

Eastern Illinois University

The Keep

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November

2022

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11-30-2022

## Daily Eastern News: November 30, 2022

Eastern Illinois University

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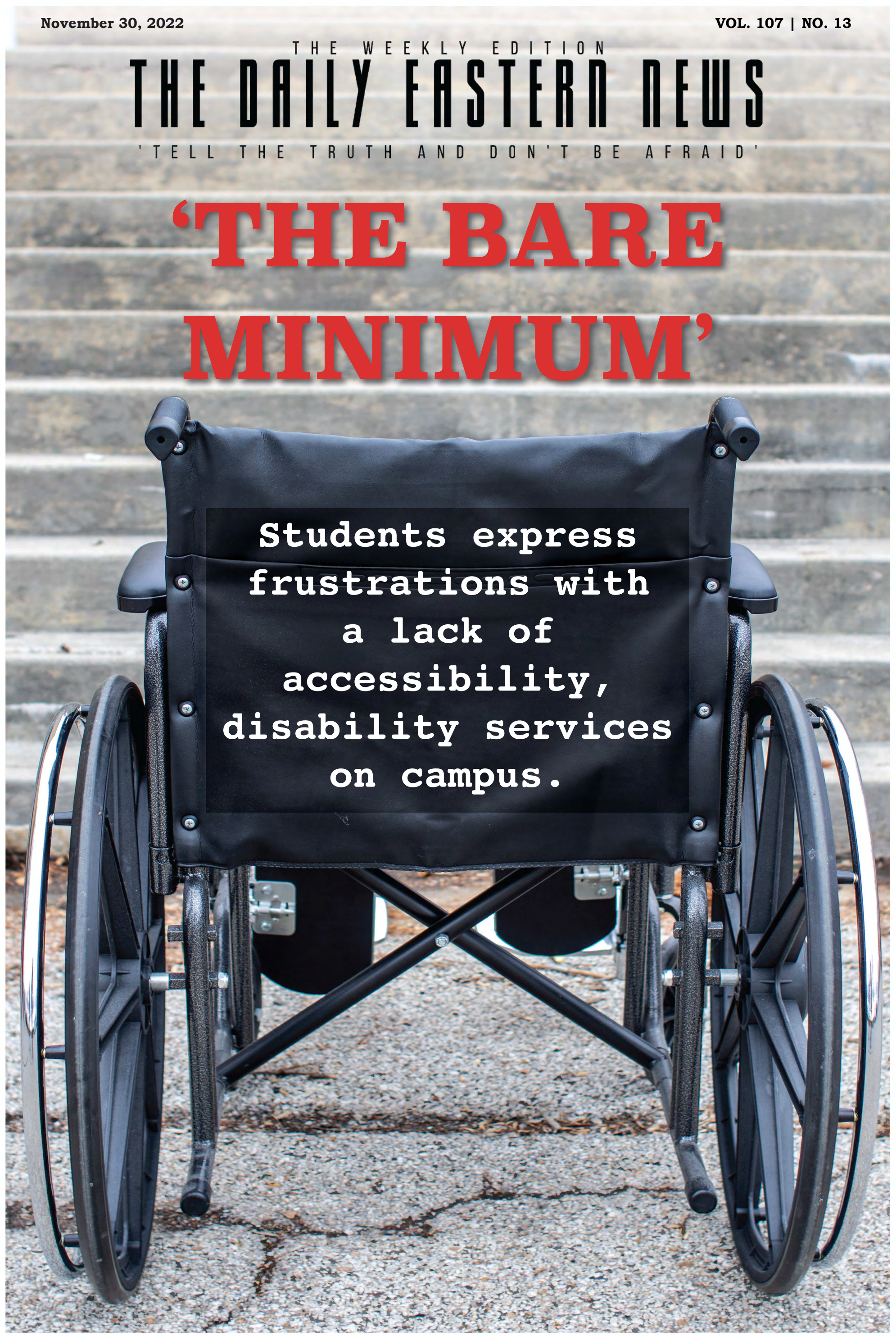


THE WEEKLY EDITION

# THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

'TELL THE TRUTH AND DON'T BE AFRAID'

## 'THE BARE MINIMUM'



Students express  
frustrations with  
a lack of  
accessibility,  
disability services  
on campus.



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Discrepancies in Eastern's disability population

By Madelyn Kidd  
News Editor | @Madelyn\_K

Eastern has declined in number of undergraduate and high school dual credit students registered with disabilities from this fall semester at 4.9%, 340 students, from last fall with approximately 6 percent, 415 students. In fall 2021, Eastern had 6 percent of students registered with disabilities to the Office of Student Disability Services. However, for fall 2022, the count dropped by approximately 75 students. Yet, Eastern's 10th count day numbers showed an increase from fall 2021 to fall 2022 with 13 more students.

There is also a decrease in students registered with mobility disabilities from fall 2022 to fall 2015. In fall 2015, there were seven students registered with mobility disabilities, while this year there are only four. This accounts for, of the 340 registered disabled students, only 1.18% have mobility disabilities.

In comparison with the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's fall 2021 numbers to Eastern's 2022 numbers, Eastern has a significant decrease in the percentage of mobility disabled students.

U of I Urbana-Champaign had 6.6% of undergraduate students with disabilities in 2021, 5.7% in 2018 and 4.7% in 2017. In 2021, there were 2,233 disabled students with 6.4%, 142 students, having mobility disabilities. If Eastern was equal to U of I Urbana-Champaign fall 2021 numbers this year, there would be approximately 22 students on campus with mobility disabilities.

For 2018, Eastern had around 3 percent, 181, of students registered with disabilities and 4 percent, around 223 students, in 2017.

Then for 2018, U of I Urbana-Champaign had 5.7% of undergraduate students with disabilities, and of those 9.4%, 181 students, had mobility disabilities. In 2017, U of I Urbana-Champaign had 4.7% of undergraduates registered with disabilities with 10.3%, 164, having mobility disabilities.

Without knowing Eastern's exact numbers for students with mobility disabili-



BY ROB LE CATES | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Eastern alumnus Eric Plummer, class of 2018, takes a bowl of chili during the CCAR Thanksgiving luncheon Tuesday afternoon, Nov. 22. Plummer works two jobs, the first as a CCAR manufacturing worker and the second as a janitor.

ties and going off estimations of U of I Urbana-Champaign's percentages, Eastern should have had approximately 33 students registered with mobility disabilities in 2018 and 27 in 2017.

In comparison with the U of I Urbana-Champaign's fall 2021 numbers with Eastern's 2021 numbers, Eastern has a significant decrease in mobility disabled students. In 2021 to match U of I, Eastern would need to have had approximately 28 mobility disabled students. Based on mobility disabled student numbers from 2022 and 2015, this is extremely unlikely.

Other Illinois public universities mostly showed an increase in the portion of disabled students in 2021 compared to 2018 or 2017.

Illinois State University had 6 percent of registered students in 2021, 4 percent in 2018 and 5 percent in 2017.

Northeastern Illinois University had 5 percent in 2021, 5 percent in 2018 and 3 percent in 2017.

Northern Illinois University had 5 percent for all three years.

Southern Illinois University Carbondale had better recent numbers compared to its Edwardsville campus with 5 percent in 2021, 4 percent in 2018 and 3 percent in 2017.

Like previously stated, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville had a smaller proportion of disabled students. In 2021, there were less than 3 percent of disabled students, in 2018 3 percent and in 2017 5 percent.

University of Illinois Springfield had 3 or less percent of disabled students in 2021, and 3 percent in both 2018 and 2017.

Western Illinois University had seven percent of its students registered as disabled in 2021, and 5 percent in both 2018 and 2017.

Numbers from 2021 were provided through the National Center for Education Statistics, and numbers from 2017 and 2018 were reported by the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Madelyn Kidd can be reached at 581-2812 or at denewsdesk@gmail.com.

About

The Daily Eastern News is produced by the students of Eastern Illinois University. It is published weekly on Wednesday, in Virden, Ill., during fall and spring semesters and online during the summer term except during university vacations or examinations. One copy per week is free to students and faculty. Additional copies can be obtained for 50 cents each in the Student Publications Office in Buzzard Hall.

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COVER ILLUSTRATION BY ROB LE CATES AND LUKE TAYLOR

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WHAT'S HAPPENING NOV 30-DEC 7

WEDNESDAY

Intro to Visualizing Timelines  
10 a.m. - Booth Library

Student Government  
7 p.m. - Arcola/Tuscola Room, MLK Jr. University Union

THURSDAY

Council on Academic Affairs  
2 p.m. - Witters Conference Room, Booth Library

Holiday Fest  
5 p.m. - Doudna Fine Arts Center

Jazz Ensemble  
7:30 p.m. - Doudna Fine Arts Center

FRIDAY

Holiday Fest  
10 a.m. - Doudna Fine Arts Center

Villains: a Cabaret of the Misunderstood  
7:30 p.m. - Doudna Fine Arts Center

Wind/Eastern Symphony Orchestra  
7:30 p.m. - Doudna Fine Arts Center

SATURDAY

Holiday Fest  
1 p.m. - Doudna Fine Arts Center

Villains: a Cabaret of the Misunderstood  
7:30 p.m. - Doudna Fine Arts Center

SUNDAY

Holiday Fest  
1 p.m. - Doudna Fine Arts Center

Holiday Concert: featuring Eastern Symphony, Choir and Band  
1 p.m. - Doudna Fine Arts Center

MONDAY

Symphonic Band and Guest High School  
7:30 p.m. - Doudna Fine Arts Center

TUESDAY

Charleston City Council  
6:30 p.m. - Charleston City Hall

Jazz Lab Band  
7:30 p.m. - Doudna Fine Arts Center

WEDNESDAY

Tarble Wellness: Crystal Bowl Sound Bath  
1 p.m. - Charleston Public Library

Student Government  
7 p.m. - Arcola/Tuscola Room, MLK Jr. University Union

Send your event information to dennewsdesk@gmail.com to be added to our online and print calendars!



# Why isn't Eastern's campus accessible?

By Luke Taylor

Editor-in-Chief | @luke\_taylor23

Editors and reporters from *the News* have struggled for over two weeks to find details on how Eastern accommodates students with disabilities.

After hearing stories about fellow students' struggles, we knew we were in for a challenge.

We toured campus and determined for ourselves that many areas are inaccessible to people using mobility aids, which comes as no surprise on a campus with older buildings.

## How are building accessibility issues handled?

We first began by trying to determine who ensures that buildings are accessible and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The answer appears to be that no official processes to make sure that buildings are accessible are currently in place.

Over the summer, *the News* published an article summarizing access challenges on campus.

Apparently, in response to the spotlight placed on those challenges, an unofficial committee was formed to look into addressing them.

This committee included:

- Anne Flaherty, vice president of student affairs
- Paul McCann, vice president of business affairs
- Ceci Brinker, director of student life
- Justin Richards, a graduate assistant in the student life office
- Lucy Ade, student body president
- Timothy Zimmer, director of facilities planning and management
- Mark Hudson, director of housing and dining services
- Ci Richardson, a senior psychology major and wheelchair user who has advocated for better accessibility on campus

The committee met twice.

Meetings were not announced publicly.

This unnamed committee made recommendations to either Facilities or to Housing and Dining on repairs and updates to sidewalks on campus as well as to the ramp to access Stevenson Dining.

But they did not follow state law. According to the Illinois Open Meetings Act: "citizens shall be given advance notice of and the right to attend all meetings at which any business of a public body is discussed or acted upon in any way."

Despite not operating in an official way, this committee likely needs to comply with the OMA because it made recommendations for repairs to campus which would use university funding or employee hours.

According to a member of the committee, neither notes nor minutes were taken in either meeting.

We did learn, though, that a document provided to the committee by Richardson lists inaccessible areas on campus.

Hudson's updates to the document reveal some planned and completed projects created as a result of these



BY ROB LE CATES | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Some places on campus create problems for people who use wheelchairs, like Weller Hall where sidewalks are damaged and Lantz Arena which is only accessible on one floor.



BY ROB LE CATES | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Cracked, eroded sidewalks are challenging for wheelchair users to navigate.

meetings.

## What is being done?

On behalf of the committee, Hudson also updated instructions for staff members to keep accessible doors unlocked while the MLK Jr. University Union is open, and to ensure that signs be kept out of the way of door openers.

Another suggestion from the committee: creating a plan for allergen-safe

foods to be provided in other dining halls after Taylor Dining's hours were reduced earlier this year.

Some other suggested projects are larger in scope

For example, in August, shower chairs were ordered for all accessible showers in Ford, McKinney and Weller Halls.

Grounds workers have been contacted to look into solutions for a dropped

sidewalk, creating an oversized step outside McKinney.

A spot in the sidewalk outside Stevenson Dining, which the original document describes as a "3+ inch step" and Hudson's update describes as a "3/4 inch lip," was repaired over the summer to make the ramp accessible to wheelchair users.

Hudson also noted there was a "major project to redo this area in the works – hopefully next summer."

## Who should students contact with concerns?

Still, we hadn't answered our initial questions about the official processes for reporting issues with accessibility on campus.

Eastern's website mentions Linda Holloway as ADA coordinator, but further research revealed that she is the coordinator for employees, not for students.

We asked multiple members of Eastern administration who confirmed that April Jackson is the current ADA coordinator for students.

Neither Holloway nor Jackson was on the unofficial committee making changes to campus.

Jackson is also the director of Student Disability Services.

In an interview about campus accessibility this summer, Jackson said that her office takes comments from students to make reports about issues with access to different locations or services on campus.

Jackson said that Facilities Planning and Management was in charge of actual building accessibility, such as ramps or automatic doors.

Zimmer, the director of facilities, had been contacted several times over the course of the summer for confirmation and for an explanation of the process for ensuring accessibility, but he did not respond.

After the article about campus accessibility was released, Heather Chism, the alternate media specialist at Student Disability Services, said that the office only handles academic accommodations for students to take their classes, not physical campus accessibility.

Since the publication of that article, Jackson has turned down multiple requests for another interview with staff at the News.

## What does this all mean?

Despite non-compliance to current ADA standards, Eastern is likely not breaking any laws.

Administrators are aware of parts of the ADA, which allow buildings once compliant to remain "out of date," if other renovations are not being made.

Compliance relies on the date of building.

Public structures built before 2012 must at least comply with 1991 ADA Standards while post-2012 public structures must comply with 2010 ADA Standards.

If an area is renovated or altered, it must comply to the more rigorous recent standards, up to a level of cost and inconvenience detailed in ADA Title II.

**Luke Taylor can be reached at 581-2812 or at deneic@gmail.com.**



# Student continues push for accessibility on campus

FILE | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Ci Richardson, a senior psychology major, wheels down the Stevenson Tower ramp while slowing themselves down by holding onto the railings on Thursday, June 9. Eastern repaired the ramp by leveling the entry from the sidewalk to make it level. Eastern plans to do construction to the ramp to make it more accessible and safer for use.

## Richardson says Eastern's campus doesn't fit 'golden standard' of accessibility

Story by **Cam'ron Hardy**  
Junior Campus Editor | @DEN\_News

Ci Richardson, a senior psychology major, has chronic pains in their body and asthma. Due to this, they are unable to walk long distances due to the pain in their legs.

Richardson must use a wheelchair to move around campus, but it is challenging for them.

"The sidewalks are awful," Richardson said. "Not every building has a push to open button... Some of the ramps are older and they are steeper of an incline... There's still places where I can't fit through some of the doors, and I have the standard size wheelchair."

Eastern's accessibility for disabled students has made it challenging for Richardson to navigate their way around the campus.

*"I just want to see this campus get better. Not for me, but for my other friends that are disabled that I know that are freshman."*

- Ci Richardson

Richardson said that their options came down to Illinois State University and Eastern but chose Eastern because ISU had more things to improve on.

There are still a lot of things that Eastern must fix, according to Richardson. And there are some areas where Eastern is getting better, but it still has some ways to go as far as

making campus completely accessible.

Richardson said of the doors are difficult to access, such as room 1550 in the Doudna Fine Arts Center, which Richardson describes as "a bomb shelter door."

Lecture halls also cause a problem for Richardson because there are not many places for them to sit.

Buzzard Hall is also an inaccessible building for some because it has push-to-open buttons for one door but not another, Richardson must navigate around that issue. Richardson said the front of the classroom is the only place to sit in classes at Buzzard, which is OK for them, but for other disabled students, it may cause a problem.

Richardson said they had to "argue" with the Office of Student Disability Services on some topics about what should/should not be an accommodation.

Richardson does not have the accommodation of their own desk because they need to have it written down by a doctor that they need to have a wheelchair accessible desk. They presumed that they would not need accommodation since they use a wheelchair.

According to Richardson, accessibility at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is better than Eastern, but it is still the bare minimum.

"Some of the things [I see] when I go there, I'm like 'Oh this is amazing. I've never experienced this anywhere else,'" Richardson said. "But that should just be the bare minimum standard."

Richardson is a member of an accessibility panel and is working with Eastern to fix some of the accessibility issues on campus, including the fix-



BY ROB LE CATES | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Ci Richardson, a senior psychology major, finds it difficult to navigate even in their accessible apartment. They said their apartment is accessible, but there are little things that are inconveniencing and irritating like the little bump between the kitchen and living room and the railing placement in the bathroom railings.

ation of the ramp at Stevenson. Richardson said there have also been other resolved inaccessibility issues on campus, including some of the sidewalks getting holes filled.

Anne Flaherty, the vice president of student affairs, is a member of the council. She participated in some of the conversations this past summer pertaining to the accessibility on campus.

She also talked about what the council is doing to improve how accessible the campus is.

"Several of the physical improvements are under review with [the Facilities Planning and Management department] to get estimates for repairs/modifications, and the feasibility of re-

pairs based on cost estimates," Flaherty said.

Flaherty said the council will regroup once they get more information.

"I just want to see this campus get better," Richardson said. "Not for me, but for my other friends that are disabled that I know that are freshman. And there's going to be disabled people coming here for the rest of the time this university is open. With it being more accessible for people to go to college, with everything now, there will be more people that should have the opportunity [to] have an accessible space."

**Cam'ron Hardy can be reached at 581-2812 or at [cahardy@eiu.edu](mailto:cahardy@eiu.edu).**



When doing tasks like laundry from their chair, Ci Richardson, a senior psychology major, has to run their chair against the wall to load clothes into the washer.

## Accessible apartment presents challenges

Photos by Rob Le Cates

Photo Editor | @robert\_lectates

For students who are physically disabled, the two Yorkshire accessible apartments are the only ground-level options of the 11 housing buildings in University Court. The disability-friendly apartments feature lower countertops and appliances, wider hallways and grips and railings in the bathrooms.

For Ci Richardson, a senior psychology major, their apartment is a step in the right direction.

Richardson is physically disabled, and is diagnosed with

chronic pain in their back, neck, shoulders and pelvis. Because of it, they use mobility aids such as a wheelchair and cane.

They primarily use their wheelchair to navigate campus and other mobility aids around their apartment.

Richardson said University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's campus is a better example for accessibility and that Eastern has a long way to go until it can compare.

"This [campus] will never be U of I, but that should just be the bare minimum," Richardson said. "[Eastern] is better than some campuses but still has a long way to go."



TOP: Richardson has a bathroom with two grip railings attached behind and next to the toilet. While the railing next to the toilet has all of its screws fastened into the wall, the railing behind is missing two of three screws in one of the anchor points. Richardson said they are lucky because they don't need to use the behind railing, but it upsets them because what if they, or someone else, had to?

BOTTOM : Richardson demonstrates the difficulties with using an oven in their kitchen. The height of the oven requires Richardson to position themselves next to the oven and avoid lowering the oven door onto their feet.



TOP RIGHT: Even getting in and out of the shower is difficult for Richardson, who lives in one-of-two accessible University Court apartments, because there is no outside handle to hoist themselves in and out. Richardson ends up using the side of the wall; they said the height difference is even hard for able-bodied people to get into the shower





BY ROB LE CATES | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Of all the Triad buildings, Weller is the least accessible because of its cracked sidewalks, step up backdoor entrances and no outside push to open button.

## Four out of 37 buildings at Eastern are fully accessible

By Madelyn Kidd  
News Editor | @Madelyn\_\_K

Out of 37 buildings on campus, The News discovered through research that only four of those buildings passed the inspection for being accessible for students with disabilities to navigate the buildings.

Editors from The News examined several aspects to determine whether each building is accessible: doors with ramps and automatic door openers, elevators, wide hallways, handrails, accessible stalls in bathrooms, access to campus offices or services, etc.

The main consideration was whether someone in a wheelchair would be able to travel throughout the entire building.

The News found that 33 buildings on campus, including academic halls, residential spaces and others, were inaccessible to some degree.

The four accessible buildings are Ninth Street Hall, Tarble Arts Center, Blair Hall and the University Police Department office.

Many other buildings were almost completely accessible, but either one or two accessibility features were missing or needed maintenance.

### Residence Halls: Thomas Hall

Thomas Hall does not have any accessible entrances with automatic door openers, but the southwest entrance does have a ramp. The elevator in Thomas Hall works, but there is only an elevator on the north tower and not the south. This makes it difficult for everyone to be able to get to their floors as they move in or out each year as they have to carry heavy objects up and down several flights of stairs. There is an accessible bathroom in the basement.

There are three laundry rooms in the basement with either four or five washers and dryers in each room. To enter two of the three rooms, students must go down steps. If a student with a wheelchair is able to go to the basement, they are faced with a problem of getting into the room. The student still has to get through all of this with a hamper or two filled with clothes.

### Andrews Hall

Andrews Hall has two accessible doors both on the side facing Taylor Hall. However, one of the buttons to open the doors at the entrance facing Thomas does not work. There is an elevator and laundry accessible on each floor.

### Taylor Hall

Taylor Hall does not have accessible entrances with automatic door openers, but has two ramp entrances on the south side and main entrance into Taylor. The south side

does not have an elevator, and Taylor has one accessible laundry room.

### Lawson Hall

Lawson Hall only has a ramp entrance on the back side with a broken automatic door opener. Some bathrooms do not have handicapped showers or stalls. There are still some areas that are accessible for students. There are large unisex bathrooms in lobby area. Lawson has an elevator and accessible laundry on each floor.

### Lincoln Stevenson Powell-Norton Halls

Lincoln Stevenson and Powell-Norton Halls are completely inaccessible from the north side parking lot. There are handicapped spots.

There is a ramp that leads to a locked stairwell with no elevator. The south side has handicapped parking. There are ramps that lead to and from those spots, but the only way into the building is the ramp that leads to the dining hall on the Lincoln side. This ramp was fairly steep and difficult to navigate in a wheelchair. Once inside Stevo dining, you can travel by elevator. During hours Stevo dining is closed, someone from inside the building would need to open the door for anyone needing to use the accessible entrance.

### Pemberton Hall

It is impossible to get into Pemberton Hall with a wheelchair without going through the Pine Honors College. The entrances into the Pemberton Lobby are inaccessible and there are stairs to get to the front desk. Some entrances have a ledge or stairs. There is an elevator in Pemberton as well as in the Honors College. The bathrooms/shower rooms are inaccessible because they have a ledge at the entrance. The east and west entrances of the honors college have the automatic door openers.

### Ford, McKinney and Weller Halls

There are several concerns in the Triad. For each building, there is a ramp with automatic doors but the doors only open from the inside or via a remote control "garage door opener." McKinney and Ford both have a main entrance with a ramp, one side door accessible by stairs and one by ground level. Both McKinney side entrances are accessible for wheelchair users. The pavement for the ramp at Weller Hall's entrance has crumbled away and is too steep. This was the only accessible entrance into Weller and with it inoperable, handicapped students cannot get in.

### University Court

The University Court office includes a ramp but no door opener. Every residential building in U Court has three stories, none of which are wheelchair accessible; the first floor is one flight of stairs down from the entrance and the second and third floors are upstairs.

U Court has two accessible apartments with their own



BY ASHANTI THOMAS | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

The entrance leading to Buzzard Hall has huge cracks and many rocks on the ramp, deeming dangerous and unaccessible for wheelchair users

entrances which include ramps.

### University Apartments

Every apartment, office and even the laundry center for University Apartments has about a three-inch step at the entrance. There is at least one accessible apartment with a ramp. Most of the sidewalks to travel between buildings also include steps.

### Greek Court

Each building has at least one accessible entrance with at least a ramp if not a button. The main office is also accessible, though the entrance is very far from parking lots.

### Academic Halls: Coleman Hall

With Coleman Hall, all entrances have stairs except one facing Taylor Hall in an arch near the bottom. In that entrance, the left side has no button but the right side doors do. On the third floor of the men's bathroom there is not an accessible stall. There is a stair lift on the second floor to the third floor but it requires a key.

### Klehm Hall

For Klehm Hall, the east entrance has a ramp to the door



but no button. It does have a ramp leading to an elevator on the inside. The inside door operators work. There are also many signs leading you to an elevator. Everything else seems fairly accessible.

#### **Lumpkin Hall**

For Lumpkin Hall, the west entrance doesn't have a door operator. There is an elevator with a tight fit and quick to shut door. Someone in a wheelchair or with slow mobility would be hit by the elevator doors trying to close when entering and exiting the elevator. The elevator seems to reach all floors in the building.

#### **Life Sciences Building**

When it comes to the Life Sciences Building, it's extremely difficult for handicapped people to navigate, mainly because there are stairs everywhere. There are doors that have buttons to help open the doors, but, other than that, there was no elevator in the building. As for the outside areas leading to it, one entrance does have a ramp.

#### **Physical Sciences Building**

The Physical Science Building was fairly accessible. There is an elevator which accesses all floors and each floor has accessible restrooms and drinking fountains. There are only two automatic door openers and accessible doors on the west side of the building. No other sides had accessible doors. The outdoor button for the northwestern door is broken. The button still functions, but the blue handicap accessible sign is missing and the button is detached.

#### **Buzzard Hall**

Buzzard Hall bathrooms seem to be accessible. The northeastern door has automatic door openers. The main entrance door is accessible. The door nearest to HitMix 88.9 radio studio does have a ramp, but it doesn't have a button. The doors near the TV station do not have buttons and are very heavy. Doors in Buzzard are heavy, including some classroom doors. There is one elevator in the middle of the building. The restrooms have handicapped stalls.

#### **Blair Hall**

Blair Hall is fairly accessible. There are handicap buttons at each entrance and the bathroom has a handicap stall. The elevator is spacious.

### **Services and Office Buildings:**

#### **Old Main**

Old Main seems to be the least accessible of all the buildings. The main front entrance has a handicap button but only opens the first doors coming into the foyer and not the giant wooden doors. The only accessible entrance is a back entrance that has a wide door and a button at the end of the ramp. However, this door is only unlocked during the office hours for the cashier's office, and is locked during lunch from noon to 1 p.m. This means if someone needing an accessible entrance has a class which starts or ends in this time frame, they would have to exit from an inaccessible entrance. The other entrances are not accessible at all. The elevator is hard to get to, and there is a mailbox that causes a very narrow path to get through. The bathrooms are accessible. The entrances to the staircases block the way for the bathrooms and to get into the main hallway.

#### **Martin Luther King Jr. University Union**

The Martin Luther King Jr. University Union is fairly accessible as long as you have a guide or knowledge of where to go. There are two accessible entrances, on the east and west buildings. The main accessible door is on the west side of the east building, which leads to the Panther Food Pantry and the hall with the east side elevator.

The main bathrooms on the east side are inaccessible due to tight hallways. However, there is a family, gender neutral, and accessible single bathroom in the vending lobby on the first floor. There is also an accessible telephone, microwave and water fountain. The east elevator is operable and takes you to each floor on the east side including to 7th Street Underground. On the west side, the only accessible entrance is the southeast entrance into the Dining and Housing offices. There is also a ramp into the southwest entrance, but the hallway is too narrow to fit a wheelchair or crutches safely into. The bowling lanes have a ramp to go down to the lanes. The elevator is tucked into a corner near the bowling lanes.

The elevator is operable and is next to the Food Court where the west staircase is. The entries to the Food Court could be a concern for those who cannot physically push the turnstile. The self-serve drink station is also a concern due to the height of the fountain drink buttons and where drink supplies are stacked. While the bathrooms on the second floor across the Food Court might be a tight entry, they are fairly accessible, but no other bathrooms on the west side seemed to be. With the MLK Jr. Union ser-



BY ROB LE CATES | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Booth Library has only one accessible outside entrance on the south side of campus. The north of campus has two sets of stairs that lead up to the entry way doors.

ices, all the entrances remain unlocked late into the night, so the west entrance does not rely on the Dining and Housing office hours.

#### **Booth Library**

The north entrance of Booth Library is completely inaccessible with multiple sets of stairs to get into the library. The south entrance is accessible, though, with an elevator to all of the floors. The main challenge throughout the library is navigating between bookshelves. Most have just enough space to fit a standard wheelchair through, but some appear too narrow. Fourth floor bathrooms, marked as gender-neutral and accessible, have doors to get to them which are not button-operated. Gendered bathrooms are accessible, though.



BY ASHANTI THOMAS | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Cracks on the sidewalks around campus which are dangerous to wheelchair users.

#### **Student Services**

The Student Services Building is accessible at bare minimum. There is only one automatic door opener, which is conveniently by the elevator. There are five floors that make up this building with only eight stairs for each one and the elevator has two sides for doors because it alternates depending on which floor you go to.

There was only one men's restroom and one women's restroom on different floors, and while the men's restroom was accessible the women's was not. First the smallest hallway is the opening for the women's restroom, which could not fit most wheelchairs. The space between the doors for the stalls and the wall is also very slim.

#### **University Police Department**

The University Police Department building has one accessible door at the main entrance on the west side of the building and handicapped parking in the lot on the south side. The emergency phones across campus are at an accessible height that someone in a wheelchair would be able to use in an emergency.

#### **Gregg Technology Center**

Gregg is accessible with a spacious ramp and handicap bathroom stalls. There are buttons on the inside and outside doors. Weller Hall's sidewalk to get up to the ramp has ridges and is broken. Weller's side doors are only accessible by stairs.

#### **Health Services**

The Health Services building has a ramp on the west side leading to doors but doesn't have a door operator on the outside. There is a ramp on the side facing Thomas Hall and a ramp in the back, but no door operator to the back doors.

#### **McAfee Gym**

McAfee only has one accessible entrance. However, the ramp is very steep with no hand railing. Plus, the automatic door opener is at the bottom of the ramp, creating a race to the door before it closes. This ramp was difficult to go up on in a wheelchair. This is the only accessible door without stairs in the way to enter the building. McAfee is also the building which houses the Students Disability Services office. Traveling in McAfee is dependent on the elevator to and from the basement and second level floors. The ground floor is cut off. There are multiple accessible bathrooms in the basement. Another automatic door is landlocked by stairs. Water fountains are a little high for someone who is wheelchair bound. There is a ramp that leads to the accessible door to the parking lot by the reserved spaces.

#### **Ninth St. Hall**

This building is fine. The main entrance off of the parking lot is completely accessible.

#### **Textbook Rental Service**

While the entrances are accessible and this building is only one story, navigating between bookshelves with mobility aids may be challenging. The shelving holding the textbooks are tall and without the ability to stand, students might not be able to access certain books. Visitors may want to call ahead and request help gathering books.

### **Arts:**

#### **Doudna Fine Arts Center**

The Doudna Fine Arts Center has a few doors that don't have buttons, but most have them. There are also two elevators in the building. The door nearest the art and design area does not have a button, as well as one of the doors near the Mellin steps. The bathrooms seem to be wide enough for students to be able to get into, and the elevators are easy to access. The main south entrance has a high door frame along the bottom of the doorway. A wheelchair may get stuck on the frame going in and out and leverage from the side of the doors was needed to get the wheels over the frame.

#### **Tarble Arts Center**

The Tarble Arts Center had doors wide enough for those in wheelchairs to get access to. They also have functioning buttons, and the pathways leading up to them seem pretty safe.

#### **Burl Ives Studio Hall**

The Burl Ives Studio Hall had two entrances with ramps leading to the doors. However, there were no visible automatic door opening buttons if any.

*Luke Taylor, Autumn Schulz, Kate Stevens, Rob Le Cates, Ashanti Thomas, Cam'ron Hardy, Adriana Hernandez-Santana and Ellen Dooley contributed to this article.*

**Madelyn Kidd can be reached at 581-2812 or at [dennewsdesk@gmail.com](mailto:dennewsdesk@gmail.com).**

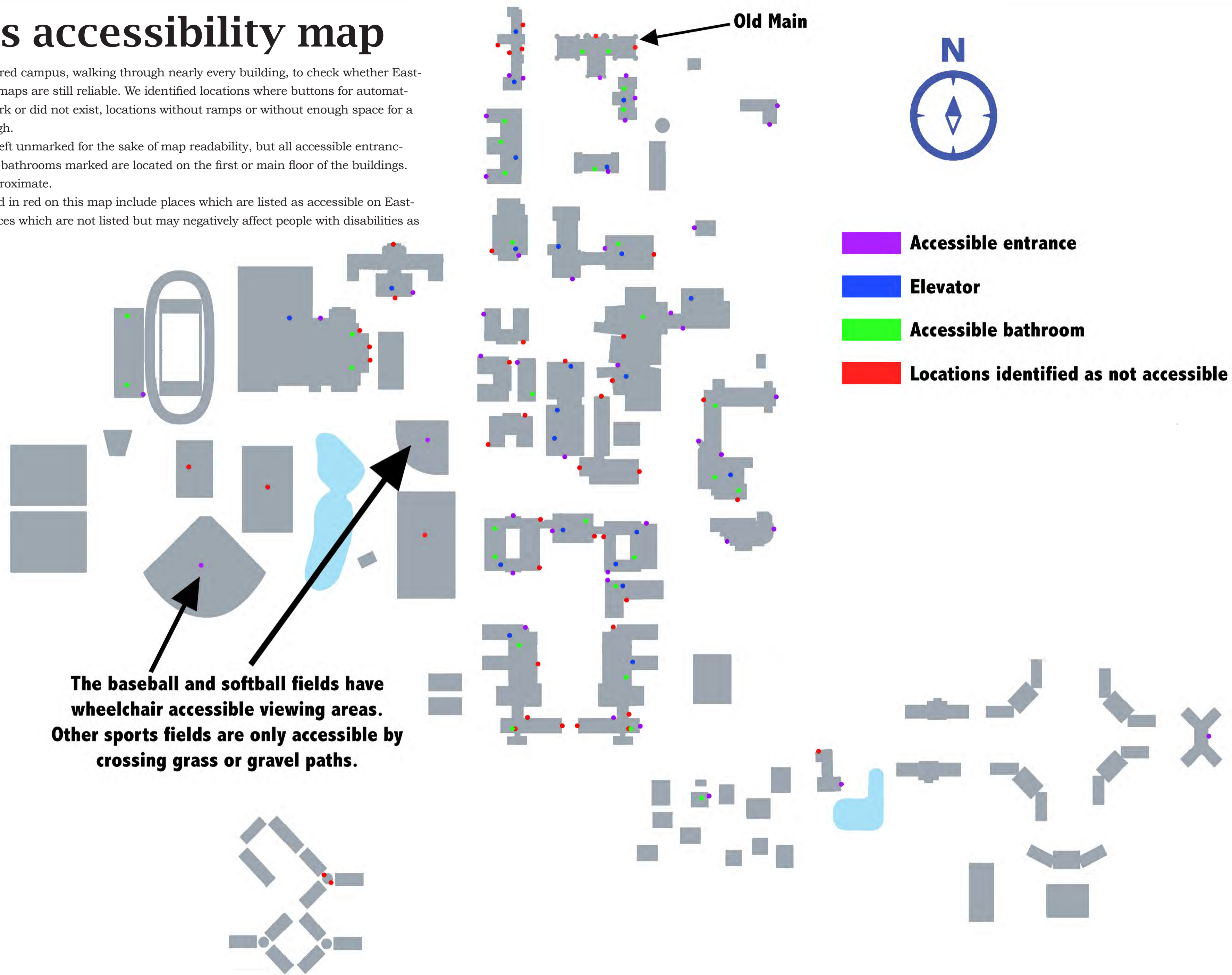


# Campus accessibility map

Staff from *the News* toured campus, walking through nearly every building, to check whether Eastern's online accessibility maps are still reliable. We identified locations where buttons for automatic doors either did not work or did not exist, locations without ramps or without enough space for a wheelchair to pass through.

Some doors have been left unmarked for the sake of map readability, but all accessible entrances have been marked. All bathrooms marked are located on the first or main floor of the buildings. Marked locations are approximate.

The 42 locations marked in red on this map include places which are listed as accessible on Eastern's maps as well as places which are not listed but may negatively affect people with disabilities as they navigate campus.







BY ROB LE CATES | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

All Eastern classes are required to list contact information for the Office of Student Disability Services in their syllabi for students who need academic accommodations.

# Students call for change in Disability Services

**Kyara Morales-Rodriguez**  
Campus Reporter | @kyaranainette

At the end of an anonymous student's freshman year at Eastern, her father passed away. The death of her father took a toll on her for years, keeping her from enjoying her college experience to the fullest.

She asked remain anonymous to avoid backlash because of the events she shared with *The News*.

The student, now a senior exercise science major at Eastern, started seeing a therapist through Eastern's Counseling Services last spring semester. It was not until then that she started looking into the process of getting her dog registered as an emotional support animal.

The student lives with PTSD, anxiety and depression and wanted her dog with her because having someone to take care of would help her "keep my mind organized and to feel safe."

A process that happens through the Student Disability Services office, starting with documentation proving her need for an emotional support animal. The student made sure to take all the necessary steps, getting all her paperwork filled out with her therapist and the Student Disability Services office.

Then came a meeting with April Jackson, the director of Student Disability Services at Eastern. She arrived at the office expecting access to its support and services and was instead met with judgment and suspicion, saying that "right from the get-go, it was completely negative."

The student said that Jackson asked her why she needs the office's help, and she explained the struggles she has faced with her mental health. She said that Jackson responded by saying that the paperwork says something "completely different" and that "the wording wasn't what she was looking for."

When she explained why she needed her dog with her on campus, she said that Jackson asked "Well, do you really need her?"

"She said, I quote 'I have students who are in wheelchairs and have hearing aids and have hearing disabilities,'" she said. "I took that as, because I don't have a phys-

ical disability, that my well-being doesn't matter. And she just kept backlashing me and saying that I didn't need the help, and it was unnecessary for me to have my dog on campus."

The student said that she had a panic attack in the middle of the meeting and began hyperventilating.

"She was just being so rude to me and wouldn't let me speak," she said. "Any time I tried to speak, it was her interrupting me. I couldn't get a word out. And I finally did say 'I feel like you're attacking me. I feel like this meeting is pointless,' and she says 'well, I'm sorry you feel that way.'"

The meeting ended with Jackson telling the student to get out of her office, making her leave through the back door "where no one would see me leave her office."

"Once I got back to my car, I sat in the parking lot for almost an hour because I was having a panic attack," she said. "I was going to report her, but I couldn't find out who her supervisor is."

Mona Davenport, the dean of student success, would be over Jackson.

The student said that an hour after their meeting, she received an email from Jackson stating that there was a miscommunication between her staff and the Counseling Services office on campus.

About a week later, she received another email stating that her dog had been ap-

*"It's a slap in the student's face. I think EIU doesn't really take the actions to take care for their students."*

- Anonymous student

proved as an emotional support animal, but at that point, it was too late.

She had brought her dog on campus late January with the hopes of getting her approved as an emotional support animal, but she had her taken away, and it was not until the end of February that she was able to bring her back on campus. Not having her dog on campus with her for over a month negatively impacted her

mental health.

"I was doing bad in school," she said. "I was not socializing with anybody. I was not leaving my room. I was very depressed because I didn't have my dog with me."

The student said that this experience affected how she viewed Eastern, and how she felt as a part of its campus, saying that although Eastern claims to be supportive of students' mental health, it does not take the steps to help students.

"It's a slap in the student's face," she said. "I think EIU doesn't really take the actions to care for their students."

Eastern students with documented disabilities expect to find the support and resources they need to be successful during

*"I would think that EIU would take mental health more seriously."*

- Hope Eagan

their college career through Student Disability Services. That has not been the case for every student.

Her experience is not an anomaly, with some Eastern students and alumni sharing that they have not felt supported by the Student Disability Services office through a Daily Eastern News survey.

The survey received seven responses, with three saying they would not recommend Student Disability Services to other students and three saying they might do so. One person said that they would recommend its services.

Blake Meadows, an alum who graduated in 2022 with a biology degree, reached out to the Student Disability Services office for an emotional support animal. She said that her experience "was horrible."

"The director was very rude and condescending to me, which is not how you should treat someone with mental illnesses or any other disability," Meadows said. "With everything that has happened in the past years with suicide and suicide attempts on campus I would think that EIU would take mental health more seriously."

Hope Eagan, a sophomore music education student, reached out for its services for students with medical and physical

disabilities, as well as to address an experience they had with a professor.

Eagan said that the office was not helpful when she shared that a professor asked if she was disabled in front of her class, and that there was little communication about her disability plan other than when she first reached out for its services.

"They could also use some more education on disabled people and the community," Eagan said. "Someone in the disability office supports 'Autism Speaks' which is a very harmful organization, and it makes it feel unsafe for autistic folks."

Dustin Jackson, a sophomore computer information and technology student, said that he attempted to receive ADD accommodations, but was not able to because of the documentation required to receive those accommodations.

"This basically cuts accommodations off from anybody who doesn't have health insurance, forcing poor students without who aren't on their parent's insurance to either pay for private sector insurance, deal with the hell that is Medicaid, or not get accommodations," Dustin said.

He did not receive the services he was looking for.

Some students said that they felt there were areas where Student Disability Services could improve.

One student said that the office needs to stop questioning doctors' diagnoses. Another said that there needs to be better communication in the process of getting accommodations, as she filled out the documentation needed to receive those accommodations and never heard back from the office.

For the student remaining anonymous, the solution is: "Fire April Jackson."

"I think the first step that EIU needs to take for Student Disability Services in that department itself is find a different director for that," she said. "The people that I've talked to that had experiences with her were so negative. It's frustrating when you're seeking out help and the person who's supposed to help students is making things worse."

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## EDITORIAL

# Students with disabilities shouldn't have to fend for themselves

Over the past several weeks, we at The News have been looking into the process for reporting issues with accessibility on campus.

We knew it would be a complex issue, but we were not prepared for the extent of the problems we would find.

We did not start this venture with the intentions of “exposing” the university or causing trouble for any offices, much less any individuals on campus. We were just curious and concerned.

The News includes a full staff of competent student journalists who devoted hours of their time to understanding this process, and we still struggled to figure it out.

Many students do not have the time or the number of eyes to look into this.

We never found an official system; whether that's because of outdated web pages, unwillingness to speak to the media or an actual lack of structure is hard to say.

Students told us about their negative experiences navigating campus and trying to get help from the office of Student Disability Services. Multiple of them thanked us just for listening to their stories.

Why has inaccessibility grown into such a problem at Eastern? Why are students with disabilities such an afterthought? Why do they feel no one is listening to them?

From our observations, only four buildings on campus are entirely accessible.

It's not that most of the other buildings are completely impossible for people to navigate with mobility aids- small repairs and a little more attention paid to these issues could easily bring them



up to par.

It isn't that we're expecting the university to drop millions of dollars on a huge overhaul of campus; especially with our historical buildings, we don't expect massive changes.

As an editorial board, our conversations on this

topic kept returning to the fact that this is a compilation of many small issues. The only reason we are seeing a larger problem is a long pattern of complacency.

We have no reason to think that employees at Eastern are intentionally making life more difficult for students with disabilities, but without established ways to handle concerns about accessibility, students struggle to advocate for themselves.

Accessibility is not something you can ignore or compromise on.

It is not a challenge to overcome.

Making the campus accessible should be a part of any university's typical processes, just like safety checks or inclusivity trainings.

Until solutions are offered, it is not just current students that Eastern will need to answer to.

It is also losing out on an entire population of students who may want to attend this university.

Students with disabilities should not have to choose their school based on whether they will be able to get around the campus.

Students should not be expected to go to more expensive universities for accessibility.

Students with disabilities will be attending Eastern until the university shuts down.

The number of students with disabilities attending Eastern or even considering Eastern as their ideal university is up to the administration.

For the students with disabilities who do attend Eastern, it is up to administration to decide whether they will have fond memories and stories to tell or whether their memories of college will be about the unnecessary challenges they had to overcome.

## COLUMN

## Accessibility isn't an option; it's a requirement



Ellen Dooley

We are surrounded by technology. So why aren't the needs of students with disabilities being met?

I am not talking about turning the volume up in a lecture hall or moving the student closer to the board.

There are multiple options that can be used to help students in kindergarten to graduate programs.

For example, there are simple everyday habits you can do when presenting or as an educator.

Closed captioning. It is in most YouTube videos- just hit the button!

But there are some students who need more than just closed captioning. These are the students we need to advocate the most for.

There are multiple groups of students who could benefit from an augmentative and alternative communication device (AAC).

You may be asking- an augmentative and alternative what?

It is not as complex as you might imagine.

It can be an electronic device (tablet, iPad, laptop, etc.) that has different pictures or symbols that represent a word.

For example, if there is a picture of toilet, you can guess that this picture

would “speak” a phrase about needing to use the restroom

Not every student, family, or school district can afford an AAC. But what is the point of being accessible if the device that provides some accessibility is not accessible?

As some businessperson on Wall Street may have said, “money makes the world go ‘round.’”

Well, this is not the latest stock trade, we are talking about someone's daily routine and quality of life here.

It feels like everyone is on board with being inclusive until it hits the point where funding is needed.

Imagine if funding did not hold students back? That seems too good to be true though.

It brings me back to a column in the summer by Rob Le Cates about being how being “All In” means everyone.

It was about how a student on Eastern's campus who uses mobility aids was not about to access some places on campus due to inadequate accessibility features.

For example, the dipped sidewalks. If someone is using a wheelchair and the dip is not adequate, then some-

thing must be fixed or replaced, right? Well, who is going to pay for it?

A problem leads to paperwork, paperwork seems to get backlogged or lost somewhere, someone is waiting on something from another person, and it all just seems to fade into nothing because you are sick of being put on hold.

People who need to access buildings or public areas cannot just sit around and wait for paperwork to be tossed between departments and services or for funding to magically come through.

These are living breathing people who are entitled to live their life independently.

In the case of the column from the summer, just get their education like everyone else on this campus and around the world.

Accessibility is not an option; it is a right that needs to hold people accountable for including people of all capacities.

*Ellen Dooley is a sophomore special education standard major. She can be reached at [emdooley@eu.edu](mailto:emdooley@eu.edu) or 217-581-2812.*

## Editorial Board

Luke Taylor

Ellen Dooley

Madelyn Kidd

Autumn Schulz

Rob Le Cates



## COLUMN

# Campus events aren't accessible, sensory friendly

By Ci Richardson

Remember feeling cabin fever and loneliness during the endless months of 2020?

That's what many disabled and/or neurodivergent folks feel all the time. Events are not accessible or sensory friendly for these folks on campus.

In other articles this week, you'll see how physical areas are inaccessible around campus. One that isn't discussed is when events happen in the middle of the grass. Some wheelchair users have gear to make it onto grass and dirt, but most do not. If the ground is muddy or soft? That entirely goes out the window.

I can't make it out into the middle of the quad and that's where a lot of events happen. For example, the poster sale is completely inaccessible for me. There is not enough space between the tables for me to navigate if I were able to go on the grass.

Outside events are not the only inaccessible events that happen. Events indoors can be inaccessible too.

Events held in buildings after the traditional hours do not necessarily have the accessible door unlocked and available for users who need them.

Other times, the spaces are too packed for wheelchairs to get through.

I ran into this particular problem at Pantherpalooza the past two years as I was trying to set up my specific club's table and had to have our row shifted over so that there was space for my wheelchair to make it through.

I understand that they try to pack as much fun into one space, but that is hard for me to navigate if I can even navigate it at all.

Moving along, there are other way that events are inaccessible especially to those with sensory sensitivity.

Events are loud. There's not much you can do to get around people being loud, but loud music is especially an issue.

It is overstimulating having to try and focus on a conversation or task as you have music playing so loud your bones are vibrating.

Add that with events that have flashing lights? I can't handle it. Senso-

ry needs are different for every individual so I can't write an all encompassing article on that without it being a novel, but sound and lights are two of the main sensory issues.

Lastly, event advertising is not accessible to some. Posters are often posted with text that is hard to read, does not have enough contrast between the text and the background, or they're too overwhelming.

Oftentimes, the information that you need to see on the poster is too close together that folks with dyslexia can't differentiate the text as well.

When information is posted online, we run into the same issues. Some organizations often do not provide alt-text or image descriptions.

Alt-text (alternative text) is text included that describes the content of the image and/or what it tries to convey. Alt-text is accessed separately if available and isn't always accessible to some screen readers.

Image descriptions function in the same way except with more detail and is provided below or in the comments of the image. You often see this below an image in the newspaper, where alt-text is online and used for screen readers through code.

Blind, visually-impaired and folks with dyslexia may not be able to read when events are held or any additional information that may be needed for the event due to the things posted above.

Sometimes people with 20/20 vision have a hard time reading posters if the image is too compressed and there is not enough contrast between the font color and the background. How is someone supposed to get to an event if they cannot read how to get there?

Keep this in mind when putting events on in the future or have an alternative to in person events if you cannot get around location barriers.

**Ci Richardson is a senior psychology major. They can be reached at [crrichardson2@eiu.edu](mailto:crrichardson2@eiu.edu) or 217-581-2812.**



BY ROB LE CATES | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Ci Richardson, a senior psychology major, poses for a picture in their accessible apartment in the University Court apartments Saturday afternoon. While they are still in the process of getting everything diagnosed, Richardson said they suffer from chronic pain which affects their whole body, but mainly their back, pelvis, shoulders and neck.



## QUESTION OF THE WEEK:

How do you get around Charleston?



[dailyeasternnews.com](http://dailyeasternnews.com)

ANSWER THE POLL ON ...  
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COLUMN

# Families should not be responsible for disability laws

By Madelyn Kidd



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY SHELLY KIDD

Madelyn Kidd, a senior journalism major, poses for a photo with her brother. Kidd chose to keep her brother's name private, but advocating for him has been an important part of her life.

**G**rowing up, I have always known four things. One, there will be a day when my parents pass away, and I will be responsible for my little brother regardless of either of our ages.

Two, this world is not always kind or fair to my brother.

Three, my parents, other parents and family members have had and continue to have to fight for opportunities and better laws for my brother and others.

Four, my brother is autistic, non-verbal and will have more obstacles in life to have what he needs and wants.

I was fairly young when my brother was diagnosed, but before then my family knew something was different.

He was two-years-old to my six, and to me he was like any little sibling- because he was my only sibling.

I didn't worry or fret when he suddenly stopped saying words that he still has not said again to this day, or when he didn't play pretend with me, or when he would make different repetitive motions with his hands or body.

To me he was just my brother, but to my parents who raised me first and never experienced this, they started looking for answers.

Eventually, we got the answer, but there were still questions, and my parents started researching opportunities, laws to protect and help him and more.

For me nothing was different, not until my family joined various autism groups of other families of autistic children.

For me, this was always fun. I made new friends who didn't act differently about my brother, and my brother made friends who also didn't talk or expect him too and had some of the same mannerisms.

However, for our parents it was a support group, and a place to share the fears of a scary reality awaiting my brother when he reaches adulthood.

While many people, especially in this area, will always hate how Chicago makes Illinois a very progressive and liberal state, I will always be thankful for it.

Because of Chicago, we have a few laws, acts and opportunities Illinois has for people with autism that my brother won't get in any other Midwestern state.

There are still very few opportunities for my brother in rural parts of central Illinois, and the state and federal laws only help so much, which are the exact fears and concerns my parents and others had for their disabled children.

As a result, my family has been a part of various groups that helped provide events, activities and normal childhood experiences for my brother and other autistic children.

Meanwhile us siblings also got to have a blast between pool days and park days where we were in a big enough group with like-minded and aware people, we didn't care about the stares we got.

Pool days and park adventures were just the beginning, and easy because it was a public area.

One of the best things my mom and other "auti-moms" were a part of was advocating for a sensory-friendly movie viewing once a month at the AMC Theatre in Mattoon.

For those who don't know what sensory-friendly movie viewing would mean, it included: some lights remaining on, the sound would be set quieter, it was okay for people to make noise and run around, but most importantly, it gave my brother the opportunity to go to the movies and enjoy it.

However, I only remember getting to go to the movies

with my whole family without any problems or disruptions.

I wasn't there when our parents were fighting for the AMC Theatre to provide this, but it was a battle. Until we got creative.

There was one auti-mom who I would call the head organizer of it all. She planned a day where everyone involved emailed or called the head person of AMC Theatre, not just the Mattoon location, but the head of every AMC Theatre.

This man received hundreds of emails and calls in one day. The best part, turns out this guy was on vacation on the day when everyone called and/or emailed.

This man took the time out of his vacation week to call the head organizer auti-mom to find out what was going on and how to find a solution to it. Needless to say, the next month we had the first sensory-friendly movie viewing.

Then recently, our mom was in a training program for disabled people and families to learn how to advocate, lobby, make petitions for bills and more to have more rights

and opportunities for my brother and others.

However, it shouldn't take the family of disabled children to provide opportunities for fun lives. There shouldn't be obstacles to fun opportunities, health care and homes for disabled people.

One day my brother will be my responsibility, because if after our parents pass away the only option would be me or the state, and there is no way I'm letting my brother be stuck with only what the state will allow him.

But it can be stressful for me, the idea of how to take care of my brother and make sure he can have every opportunity he wants without obstacles in the way. Because any other option is scary, and it shouldn't be.

I shouldn't have to think and know that the state won't be able to help my brother like they should. I shouldn't be afraid of what would happen if our parents and I were to die together in an accident leaving him alone.

I shouldn't have to get frustrated and sick of how not having hundreds of thousands of dollars means my brother can't experience some things others can.

But that's the system; that's the game. It shouldn't be.

Once, our mom and I were talking about how my brother might one day be a part of a program where he could live on his own to an extent.

He could share a house or apartment with other autistic men in the program with caretakers that visit and monitor them. They would be as independent as possible.

The joy on my brother's face about just the possibility of

being able to live on his own as an adult is something I'll never forget.

I want that life for him, but of course there's obstacles in between that opportunity and him, and as his family we help him get to what he wants.

Right now, he is still a minor, but in the future I hope he gets that freedom.

Even if it's just our dad building a separate addition to the house so he can have his own area to himself, I want him to have that.

But no one should have to fight for their disabled family members to have that.

There will be a day when my parents pass away, and I will be responsible for my little brother regardless of either of our ages.

The joy on my brother's face about just the possibility of being able to live on his own as an adult is something I'll never forget.

**Madelyn Kidd is a senior journalism major. She can be reached at 581-2812 or at [dennewsdesk@gmail.com](mailto:dennewsdesk@gmail.com).**





BY HAN BYER | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Giovana Larregui Lopez, a junior outside hitter, jumps to spike the ball during the volleyball of the second set of the first game against the UT Martin Skyhawks at Lantz Arena in October. Lopez had 24 kills, 5 blocks, and scored 27 points. The Panthers won 3-2 against the Skyhawks.

## Volleyball team wins 'big' at OVC awards

By Autumn Schulz  
Sports Editor | @autschulz

Two weeks ago, the Eastern volleyball team saw its historic 2022 season come to an end after being knocked out of the OVC Tournament by Southeast Missouri in a five-set thriller.

The Panthers had previously swept the Redhawks in two regular season matches, getting their revenge after the Panthers' 2021 season came to an end after being swept 3-0 by the Redhawks in the opening round of the OVC Tournament.

This time around, the Panthers and the Redhawks met in the quarterfinals and went all five sets, but the Redhawks ultimately came out on top with a 2-3 victory, sending them to the semifinals where they knocked out second-seeded UT Martin and then onto the finals where they lost to third-seeded Tennessee State.

The five-set match was tied 33 times and there were 16 lead changes. The fourth set saw 19 ties and 10 lead changes, alone.

All but two sets were won with a two-point margin for both teams. The Redhawks took set one with a score of 25-23 and set two with a score on 27-25 as the Panthers could not avoid the block by the Redhawks.

The Panthers were down 2-0 as the chance to get swept by SEMO back-to-back crept closer but the Panthers were able to secure a 25-17 victory in the third set and a 28-26 victory in the fourth set.

The fifth set was won by the Redhawks 15-9 after they posted a .471 hitting percentage.

Junior outside hitter Giovana Larregui Lopez led the Panthers with 20 kills and five service aces. Sophomore outside hitter Kaitlyn Flynn was second on the team with 13 kills and two aces.

Freshman outside hitter Lilli Amettis had 11 kills and five block assists while freshman middle blocker Kate Dean added 12 kills and 10 block assists, mak-



BY HAN BYER | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

The Panther volleyball team celebrates scoring a point against the Tennessee Tech Golden Eagles at Lantz Arena earlier this month. The Panthers lost 3-1.

ing her the first Panther of the season to reach double digit blocks.

Junior libero Christina Martinez Mundo broke the single season digs record for EIU during the match as she collected 14. Setters Catalina Rochaix and Summerlyn Smith combined for 56 assists.

The Panthers had a historic season as some of their season highs had not been reached since the 2015 season. They finished with 1,483 kills, 1375 assists, and 16 overall wins and 10 OVC wins, all the most in their respective categories since 2015.

The Panthers also had 1,701 digs, which is the most since the 2018 season. Mundo finished her junior season with 599 digs.

On the eve of the OVC Tournament,

the OVC hosts their annual awards banquet where they announce All-OVC first and second teams, along with OVC Player of the Year.

The Panthers' own Giovana Larregui Lopez won OVC Player of the Year, making her the first Panther to do so since 2004. Lopez had 385 kills in 96 sets while averaging 4.01 kills per set through the OVC matches.

She led the Panthers with 1,058 kills and in service aces with 48, the most in a single season since 2003. She also tied the EIU record for kills in a three-match set with 26 against Southern Indiana.

Kaitlyn Flynn missed the first two weeks of the season and still managed to win first team All-OVC honors.

Flynn finished with 368 kills this season and her season high of 29 came

against Eastern Kentucky, the most kills in a single match by any OVC player this season.

Christina Martinez Mundo not only broke the single season dig record, but she won second team All-OVC honors. She was third in the OVC in digs per set and in total digs. In the NCAA, she ranked seventh in total digs and 17th in digs per set.

Academically, the Panthers had three members recognized by the College Sports Communicators; Ella Collins, Ashley Sharkus and Summerlyn Smith. The All-District honorees will be on the ballot for Academic All-America consideration.

**Autumn Schulz can be reached at 581-2812 or [acschulz@eiu.edu](mailto:acschulz@eiu.edu)**



# Lantz Arena 'up to code' but not accessible

By Autumn Schulz

Sports Editor | @autschulz



BY ROB LE CATES | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Eastern's men's basketball Head Coach Marty Simmons, talks to players during a timeout in a game against the St. Mary of the Woods College Black Horses during the game in Lantz Arena Monday afternoon. The Panthers won 102-40 against the Black Horses.

Lantz Arena is the home of Eastern's men's and women's basketball teams and its volleyball team, but it is also home to inaccessibility for those who are disabled but want to attend a game.

Someone who is wheelchair bound would be contained to designated spaces on the upper level of Lantz Arena, completely separating an individual from the action on the lower level.

However, if there was seating available on the lower level of Lantz Arena, those with mobility disabilities would be faced with steep hallways and a long quest to find the nearest elevator.

The main hallways are made of tile and the main hallway outside of the entrance of Lantz Arena is very steeply slanted, making it both difficult and unsafe.

If one can get around safely enough to find the elevator, they would be searching for the elevator for quite some time. The signs pointing in the correct direction to the elevator are hard to see and it is in an inconvenient location.

There are various requirements set by the Americans with Disabilities Act that must be met in order for any collegiate stadium or arena to be considered accessible.

The ADA "prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all areas of public life, venues that receive visitors have to make sure people with disabilities are offered the same access and services as any visitors," according to [inclusivecitymaker.com](http://inclusivecitymaker.com).

Some of the requirements, according to [inclusivecitymaker.com](http://inclusivecitymaker.com), are having lowered counters at concessions and merchandise stands, wheelchair seating areas, wheelchair escorts, assistive listening devices for hearing impaired people, and dedicated spaces for service animals.

Although Lantz Arena has wheelchair

seating areas, that is just one of the many things that it should have in order to be more inclusive.

Eastern men's basketball head coach, Marty Simmons, has personal familiarity with Eastern's accessibility matter.

Simmons' daughter, Brittany, went into cardiac arrest in 2019, where it took 25 minutes to get her heart beating again and it resulted in an anoxic brain injury. Brittany is now blind, wheelchair bound, and sensitive to noises.

Brittany does take advantage of the accessibility features that Lantz Arena has to offer, such as handicap parking in the rear of Lantz for easy entry into the building, in

order to make watching her dad coach an easier experience.

Once she is inside, Brittany uses the elevator in order to get to the upper level to watch the game from a corner near the basketball offices.

Simmons said that Lantz meets Brittany's needs for her to attend the games.

"That is important to us because she grew up going to games and it keeps some normalcy in her life since her health event," Simmons said.

According to [burnhamnationwide.com](http://burnhamnationwide.com), many believe that the ADA only applies to new construction or renovations. Therefore, buildings that existed prior to 1990 do not

need to be accessible.

Lantz falls under this assumption because, according to Rich Moser, the associate athletic director, Lantz is compliant with ADA codes because no renovations have been made since the enactment of the ADA.

However, according to [burnhamnationwide.com](http://burnhamnationwide.com), the ADA does require the removal of barriers to accessibility in older buildings. Some examples of removing barriers include adding curb cuts to sidewalks and entrances, widening doors, and using accessible door hardware.

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## Accessibility and sports should always coincide

Accessibility in sports should not be up for compromise, ever.

There is no room for those with disabilities to be excluded from participating and attending sporting events, especially at the collegiate and professional levels.

However, here at Eastern, that inclusivity is lacking in a major way when it comes to its different sporting facilities.

It is sad knowing that someone who is wheelchair bound and wanted to attend an Eastern men's or women's home basketball game or volleyball game would be contained to the upper level of Lantz Arena.

Coming from someone who sits at the press table courtside, it is like being in the game because I am that close to the action.

At O'Brien Field, there is a small platform for those with wheelchairs to sit on, but there is no other seating available closer to the field or in a different part of the stands that provide a different view.

For those who can sit in the regular stands are immersed in the crowd when it gets exciting and can see the action from a good viewpoint.

That same feeling and opportunity should not be different for those with disabilities.

Various requirements that are set by the



Autumn Schulz

Americans with Disabilities Act must be met in order for a stadium to be considered accessible.

Some of the requirements, according to [inclusivecitymaker.com](http://inclusivecitymaker.com), are having lowered counters at concessions and merchandise stands, wheelchair seating areas, wheelchair escorts, assistive listening devices for hearing impaired people, and dedicated spaces for service animals.

Just because the list of requirements seem long does not mean stadiums should ignore them or implement policies that are just "good enough."

There are many collegiate and profes-

sional sports facilities that all colleges can take after in order to be more accessible.

In an article by [wsrsolutions.com](http://wsrsolutions.com), they named Ohio State University as the most accessible collegiate football stadium because it meets all Americans with Disability Act requirements. According to [wsrsolutions.com](http://wsrsolutions.com), it provides "wheelchair users with accessible seating, elevators, and restrooms."

Those who attend a football game at Ohio Stadium and are wheelchair bound are "encouraged to ask an usher for assistance. They will provide transportation from the entrance gate or shuttle drop off to the accessible seats," according to [wsrsolutions.com](http://wsrsolutions.com).

Paul Brown Stadium, home of the Cincinnati Bengals, was named the most accessible NFL stadium by [wsrsolutions.com](http://wsrsolutions.com). "Accessible parking, entrances, concessions, restrooms, elevators and seating are available," according to [wsrsolutions.com](http://wsrsolutions.com).

The stadium had 1,000 accessible seating areas, according to [wsrsolutions.com](http://wsrsolutions.com). U.S. Bank Stadium, home of the Minnesota Vikings, has a sensory room according to [inclusivecitymaker.com](http://inclusivecitymaker.com). "People with down syndrome, people on the autism spectrum or with dementia" can have a "safe haven," according to [inclusivecitymaker.com](http://inclusivecitymaker.com).

At U.S. Bank Stadium, according to [inclusivecitymaker.com](http://inclusivecitymaker.com), "two licensed behavioral specialists take care of visitors at the sensory room." Having a well-trained staff can help make sure those with disabilities feel welcome and safe in an overwhelming setting.

Another overwhelming aspect of visiting a stadium or arena is not having access to important information beforehand.

If one were to google "Lantz Arena accessibility," they would not find much information about where to park, where to access the building, if there are restrooms and an elevator, or where to sit once they entered the building.

However, Illinois State, which is just a little over an hour North of campus, provides a page on their [goredbirds.com](http://goredbirds.com) website that describes where accessible seating can be found in both Hancock Stadium and Redbird Arena.

The little to no information available regarding accessibility here on campus for sporting events is not a "smaller college in the Midwest" problem, it's an Eastern problem.

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# Wilkerson's return home is already making a difference

By Kate Stevens

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Head Eastern football coach Chris Wilkerson is finally home. He has bled blue since his time at Eastern began thirty years ago and has already made a difference in the Eastern culture in his 11 months back in Charleston.

He said he has fond memories of being a student-athlete at EIU. For him, it all started in the summer of 1989 when he attended a recruiting camp at the University of Illinois where he got to know coach Brock Spack who was the position coach for his group at that camp. At that time Spack was the linebackers coach at EIU.

After visiting and exploring other options for college as he finished high school, Wilkerson had the official visit at EIU.

"From the moment that I came to campus for the visit, I knew there was just something very different about this place," Wilkerson said. "And it was something that certainly was a massive, influential moment in my life."

Wilkerson went on to play for EIU football in from 1991-1994 under coach Spoo. He recorded 136 total tackles and 11 sacks in his time at Eastern.

As he fell more in love with the sport of football, he also fell in love with Eastern softball catcher named Sharna McEwan.

"I met my wife here and that's the greatest gift of all," Wilkerson said.

Sharna said she and Wilkerson met in the halls of the Lantz building and talking to each other between classes ultimately led to their first date.

"He had lots of PE classes in the Lantz building, and I had class in the Lantz building also, because I was community health [major] at the time and we would just cross paths every day," Sharna said. "We went on our first date to the Will Rogers movie theater uptown."

Sharna is in the record books as one of the best EIU has had. She earned many honors and held records in her time playing for Eastern. She was an all-conference player all three years and remains on the top ten lists for most doubles and best batting averages in EIU history.

"Senior softball player Sharna McEwan, in just three years, has established herself as possibly the best catcher in Panther history," wrote Tony Nasella in a Daily Eastern News article from April 7, 1995.

She said in that article that she was unable to play her fifth year due to a financial aid mix-up, but she said she was more focused on her future career and her wedding that was coming up in the summer.

At the time they got married, Wilkerson was an assistant on coach Spoo's staff where he coached special teams, he also served as defensive coordinator, linebackers coach, and defensive line coach at various times during the next seven years.

Wilkerson said coaching at the collegiate level was not always the plan. He had his education degree and planned to teach and coach at the high school level.

"I thought I'd get a job," Wilkerson said. "I've already passed the Illinois examination. I thought I'd get a job teaching or coaching in the suburbs."

He said Spoo had asked him to come back and help them out for spring football and he thought he'd give it a try.

"He [Spoo] said, 'I think you'd have a



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Eastern Illinois University's Head Football Coach Chris Wilkerson (front), runs out with players Jay Vallie (80), a graduate tight end, and Jordan Vincent (1), a sophomore safety, before the start of the Panther's first home game of the 2022 season.

bright future coaching college football," Wilkerson said. "I'm a believer in 'things happen for a reason.' I've done nothing other than coaching college football."

In his time as an assistant at Eastern, the Panthers went on to reach the NCAA FCS playoffs four different times and won two conference championships.

In 2002, he was given a chance to coach defense and the special teams units at San Jose State until 2005 when he was hired by Dartmouth College as the associate head coach until 2012.

In 2013, he made his head coaching debut for the University of Chicago where he stayed for the next nine years. He had a successful reign there as he had a 53-31 overall record as he led the team to seven winning seasons and a conference title in 2014.

On Jan. 26, Wilkerson was announced as the 26th head football coach of Eastern Illinois after former head coach Adam Cushing resigned from his position. Cushing had gone 3-26 over three seasons at Eastern.

After gaining years of experiences in different coaching positions at different colleges, Wilkerson had finally returned home.

Over the years there had been vacancies in the head coaching position for EIU that had sparked his interest, but he felt they were not the right timing for him. This time it was different.

"I've always, always been very interested in the position, but it just wasn't the right time," Wilkerson said.

Wilkerson said he was at a national coaches' convention in early January 2022 when he heard that Cushing had resigned as head coach. As he talked to different people with EIU connections, he said he made them aware of his interest.

"It didn't take much longer until I was on the airplane about to go back to Chicago from San Antonio, and I had received a couple of calls from some people that I had coached, that were involved in the search process, about my interest level. Certainly, I made them aware that I was very interested," Wilkerson said.



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From left, Chris Wilkerson, Eastern Illinois University's 26th Head Football Coach, receives a jersey from Eastern Athletic Director Tom Michael for becoming the football team's new head coach at Wilkerson's press conference earlier this year.

He then had conversations with athletic director Tom Michael where they discussed his interest in the job and him coming home to Eastern. He then went through the formal application process.

Just a few weeks later, he was officially named the head coach of the Eastern Illinois football team.

"It's the greatest single decision I ever made," Wilkerson said. "It was a no brainer for me to come back and restore our place."

He knew he was leaving a good program behind in Chicago, but he was determined to come back home to EIU to ultimately make the program better because it has meant so much to him.

"Coaching for me is as it was for coach Spoo," Wilkerson said. "It wasn't just a profession. It's a calling. It's about helping people be the best versions of themselves. And

so, when this opportunity did present itself, I was in a pretty good situation at the University of Chicago and I probably could have stayed there for 20 more years and had won quite a few games, but again this place means so much to me. When this opportunity had did present itself, it was just something I could not say no to."

He said is happy to be back in Charleston because he said he owes so much to so many people at Eastern and in the area. He also wants to give back to the players the things and experiences he was able to have at Eastern.

The rest of this story can be found online on The Daily Eastern News website:

[dailyeasternnews.com](http://dailyeasternnews.com)