

# Fishbowl magnifies accessibility issue

The new EMU Fishbowl is an embarrassment to the University.

University officials should take whatever steps are necessary to make the room accessible to wheelchair-confined students, regardless of the Affirmative Action Committee's recommendation.

The committee is considering the legality of building an upper level of Fishbowl seating without providing access to handicapped students. But if University administrators are serious about their pledges to improve handicapped accessibility, they should look beyond the legal question and take immediate steps to right an obvious blunder in the renovation project.

Their first consideration must be increasing handicapped accessibility on campus. The University already has fallen behind schedule on accessibility projects planned in 1977 for completion this June.

The effect of that lag is heaviest not on the 60 wheelchair-confined students on campus, but on the scores of handicapped students for whom the lack of accessibility is a very real barrier to at-

tending the University. Every year that passes without improving building accessibility is a year in which dozens of handicapped students desiring a college education are denied that opportunity.

But as if it isn't bad enough that University planners are behind their own accessibility schedule, they now have gone one step further — they made an accessible building inaccessible to

## OURS

students in wheelchairs. And the project cost \$167,000.

It's almost incomprehensible that the bogus renovation plans could go through all the channels inherent in the bureaucratic jungle without catching a discerning eye. Mistakes do happen, however, and when they are honest mistakes we expect the responsible parties to take immediate steps to remedy the situation. Unfortunately, that has not been the case in the Fishbowl debacle.

On the contrary, the reaction of University officials to the problem has been even more

disturbing than the initial lack of foresight in approving the plans.

University planner Dave Rowe says the renovation project had reached its maximum limit on change orders before the problem was discovered. But Bob Schutz, assistant EMU director, implies wheelchair access was considered when planning the renovation but not incorporated into the final plans.

The room was designed so wheelchair access could be provided at minimal cost if it proved necessary, he says.

It's been almost a week since the complaint was filed, and still University officials have avoided taking any firm stand on the issue. If Rowe's assertion that "there is no problem about getting this resolved" is correct, then Acting University Pres. Paul Olum should not wait for the Affirmative Action Committee's report but should immediately voice his regrets about the oversight and pledge to modify the construction.

In the meantime, the Fishbowl continues to be an embarrassment.

## YOURS

### On good authority

In response to David Ruekberg's letter, "For the Bible..." (Jan. 8), I would like to make a couple of points clear.

First, I would like to point out that few people reject Christ because of an intellectual reason. The majority of people reject Christ because either they're searching with a closed mind and are not willing to give up their life to Christ when they find out who He says He is, or because they're too lazy to seriously investigate the evidence of the claims of Christ. "The best proof" is fact; the life, death and resurrection of the Son of God is fact! Dr. Clifford Herbert Moore of Harvard University said, "Christianity knew its Savior and Redeemer, not as some god whose history was contained in a mythical faith, with rude, primitive, and even offensive elements. The Christian's faith is founded on positive, historical and acceptable facts." The rejection of Christ is not a result of intelligent reasoning, but due instead to ignorance, or stubborn self-will (or both).

Second, in the case for the Bible, I would ask Mr. Ruekberg to check the facts. The Bible was written over a span of 1,500 years in three languages, with 40 authors, all writing on the same central theme, that being God's love and plan of salvation for mankind through the life, death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. What makes "Willy, Chpt. IX, v. 3" different from John 3:16 is simply a matter of Divine Inspiration. In II Peter

1:20,21, the Apostle Peter writes, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." Therefore, I can quote and claim John 3:16 with the authority of God. Mr. Ruekberg can quote "Willy, Chpt. IX, v. 3" with the authority of (Willy?).

**Guy Cooksey  
Junior, physical education**

### Fishbowl project

The Emerald quotes the associate provost of student affairs as saying the people who designed the new Fishbowl "aren't in the right place in our thinking" about handicapped issues. That's the biggest understatement made since the captain of the Titanic announced there'd be a change in travel plans.

It's infuriating! For at least five years, disabled students have sat on committees, worked on self studies, written letters and articles to the University to educate the administration on the need to eliminate architectural barriers. Always the answers have been that of course they understood. Of course, they were working day and night to help. But there just wasn't the money.

And now they've spent \$167,000 to make the most popular meeting spot on campus less accessible than it was before! After all these years, and after both state and federal legislative

guidelines, you'd think even the most impossibly dull-witted bureaucrat would begin to get the message.

Of course, as they say, new wheelchair ramps can be made "at minimal cost." They could have been included in the original design at even less cost. Or the Fishbowl could have been left alone at no cost at all.

After two years of planning and \$167,000, the Fishbowl looks like a slum bus station in Newark, New Jersey. All that's needed to complete the resemblance are "No Loitering" signs and some resident dope dealers in the men's room. Neon lights? And whose bright idea was it to move the west doors away from their logical place in front of the west entrance? Freshman architects are flunked for lesser blunders!

And that raised platform! Other than frustrating students in wheelchairs, it seems to serve only three purposes: (1) it keeps out the sunlight, (2) it blocks the view towards the windows for anyone less than nine feet tall, and (3) it makes the poor galley slaves on clean-up carry their equipment bumpity bump up and down stairs 10 times a day.

Considering how much inconvenience we've bought for only \$167,000, thank God the University didn't spend a million!

For disabled persons, it would have been much better if their share of the \$167,000 had been spent on ramps and elevators. Or if that weren't possible, the money should have been tossed into the Willamette.

Of course, that would have done us no good, but at least we would have been no worse off.

**Kent Patterson  
University graduate of 1963**

### Senate motions

At the last senate meeting we found ourselves talking about two quite different things in connection with my second motion. This was my fault, as I did not make the intent completely clear. Mr. Olum was right in stating that if my motion were strictly applied to the day-to-day operation of the University it would create serious problems.

The second motion was intended to apply only in the event that things come to pass that a state of financial exigency is declared, making it possible either to lower everyone's pay and restrict expensive programs, or to lop off substantial personnel and program areas. I was simply proposing, that in such an event, we all try to weather the crisis together as best we can, rather than sacrificing everyone and everything that is most vulnerable.

I realize that the University can't do everything, that it must evolve and change with time, emphasizing particular areas of strength as they emerge or are needed, and curtailing or eliminating other activities at times.

But I don't think the crisis atmosphere of a financial emergency is the appropriate time to consider and effect such changes. Decisions as to what is to be lopped off and what supported, made at such a time, are likely to follow lines of personal power at the moment, or of vulnerability rather than be based on the long term social value of the programs being considered. The process would in any event be highly devious, lead to deep feelings of guilt, frustration, embitterment etc. resulting in more long term damage to the institution than would a general tightening of belts.

At the assembly meeting Wednesday I will introduce amending language to make the motion clear.

**Bayard H. McConnaughey  
Professor, biology**

### letters policy

The Emerald will accept and try to print all letters containing fair comment on ideas and topics or interest to the University community. Letters must be typewritten, using 65-character margins and should be triple spaced.

Letters must be signed, the author's field of study (or faculty status) noted and should include address and phone number where possible.

