

Accessibility at Dal?

by Lisa Legatto

Dalhousie University remains riddled with problems in terms of accessibility for physically challenged students in the wake of administration's new building policy.

"Dal is about as accessible as an old European city," said David Shannon, past president of the Student Union and member of the Dalhousie Association for the Physically Challenged (DAPC).

Shannon said a "segregation" of students occurs because those in wheelchairs are sometimes forced to attend universities that cater to their needs. This leaves them out of specialty programs offered at Dalhousie. "It's an issue of attitudes, equipment and availability," he said.

Ramps, marked handicapped zones and curb cuts have been built, but the need for structural change exists. Shannon, a Law student, said, "The Weldon Law Building shows grave error in the planning stage." After recent renovations, there are desks that are not wheelchair accessible and entrances without ramps.

An annual allotment of \$50,000 will be used to upgrade the campus. The policy requires all buildings to be approved by Barb O'Shea, Director of Occupational Therapy.

Anne-Marie Mason, project coordinator at the Physical Planning Department said, "We have a set fund for changes; our job is to identify the trouble spots."

The trouble spots include the

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Law Building which was renovated before the policy was in effect. Improvement plans involve signs directing people to accessible entrances and a ramp system which would loop the Chase, Life Science Centre, and Arts and Administration Buildings. Ramps have been added to department houses on the "upper campus" while the "lower campus" is under evaluation.

A handbook for the physically challenged students will be released this fall. Mason said that it is "premature" in light of the new developments.

David Shannon said, "I have reservations because it is only one small part of the problem." Both the campus guide and the policy are signs that the concerns are being addressed. As to whether or not it was adequate was uncertain.

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