



By Sean Earley

Priorities 'handicapping' changes

Like everyone else, UTA is feeling the money pinch and talk of priorities usually follows a request for funds. Such is the case with one worthy cause, the facilities for handicapped students on campus.

Ask any handicapped student here and you will probably be told how the administration has greatly improved the situation, including the addition of ramps, lowering of drinking fountains and increased numbers of curb cuts.

But for a long time handicapped students weren't able to get a drink of water at a fountain, didn't have bathroom facilities and found that negotiating square curbs in a wheelchair was uncomfortable at best. Who wouldn't be grateful?

The facilities have been improved but unfortunately some are only at a point of being bearable, hardly convenient.

Last year, enterprising handicapped students drew up a well-researched and lengthy proposal for a model university which they requested be submitted to the Board of Regents. The proposal provides for extensive renovation, making the campus completely accessible.

Note the word accessible. That doesn't mean any special luxuries. It does mean that if a student is blind he can tell what button to press on the elevator because braille numbers would be installed.

It means a wheelchaired woman on the first floor of University Hall won't have to go up every floor of the building to find out which bathroom

is equipped for wheelchairs.

The proposal, however, was shelved for further study. It remained in limbo for a number of months. However, the administration sent a letter Dec. 5 to the Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC) in Austin asking permission to formally request funds from that agency.

Where has this left the handicapped?

They are still trying to get up ramps that are too steep and out of bathrooms that are too small.

Giving everyone the benefit of the doubt, let's assume the TRC allocates funds. Chances are the money will not be available at least until the fall semester.

Isn't there money somewhere in the budget that could at least correct small inconveniences such as faulty curb cuts? Such architectural barriers, though minor, could easily result in a serious injury.

Unfortunately, the \$5,000 already allotted for these improvements was used up last semester.

There's money available, but it seems there are also other priorities. However, many of those don't involve a person's safety.

The recently held "Handicapped Administration Day" was proof that the administration is truly interested.

With a better understanding of the problem, hopefully further action will now be taken.

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