

# cougar print

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## Architectural barriers discussed

# Handicappers meet with administrators

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Eliminating all the architectural barriers that exist for handicapped students at Clackamas Community College would cost thousands of dollars, but eliminating some equal-challenging barriers—in the area of communication—didn't cost a dime.

Last week CCC Dean of Students, Len Monroe, held a meeting of the problems of handicapped students on campus. "We want to get input from you about some of our facilities," he began, "and some of the things we could do to aid or assist you."

Of the thirty people attending the meeting, a third were using wheelchairs, canes or crutches. The rest were faculty members, students and staff with an interest in the issue. Responses to the costly dilemma of eliminating architectural barriers were numerous, specific and reflected much thought.

"If I were a handicapped person, the first thing I'd want to do is establish my independence," said Associated Student Government President Michael Ayers. He pointed out that the design of the bookstore, cafeteria turnstiles and bathrooms made independence physically impossible for a person in a wheelchair.

In representing themselves, the handicapped students offered ideas ranging from the far reaching and expensive to the simple and inexpensive.

"There needs to be at least one door in every building equipped with either an electronic eye or a pneumatic pad—and no door casing," said Don Bixter. The heavy doors and door casings at main building entrances are difficult barriers for those in wheelchairs he said.

"I had to quit because of heavy doors and carrying my books all day. There should be lockers," said one elderly woman.

Some participants in the discussion listed minor details that posed major physical hazards for them. The floor wax once used on a ramp in Barlow Hall made it too slippery to be used safely, many trailers have a difficult drop from the door to the ramp and the walkway to one Orchard Center science building is graded too steeply for wheelchairs.

Others offered suggestions with smaller price tags. Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Coordinator, Judy Smith, asked about posting signs to help newcomers in locating elevators. Many agreed that the handicapped aren't provided with enough information about facilities or services available to them.

At the close of the meeting Monroe indicated he would bring these items to the attention of the Board of Education. He was scheduled to give a report on the needs and rights of disabled students at the board's monthly meeting on Jan. 12.

He stated that board members were "very

concerned" about this issue, stemming from last fall's controversy over the status of art major Bonnie Nelson, confined to a wheelchair and unable to attend classes on the second floor of the Smucker's Building. He anticipated that the nine board representatives are now ready to commit some money to improving the lot of handicapped students.

Joining Monroe in the presentation were Alf Lair, Director of Planning and Operations and Don Fisher, Facilities Planning and Development Officer. These men recently completed a study on the fitness of school facilities in serving the handicapped.

They found that although the buildings meet all state standards that existed at the time of construction, it would cost \$250,000 or more to meet standards set for new buildings.

Monroe explained that the school attorney has advised him that "unless we start to remodel extensively or make changes, our buildings are up to code. We have no programs to make the old buildings meet the new standards, and we're under no deadline."

The board and staff say they are motivated by humanitarian as well as legal and monetary concerns. Whatever money is available to spend on improving the situation will be spent. No amount exists in the 1976-77 budget for that purpose, however, and it may be that funds will be extremely limited.

Lair said that state aid for architectural improvements on behalf of the handicapped is a high priority item during the current session of the legislature.

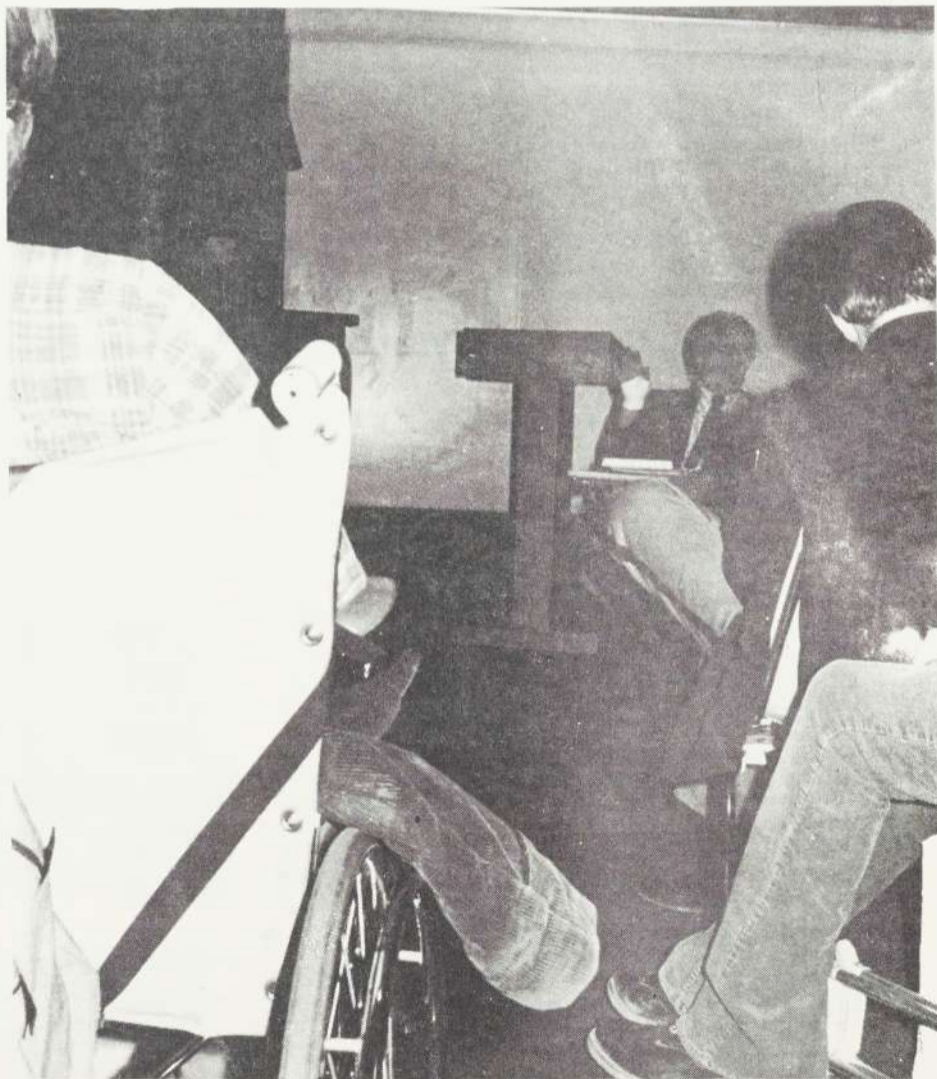


Photo by Brian Snook

Len Monroe discusses architectural barriers and how they affect handicapped students at a meeting devoted to that topic held last week at Clackamas Community College.

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