

Work begins to facilitate handicapped needs

New Alert director mobilizes students

Everyone has problems, right? But imagine being assigned textbooks and not knowing how you are going to get them — not because of incredibly long lines or because your instructor under-ordered — but because you can't get up a flight of stairs in a wheelchair.

Or how about being unable to get athletic tickets because MacArthur Court provides seating arrangements for only two wheelchairs? The list could go on and it's not hypothetical.

This is the time for persons interested in the issue of accessibility for the handicapped to explain

dents during new student week and designing a newsletter specifically designed for handicapped students.

While much is being accomplished, several crucial problems have arisen. Ferguson says he needs feedback. "We have to

reach students who may not want to be labeled 'handicapped' or have anything to do with our group," explains Ferguson. "But they are the most important people when it comes to petitions and votes. I see the disabled speaking for themselves as a very important step and one I hope to promote."

to act only in areas that we understand or are familiar with. Most people are afraid of the unknown." Grier adds, "If people don't have to see it, they don't have to identify with it." Both agree that the issue of accessibility for the handicapped also questions society's stereotypes of physical beauty.

The "Back Door Plan" is readily exemplified. For instance, the library has back door accommodations but no front door or side door access. Both Ferguson and Mancl would like to see this changed.

Ferguson plans to reassess which buildings are now accessible and which rooms may need to be changed for specific courses. He explains that it is advantageous for Alert to have a director working in the summer and that this is the first summer it has had one.

"The handicapped students either make it or break it that first term," says Ferguson. "It takes them a lot longer to do the same things you and I can do, things like finding a place to live, adjusting to being on the campus for the first time, and finding out where to go when they need something."

With the newsletter and orientation for handicapped students, Ferguson hopes to make this transition easier. But he adds that he again needs feedback from these students themselves concerning not only what their survival needs are but which issues they think should be acted upon.

Alert hopes to hold a wheelchair olympics at the University track in the spring. Eugene is more centrally located in the northwest, than is Seattle where the only wheelchair olympics sanctioned by the National Wheelchair Athletic Association is held. "The tartan track is excellent for wheelchairs," comments Ferguson, "and athletes who have tried it think it is a place where potentially a lot of records could be broken."

Being handicapped can mean anything from being pregnant to being blind and in some cases the handicap is not even a visible one, such as a heart problem or learning disability. In 1961 standards for accessibility to the handicapped were first developed by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

Both the attitudes of handicapped people and people who are not labeled "handicapped" have isolated those who need help. Says Grier, "Maybe we are all handicapped in some way or another. We only label the more obvious."

By LUELLEN FLETCHER
Of the Emerald

their problems and offer suggestions. As Chapter 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 begins to be implemented, evaluation of "transition plans" by University personnel with the assistance of persons, including the handicapped is required by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Dave Rowe at the University physical plant confirms that the priority order for building modifications will be finished within six weeks.

All University programs in the state must be made accessible to the handicapped by August 2 unless physical building changes are necessary. By December, a "transition plan" to change buildings must be ready and a self-evaluation considering all necessary changes must be finished and on file in every educational institution which relies on federal funds by next June.

Many people at the University are now working to meet these goals. Harold Babcock, physical plant director, Dave Rowe and Dan Valentine, planning consultants will soon report to Myra Willard, state affirmative action officer and sec. 504 coordinator.

Art Mancl, director of campus and building planning for the Oregon State System of Higher Education, and Melinda Grier, compliance officer, have visited every major building at state universities to obtain an overall view of the project and developed a total cost estimate of \$5.3 million.

Dan Ferguson, director of Alert, an ASUO program serving handicapped, is planning orientation sessions for handicapped stu-

The Alert newsletter will first appear next week and Ferguson hopes he can begin to develop a formal link of communication between his group and handicapped students. He is trying to form a mailing list, although the registrar and admissions office can't legally give him the addresses of handicapped people.

Ferguson estimates his mailing list will consist of 20 or 25 names and that there are 50 more students that should probably receive a copy of the newsletter.

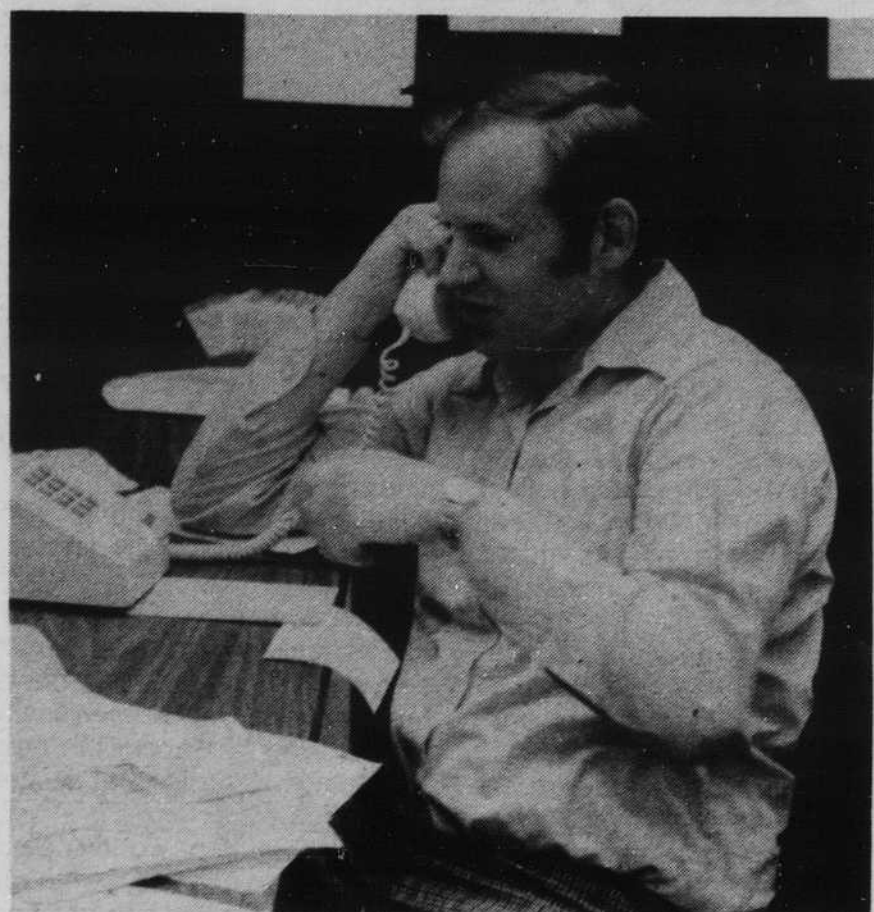
Another problem is funding. After the \$5.3 million estimate was presented to the legislature, \$100,000 was authorized under the capital construction budget to begin accessibility for the handicapped.

"This identifies the attitude of the legislators," says Mancl. "Now we know that this is something we should pursue further. We can continue planning and begin some simple projects."

And then there is the more elusive problem of attitude. "Why is the back door accessible?" asks Ferguson. "Because the delivery man can't carry 200 pounds of raw meat up the stairs to the refrigerator in the EMU." He continues, "The 'Back Door Plan' is a house joke as well as the traditional attitude."

Mancl and Grier concern themselves with the question "what is 'front door accessibility' as opposed to 'back door accommodations'?" when visiting campuses and talking with handicapped people.

"It's an attitude," says Mancl. "The real difficulty is that we tend



New Alert director Dan Ferguson will head up the ASUO program serving handicapped students.

There will be a meeting of a task force to evaluate the University's compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which forbids discrimination against the handicapped in education and employment. The meeting will be

held today at 4 p.m. in Room 472 Oregon Hall. Any person interested in assisting with the self-evaluation please contact the Office of Affirmative Action, Ext. 3123.

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