

NEWS From GEORGIA TECH'S ENGINEERING EXPERIMENT STATION

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INEXPENSIVE ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT
FOR THE HANDICAPPED SOUGHT

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For Immediate Release

ATLANTA, GA....A research effort beginning at Georgia Tech may remove some of the financial obstacles which keep handicapped persons from leading more comfortable lives.

Tech's Industrial Design Department has started a program to design and encourage the marketing of inexpensive adaptive equipment for the handicapped.

"Most of the adaptive equipment being manufactured in this country today is either specially fitted to individuals or almost prohibitively expensive," said Richard L. Martin, an industrial design professor who will head the program.

Tech's involvement in this field began several years ago when undergraduate students for Martin designed equipment and special environments for the Georgia Retardation Center. Last year, juniors and seniors in the industrial design program built prototypes of five pieces of adaptive equipment for the DeKalb Training Center.

The latter project included construction of a playground for mentally-retarded adults and children which was dedicated at the Training Center in early April.

"During the course of these projects we discovered that no other public agency or private manufacturer was meeting the equipment needs of these institutions in a cost-effective way," Martin said. "We found we could make an enormous contribution even on the undergraduate student level."

(more)

Graduate students will make up the primary work force for the expanded adaptive equipment design program. The effort also will require participation from engineers and other professionals throughout the Tech campus.

"We need engineers to help us with design problems and business people to aid us in developing the means to market, sell and assemble the equipment," Martin said. "We really have all the resources for a complete program here at Tech now."

Martin believes Tech's program could easily tie in with government-sponsored efforts to bring the handicapped into the national work force. One proposal he cited was for handicapped workers to build adaptive equipment themselves in small-scale industries.

Whatever the degree of its involvement, Martin believes Tech can work cooperatively with the private sector in broadening the market for equipment for the handicapped.

"There's enormous potential for manufacturers if we can help them get down costs of production," he said.

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