

Campus to serve handicapped

By KATHY THIELMANN
Herald News Writer

Handicapped students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison will have greater access to campus buildings following modification projects scheduled for spring and summer completion.

One major project already completed is alteration of UW dormitories to allow access to students confined to wheelchairs.

By law, all federally-assisted institutions are required to be "barrier free."

Marian Laines, chairwoman of the Chancellor's Committee for Disabled Persons on Campus, said that she hopes disabled students will take advantage of the opportunity and move into the dorms.

Changes in building structure include wider doors to accommodate wheelchairs, ramps as alternatives to stairs, wider toilet

stalls, lowered and brailled elevator panels, and automatic doors installed in the main entrances.

Cost of the project will be at least \$250,000 according to Robert Fessenden, assistant director of physical plant operations for University Housing.

At the present time, no Lakeshore dorms are accessible to people in wheelchairs because they do not have elevators large enough for wheelchairs. Plans are now underway to install a new and larger elevator in Sullivan. This installation will be the most expensive modification, costing about \$40,000.

Laines reported that no students in wheelchairs currently live in the dorms. "It takes a lot of courage to decide to move onto campus," she said. Most of the handicapped, for one reason or another, make that decision too late to get a room, she said.

Laines advises handicapped

persons to apply as soon as possible, no later than March, if they wish to obtain a dorm room for the fall of 1981.

Gordon Orr, university architect at the physical plant, is in charge of numerous reconstruction projects throughout campus. "Right now, we are financing a substantial project, combining life safety with accessibility," he said.

Three projects nearing completion are the Education and Mechanical Engineering buildings, as well as Science Hall. Each building is getting new elevators, toilets, door buttons, etc. Science Hall, one of the older buildings on campus, will be one of the better ones for access, Orr said.

Orr estimates total cost for the project to be 1.5 million dollars. This includes measures taken for general public safety as well as for the handicapped.

Upcoming projects include

Music Hall, which has an auditorium open to student and public use. Installation of two elevators at opposite ends of the building will offer greater access.

The Red Gym, according to Orr, will also face major renovation with reconstruction of the entire front entrance to accommodate wheelchairs. An elevator will be installed to allow access to the various floors. Eventually, various recreational programs for the handicapped will be held in the gym, instead of the Natatorium, allowing easier accessibility for most students.

The Babcock ice cream parlor will soon be accessible to handicapped, said Orr, with the addition of a lift in the lobby of the northeast corner of the building. Also, one of the freight elevators will be changed to a passenger elevator to accommodate wheelchairs. A designated parking spot for the handicapped is also planned.

These are the major programs in operation at the present time, according to Orr. "We're trying to hit all the buildings that have enough activities, where handicapped people are being denied access."

Other continuing programs include curb cuts and toilet installations at various buildings. Most of the curbs in the central campus area have been modified, but we're still working on some of the outer streets, Orr said.

In addition to architectural changes throughout campus, handicapped students are being served by many organizations and special programs on campus and in the nearby community.

Pat DiRocco, UW-Madison's

assistant professor in charge of physical education for the handicapped, said any student with a handicap can sign up for special adaptive sports courses.

"When they sign up," DiRocco said, "they have an interview with a teaching assistant who will assess fitness by various program assessment tests." Once stress, strength and flexibility have been conducted, individual programs can then be organized.

If a student can work by himself, he will generally meet with a teacher once a week to determine progress.

In addition, access to the Natatorium pool is generally granted once a week for the handicapped.

The McBurney Resource Center, 77 Bascom Hall, also helps students with disabilities by providing information, services and referrals.

Because registration can be a difficult time for handicapped students, they may get their Timetables and textbook information 45 days in advance, as well as requesting assistance with registration.

Any persons with disabilities are encouraged to contact McBurney at 263-2741 if special problems arise.

Another community service for the handicapped is the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), 1 S. Park St.

Pete Hansen, Staff Counselor at DVR, works to develop employment plans for persons with physical, psychological, and chemical dependence disabilities.

"What we do is develop a plan that will lead to employment," Hansen said, "and school is one thing that leads to employment."

At the center, students can learn where to get information as to which courses will help improve a person's employability.

"We also provide evaluation services to determine the extent and nature of a person's disability," Hansen said.

Hansen said that though the center is designed primarily for employment consultations, they do provide counseling services.

"People who are handicapped have an additional self-acceptance problem that most of us do not have," Hansen said. "It does limit their lives in most aspects—socially being the most significant."

But, as Hansen noted, most of them do a good job of adapting. "I think most people with disabilities do a remarkable job of accepting themselves and developing positive attitudes about setting realistic goals, and accomplish a great deal," he said.

UW proves justice is blind

By TOM MANNIS
Herald Feature Writer

Matthew Olaiya is not so different from his first-year law classmates. He attends classes, takes notes and spends a lot of time studying—up to 40 or 50 hours a week when the pressure's on.

But what is different is that Matthew Olaiya, 23, is the first blind student enrolled at the University of Wisconsin Law School. When he finishes the three-year course, he will be one of many blind lawyers. He plans to move back to his native country Nigeria after graduation.

Being a blind student in a course as complicated as law means that Olaiya has to use some special aids. His description of how he handles the work, however, sounds almost routine.

Olaiya's textbooks are recorded for him by an agency in Milwaukee: some books such as the Legal Dictionary are available in braille. He tape-records lectures, which he then transcribes into braille notes. Also, he has good friends who help with library research and who read class handouts.

"Most people are very helpful," he says, adding that his professors are almost always sensitive to his blindness. His final examination questions will be tape recorded, and he can type his answers.

Last fall, textbooks for two of his classes came too late to be recorded before the semester started. Olaiya relies on readers in

those cases and sometimes falls behind. "Not having read the texts makes it hard to follow the lecture," he said, but added "it's not as big a problem as you might think."

Olaiya came to the United States five years ago and began studying at Marquette University in Milwaukee where he used to "jam a lot" with friends; he played saxophone, and his friends played along with him. At Marquette, he studied business and history.

"In Nigeria, I had to braille all my own books," he says. "I spent

most of my vacations brailing books." This was, however, something of a scholastic advantage in the long run, for it forced Olaiya to go into his course material deeper than most of classmates cared to. "It forced me to notice the fine points that many miss."

Olaiya believes that his opportunities will be best with an American firm, but acknowledges that American law firms are reluctant to hire the blind. Most blind lawyers work for the government.

"Stereotypes about blind people are worse in Nigeria," he

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Matthew Olaiya, University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School's first blind student, transcribes recorded lecture notes on a braille machine.

Justice is blind

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observes. "perhaps because here [in the US] people know better." But he said that things are finally better for the blind in his home country.

His family is still in Nigeria. Olaiya's father died when Matthew was 13, and his mother has supported them since. She is responsible for his being here today, and will probably send another son to the United States next year to study. "But not to Madison," says Matthew. "She wants us to be apart to be as independent as possible."

Olaiya has been pleasantly surprised by his Law School experience. Fellow students are helpful and willing to lend a hand. Most people, he says, are not openly taken aback by his so-

called handicap.

However, Olaiya relates one bitter but still seemingly humorous experience he had on a metro bus recently. As he and his eyeglasses were walking down the aisle to exit, a "young woman started screaming 'somebody help him'." He did not need any help. "I think she should have asked someone to help her instead," he said jokingly.

"I expected that law students, especially those in their first year, would be very occupied with their own studies. I was surprised by their willingness to volunteer to help with reading, shopping... Everytime I walk through the corridors, someone stops me to offer help," Matthew Olaiya, it seems, needs no help at all. He's doing just fine.

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