

A unique program at a great university gives disabled students a chance to become valuable members of society.



"Seatless" bus also has hydraulic lift for students. All courses are open to wheel-chair collegians.

WHERE HANDICAPS DISAPPEAR

by Yvonne Ogden Earnst

ANYONE WHO DOUBTS the value of a college education, either for the individual or for society in general, will find an assuring answer in the program for physically handicapped students at the University of Illinois.

Last Fall, 140 disabled students—94 in wheel chairs—enrolled in the university's Student Rehabilitation Center. Forty of them are coeds. They are members of every class from freshman to doctoral candidates, in every school and college.

A national leader in rehabilitation, the U. of I. has steadily expanded its program since it was started with eight students in 1948 by Prof. Timothy J. Nugent. This year students came from 23 states and territories outside of Illinois, and more than 300 applicants had to be turned away.

When 32-year-old Bob Williams of Bloomington, Ill., enrolled as a freshman last year, he had never attended a formal class. Visiting teachers had guided his education through his years of disability from cerebral palsy. Though he once was dependent on others, Bob now skillfully maneuvers his wheel chair, and successfully handles the routine problems of daily living. His self-reliance gained from physical independence enables him to make good grades as a student.

In addition to cerebral palsy, the students are victims of polio, war injuries, muscular dystrophy, and severe arthritis.

The comprehensive program at Illinois embraces the whole scope of higher edu-

cation, as well as personal counseling and therapy, social activities, and a recreation program including adapted athletics.

Among the examples showing the wide range of courses available to wheel-chair students, Tom Joyce of Savannah, Ga., is finishing his premedical education this year. Ted Chenault of Louisville, Ky., is studying law; and Eva Marie Boudreau of Kankakee, Ill., plans to be an executive secretary. Further along, William Fife has returned to the university for graduate studies in political science and economics after working two years in Sioux City, Ia.

A total of 102 handicapped students, more than half of them in wheel chairs, have been graduated from the university since the rehabilitation program began. They've all obtained jobs, and are earning an average of \$5,500. That's more than half a million dollars each year that doesn't have to come out of taxpayer or family pockets. Instead of being supported, these young people are contributing their full share to society.

Graduates are working in management, teaching, journalism, medicine, engineering, architecture, sales, art, and employment counseling. One alumnus owns and manages a motel and restaurant. Another is a minister who travels around the country doing evangelical work, though he is confined to a wheel chair.

Actually, there isn't much handicapped students can't do if given the chance. And a chance is all they ask—a chance to be accepted on the basis of their ability rather than their disability.



The Illini Gizz Kids have attracted national attention with their basketball skills. Team has its own cheerleaders, too, from among 40 handicapped coeds. Bowling, swimming, and softball also are popular with the group.