Handicapped students find campus helpful

Mary Ellen Matava

University of Maine

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/social_justice

Part of the Disability and Equity in Education Commons, Higher Education Commons, and the United States History Commons

Repository Citation
https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/social_justice/559

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Social Justice: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.
Handicapped students find campus helpful

by Mary Ellen Mata
Staff Writer

Services to the handicapped at UMO are helpful, and people are willing to offer assistance if asked.

and the university does its best with the money it has available, they said.

“Only so much can be done, because there is only so much money available,” John Babcock said. Babcock is a senior journalism/broadcasting major and is limited by a wheelchair. He works at the campus radio station, WMEB-FM, which moved from third floor Stevens to the East Annex last year. “I wanted to work for the station, but I couldn’t take broadcasting courses that required the use of the studio,” he said. “Finally they moved it, and it’s worked out pretty well.”

Debbie Monson is a junior business management major who transferred from Husson College. She is legally, but not totally, blind. She sees 30 to 40 percent of what a person with perfect vision sees. “Services to the handicapped are not blatantly advertised on this campus. But if you inform people they are 98 percent willing to help you,” she said.

At the beginning of the semester, Monson walked around campus using a white cane with a red tip.

This type of cane signals to the general public that its user is visually impaired. She is now at the point where she can walk around campus on her own. “I get around campus pretty well now. I’ve gotten used to where most things are,” she said. “The library steps are terrible, though. There’s no definition of stairs. They all look alike.”

Monson said the professors and administration are cooperative and willing to help. “Most of my professors are verbal,” she said. “I have trouble with blackboards, but that’s the way it is. There are just some things you get around.”

Henry Burleigh, a freshman electrical engineering major, has an artificial leg, and finds walking around campus difficult in the winntertime. “You have no control over an artificial leg, so when you slip, you usually fall,” he said. “It would help a lot if they would clear the sidewalks better.”

Babcock said the snow poses a problem for him, too. “Getting to classes is a problem in the winter-time,” he said. “I miss my classes completely about three times a year.”

The completion of the elevator in the Union will be a great help for Pete Perkins, a freshman international affairs/political science major. Perkins is in a wheelchair, and is interested in becoming involved in student government.

“Right now I can’t do anything with student government, because it is on

(See Handicapped page 6)
Housing difficulty cited

(continued from page 1)

the third floor of the Union," he said. Perkins is also interested in the activities of Hannibal Hamlin Hall's Multicultural Exchange Center. "It doesn't look like I'll be able to do anything with that unless it is refurbished to be accessible."

Distance is sometimes a problem for Perkins who has a manually powered wheelchair. He hopes to have a motorized chair soon. "For the first few weeks, the library seemed a long way off," he said.

Perkins said the campus is basically pretty accessible. "On the whole, the campus is accessible. It is the best by far compared to other campuses I looked at," he said.

Living arrangements can be a problem for handicapped students. Babcock, who lives in York Village Apartments, said, "There should be more of a variation of living facilities on campus for handicapped students." Three dorms on campus out of 21 are wheelchair accessible to all floors: Hancock, Stodder and York, according to an official campus map.

Monson lives in a single room.

"Usually roommates leave things laying around, and that could be disastrous for me," she said. "Visually handicapped people are memorized. I know there is a lamp over there on the floor, and that there are clothes on this chair. This room may look unkempt to you, but I know where everything is in it."

Veronica Barry, counselor coordinator of Handicapped Student Services said, "I think the university is doing a very good job in determining the needs of handicapped students. As soon as we are alerted to a specific need, we are bending over backwards to meet it."

Although the university is doing a good job, "there always is room for improvement," she said. "Sometimes we don't get action as fast as we like, but on the whole we've made progress."

A large part of Barry's job is relocating classes of handicapped students. "If a handicapped student signs up for a course and it is inaccessible, the class is relocated," she said. Seventeen classroom buildings out of 33 are wheelchair accessible at least to one floor. "If we can't change a class, then the university must come up with the funds to make the building accessible."

Barry said an example of the university making buildings accessible is moving the radio station from Stevens Hall to the East Annex. There has also been some work done on some labs in Aubert and Bennett to make them accessible, she said.

Henry Burleigh