When Fuller appeared before the Structure and Function class (25 student limit) a crowd of 300 had filled the room and overflowed into the hallway beyond. A short, balding, white-haired man, Fuller looked at the mob through thick glasses, adjusted his microphone, and asked if the people in back could hear.

"No," they shouted.

"Fine," laughed Fuller, and began his talk.

He talked at length about basic structural shapes and their relationships—the triangle being the most primary unit of structure, the tetrahedron and other polyhedrons each possessing unique structural characteristics. It is these polyhedrons of which the geodesic dome—perhaps Fuller's best-known invention—is constructed.

As Fuller was telling of the difference between an engineer and a non-engineer , (an engineer realizes that every action has a reaction), the end of the hour approached, and a white-haired lady caught his attention from the side of the room, pointing at her watch.

"Time?" Fuller asked, then grinned. "My wife never minds telling me something."

Fuller's enthusiasm for his subject was obvious, as he continued his talk for another 20 minutes. He noted the new architecture will make use of incompressible liquid in structures, with strong, high-precision metal fittings which can be built using high-technology processes. And by building bigger, more efficient structures, man will be able to conserve energy, he said.

After receiving a standing ovation from the architecture students, Fuller walked to Condon Hall to speak to students, at the invitation of the Geology Department. About 40 persons attended.

It is perhaps not well known, but during World War II, Fuller found a way to transfer information from a globe to a flat map with no visible distortion. Only about a fourth of a globe can be seen at one time, Fuller said, and, therefore, one cannot get a real idea of how oceans and continents relate. He noted most world maps, like those in which Greenland looks huge, are badly distorted.

Fuller's map has neither problem, though he said it wasn't an easy solution to develop. Fuller said it took him two years to find a way to arrange the continents and oceans to avoid placing the sunuses—splits between triangular map segments—within continents.

The result was a map unique enough to be patented, despite the U.S. Patent Office's statement that it would grant no more cartographic patents, he said.

An accurate flat map helps people to deal with the great changes that technological advance has worked and will work in the world, Fuller indicated. As an example of such technological change, Fuller noted man will soon be able to conduct power over distances of 1500 miles through superconductive lines. Fuller said he conceives a time when electric power will be transmitted not only across time zones within countries, but across the North Pole. Man will then be able to integrate day and night, and make full, efficient use of resources, he said.

Cabinet discusses tenure, promotion

Students need an effective way to voice their opinions concerning matters of faculty promotion and tenure, according to ASUO Cabinet members.

ASUO President Bill Wyatt introduced this problem in a cabinet meeting held at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday in 337 EMU. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce new cabinet members and to develop goals, guidelines and schedules for the cabinet to follow in the next few months.

Wyatt stated his intention to propose in the next faculty meeting that there be some sort of student representation in developing or revising promotion and tenure policies.

Last week a motion to include two students in the recently created Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion and Tenure was defeated by a 9-16 vote in a Faculty Senate meeting.

Cliff Zukin, ASUO Senate president, was skeptical about the faculty response a repetition of the proposal might receive. If the motion fails, Wyatt stated he would like to see the cabinet form a group of students to investigate these matters independently of the faculty committee.

"In choosing goals, you have to pick something finite," Wyatt stated. One suggested goal was to initiate a university-wide study of teacher and course evaluations in the various departments, in order to determine the relevancy of evaluation forms.

The cabinet also discusses women's athletics, stressing the inadequate funding of that program.