

Faller files discrimination complaint

By **STEPHEN KNIGHT**
Of the Emerald

The University is illegally discriminating against disabled students, says a handicapped student who has filed an affirmative action complaint.

In his complaint, Chester Faller — director of the Physically Limited Union of Student — maintains that too many campus buildings are inaccessible to wheelchair-bound students.

"Inaccessibility is a type of barrier discrimination which deprives me of my basic right to an education," he says.

According to Faller's complaint, the University has violated the 1973 Vocational Rehabilitation Act. The federal act required all education programs to be made accessible to disabled students by June of 1980, Faller says.

A 1937 University accessibility report lists 54 buildings that need modification, ranging from stair ramps and door pressure adjustments to elevators.

Villard Hall, Deady Hall, Allen Hall and Friendly Hall are the most serious accessibility problems because each contains special equipment necessary for certain areas of study.

When handicapped students find they need classes offered in inaccessible buildings, the University usually tries to move the classes to accessible locations.

But Faller says student and teacher resentment discourages disabled students from pursuing the subject.

"A B.A. (degree) is particularly hard to get here

because the language requirements are offered only in an inaccessible building."

The University requires six quarters of language instruction for a Bachelor of Arts degree. The classes are offered in Friendly Hall.

In 1979, the Legislature allocated approximately \$1.4 million to accessibility projects. However, the Legislature withdrew the funds during last summer's emergency session.

Faller says the cut was illegal and could have been prevented by the University administration.

"The administration has the power to choose the programs they want saved," he says. "But they're more concerned with increasing professors' salaries than the rights of disabled students."

The University has 30 days from the time a complaint is filed to investigate and respond.

Ray Hawk, vice president for administration and finance, "categorically" denies that the University is deliberately discriminating against handicapped students.

"If we can show we have blueprints to put facilities into buildings on campus, that isn't my idea of deliberately discriminating," Hawk says.

"We've gone every step of the way we could up to the point where our money was taken away from us."

Hawk says the University had to discontinue its accessibility projects when the Legislature discontinued funding. The administration couldn't have prevented the cut, he says.

"We didn't have any choice in

the matter," Hawk says. "It's a case where our legislative body told us we can't fund this program now."

If the Legislature would release the money for accessibility projects, construction bids could begin tomorrow, Hawk adds.

In the meantime, Hawk says disabled students should consider transferring to another institution if the subjects they

want are offered only in inaccessible buildings.

"You may have been a 'Duck' from the time you were a junior high school kid, but if you wanted engineering you had to go to Oregon State.

"I don't think that choice is any different than if a handicapped youngster wants mass communication. He'd better pick the school where he's able to be accommodated, not

necessarily the school where he'd prefer to go."

But Faller disagrees.

"The idea the disabled should go somewhere else is like telling a black student to go to Tuskegee," he says, referring to an all-black college in Alabama.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Act is disabled students' "key to freedom," Faller says.

"I'll take my case to the Supreme Court if I have to."

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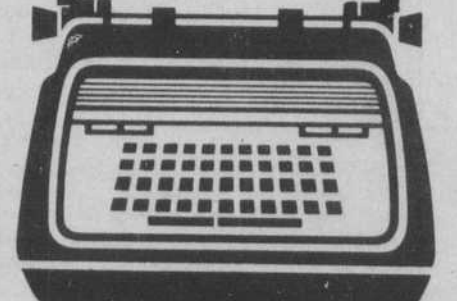
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