

DISABLED STUDENTS CONSIDER BRICK TRAIL FOR THE BLIND UNRELIABLE

Tamkang University is a designated model of barrier-free campus, yet there are lots of barriers around the campus. At the recent meeting of the student council Councilor Li Ker-han (senior, Public Administration) put forward several proposals for improvement of access for the disabled: adding wheel-chair access to the student clubs offices, and removing the metal barriers outside the natatorium complex, those near the entrance to the parking lot of the Business and Management Building, and those close to the Li-bar footbridge. These proposals were passed by the student council and will be formally presented to the school authorities for consideration; student councilors wished to see more facilities in place ensuring easier physical access for disabled students.

Li Ker-han, a wheelchair user himself, could not get to the office of the student council for a meeting at the end of last semester because there was no wheelchair access to the office. In the end he was carried, in his wheelchair, into the office by the other student councilors, “as if I were a deity,” he joked. Li therefore proposed to have more wheelchair access paths so that wheelchair users can reach club offices easily.

Furthermore, Li mentioned the slope for wheelchair use on the right hand side of the natatorium complex: large objects at one end of the slope render it inaccessible for wheelchairs. Also, the brick trail for the blind at the exit of the parking lot outside the Business and Management Building has bright yellow barriers right on the trail: visually impaired students who follow the trail on their way to the Business Building sometimes stumble over the barriers. Barriers near the Li-bar footbridge, too, cause inconvenience for blind students. Li added that the proposals he made were the result of his asking many blind students about the problems they encountered on campus; he hoped that the school authorities

could improve facilities so that disabled students could move around the campus safely and easily.

Tamkang Times reporters have found that the majority of visually impaired students at TKU are in favor of removing the brick trails altogether and that they have little confidence in those trails.

Chen (freshman, Chinese) said that he would not mind the barriers so much if they were effectively used; however, since the barriers are simply left there on the brick trail for no purpose, “you might as well get rid of them.” Chiu (freshman, History) said that he did not enjoy following the brick trail because “it feels very unreliable.” His classmate Yu said with understatement, “You get used to it after a few bumps.”

Responding to this question, Professor Hung Ching-jen, Dean of General Affairs, asked students to behave themselves and not to park their motorcycles on the brick trails for the blind; he added that the barriers would be removed in the future. Professor Luo Shiaw-shyan, Chair of the Department of Transportation Management, said in his class of “Introduction to Urban Transportation”, “The brick trails for the blind had better be removed altogether because they always lead the visually impaired students to dangerous spots.”

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