

EMU: Board considers card-swipe system

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the studio after building hours. However, other groups who stay late to work on projects may not necessarily need such liberal access, he said.

"It's rare [among student union buildings] to have other student offices open at the desire of the occupants," Miller explained.

However, EMU board chair Kim Guevara said she is strongly opposed to limiting access to the building. "Certain student programs need it," she said. "Students who access the EMU late at night will be those who need to be there."

Former ASUO President Bill Miner agreed that student programs should retain after-hours access. "Personally, I'd like to see the EMU open 24-seven. It should be a true student union — if a program has work to do, they should be able to come in and do it."

Miner added that he is opposed to restricting the access of some groups but not others. "You can't really identify a group who needs to be in here more than another," he said.

EMU facilities manager Dana Winitzky agrees that limiting access is a tough issue and that the student union building should be available for student use.

However, "from a maintenance and safety standpoint, we should have certain hours when the building's open, and after that have the doors locked. I worry about my custodial staff," he said.

Miller questioned whether after-hours access for some student groups is worth putting everyone in the building at risk, and he said he doesn't believe students should wait until someone is injured before considering the issue.

"It's too late to worry about it if it happens, especially for the person it happened to," he said.

However, Guevara said the EMU board has already made safety a priority and is exploring other options.

One option is replacing the building's locks with an electronic card-swipe system that would allow students and staff to use their identification cards to unlock the EMU. A central database would determine whose cards could unlock the doors, and names could be added and deleted to the database as the staff and student body changes. The sys-

tem would also keep track of who entered and left the building and at what time.

"We wanted a system that would establish a means to know who is going in and out of the building," Guevara said. "When people are in and out during random hours when we don't think they should be, we'll have a record of that." The card swipe would not only prevent non-students from entering the building after hours using old keys that the EMU has lost track of, but it would help deter theft as well. If a theft occurred, Miller said, authorities could find out everyone who entered and left the building around the time of the incident by looking up the computer records.

The Oregon State University Memorial Union has used a card-swipe access system for the past three years, said director Michael Henthorne, and its security problems have been minimized. Before the system was implemented, the union had many of the same security risks as the EMU, such as theft and propped-open doors, he said.

Henthorne added that although the system was expensive, it has been worth the cost.

Guevara said because the system is so expensive, the board is waiting until the EMU renovations are finished before it pursues the matter further.

Although the board won't take action on the card-swipe system for awhile, Miller said students have already taken measures to make the EMU safer by deciding in the April 23 ASUO election to keep the lower level of the building open until 2 a.m. Because the measure requires an increased staff presence after the building's normal closing hours, students who remain in the building will have someone to go to for help should trouble arise.

"It will make use after hours safer because 'after hours' happens later," Miller explained. "Keeping the building open later enhances safety and reduces the need for students to be in the building after hours to complete their work."

Winitzky mentioned that although money places constraints on what security measures the EMU can implement, the safety of staff and students should not be compromised.

"It would be nice to have 24-hour security, but we'll never have the dollars for that. But," he added, "money is never a reason not to have good safety."

"Keeping the building open later enhances safety and reduces the need for students to be in the building after hours to complete their work."

Dusty Miller
EMU Director

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