

NEWS RELEASE

University of Scranton

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STORY AND PHOTOS

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The University of Scranton has made significant progress in modifying its facilities and programs to make them more assessible to handicapped employees and students, according to the school's vice president for business and management, John S. Flanagan.

As part of the Jesuit College's Affirmative Action Plan enacted in August 1976, the university has outlined a timetable of modifications to ensure satisfactory compliance with the federal government's non-discrimination commitment outlined in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, said Flanagan, the man charged with directing the university's affirmative action plan.

"The key to section 504," Flanagan explained, "is accessibility to facilities and academic programs by handicap students and employees." He said that since the plan was developed some 19 months ago, the university has made numerous handicap facility improvements in accordance with section 504 guidelines.

An Affirmative Action Subcommittee on Nondiscrimination on Basis of Handicap was established last August in compliance with section 504, which actually became effective in June 1977.

Flanagan outlined the committee's formal purposes as being to exercise the university's moral and legal commitment to comply with the requirements of section 504; to work together as a community to preclude nondiscrimination on the basis of handicaps or any other reason; to develop a sense of awareness by the university community to bona fide handicap needs; and to provide reasonable accessibility to programs and facilities.

The subcommittee, chaired by Flanagan, and comprised of representatives from all segments of the university community, includes professor of philosophy, Dr. Louis D. Mitchell, who is visually handicapped, and Dexter Hanley College student, Donna Manger, who is confined to a wheelchair. The work of the committee has led to handicap improvements in each of the six major buildings on campus: St. Thomas Hall, Loyola Hall of Science, John Long Center, O'Hara Hall, the Student Center, and Alumni Memorial Library.

So far, male and female restrooms have been converted to suit handicap needs, and telephones and water fountains have been lowered in St. Thomas Hall. The other five buildings will receive these same modifications in the 1978-1979 academic year. All buildings equipped with elevators will add "braille" language to floor indicator buttons in the next academic year, Flanagan said.

Ramps for the handicapped either already exist or have been constructed at: Alumni House, O'Hara Hall, St. Thomas Hall, Student Center, Loyola Hall of Science, the Library, and John Long Center. An entrance ramp at Jefferson Hall is slated to be completed by the next academic year, or in 1980 at the latest.

Curbs have been lowered to allow easier passage of handicap students at the heavily traveled crossover on Linden St. between the Student Center and St. Thomas Hall; at the Monroe Ave. entrance to the tennis court area; and Linden St. between the Student Center and the athletic plaza under construction.

Improved access to one male dormitory, Somerset House, and one female dormitory, Bradford House, is slated for the 1979-1980 academic year.

Handicap Facilities Improvement. . . . 3

Flanagan also said that parking facilities have been modified to accomodate handicapped individuals. Three spaces have been allocated to the lot behind St. Thomas Hall and one space each to lots at O'Hara Hall, Student Center, Alumni House and Jefferson Hall sites.

A voluntary survey profile compiled last fall indicates 25 different handicaps exist among the university student population, and there are 15 members of the university faculty who are handicapped in one way or another, according to Flanagan.

Hearing, musculoskeletal, paralysis, and cardiovascular disabilities headed the student handicap survey. Visual, arthritic, musculoskeletal, and cardiovascular formed the bulk of faculty members with handicaps.