

ROLE-PLAY HELPS STUDENTS EXPERIENCE WHAT IS LIKE TO BE THE DISADVANTAGED

“Careful! Don’ t make me bang my head on the door of the elevator,” cried the blind-faked Wang Yu-chun (freshman, Information Management) to her “guide dog” . Wang and the other students enrolled in Dr. Chen Chien-fu’ s “Disadvantaged Groups and Social Welfare” were role-playing the visually impaired and “guide dogs” to experience the inconvenience of people with disabilities.

At noon last Wednesday a group of students walked very slowly out of the Business and Management Building, jamming the already congested entrance. Some students had their eyes blind-faked with strips of cloth or masks, a walking stick in their hand, and walked slowly down the stairs, supported by fellow students. This unusual activity was devised by Dr. Chen Chien-fu of the Graduate Institute of Futures Studies for the course “Disadvantaged Groups and Social Welfare” : he asked the students to walk around the campus in pairs, playing the “guide dogs” and the visually impaired and experiencing their interdependence.

The blind-faked Wang Yu-chun did not seem to have complete confidence in her “guide dog” : after a tour around the Liberal Arts Building, the Hwei-wen Hall, the Maritime Museum and the Engineering Building, she said it was terrifying. However, her “guide dog” , Yeh Chia-wei (sophomore, Information Management), believed he did a good job: “It was tough for me, too.”

Dr. Chen said that this course is the only core course in the social analysis program receiving the Ministry of Education’ s grant for

“Individual General Education Improvement Project” to have four teaching assistants. After this role-play activity, students will visit the Resource Center for the Visually Impaired and write a report assessing the facilities for the disabled on campus. Further investigations will, Dr. Chen said, look at the “relatively disadvantaged” position of “students” on campus in terms of accommodation and space for extracurricular activities. In Dr. Chen’s view, women are a disadvantaged group as well: “For example, men don’t need to line up to use the toilet, whereas women often do—that makes them disadvantaged.”

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