



1. Historical background

Sophia University was not among the best 26 universities helpful for handicapped students in the 2006 University Ranking (Asahi Shimbun publisher), topped by Nihon Fukushi (welfare) University. It was Sophia students' initiative that urged the school to start accepting the disabled in the 1980s, according to the student newspaper Jochi Shimbun.

One high school for the blind inquired of Sophia in 1980 whether its student could take an entrance examination, said the paper in its Jan. 16, 1981 edition. Sophia answered there hadn't been a blind entrance examinee before.

Students including Yukiko Kaneda started campaigning for better treatment of the handicapped. As a result, the school set up a committee in January 1981, and eventually accepted the first disabled student in 1984.

In the background was the International Year of the Disabled Persons in 1981 designated by the United Nations. Also, there was a controversy over an essay by Sophia professor Shoichi Watanbe (published in the Weekly Bunshun magazine in October 1980) that said it's a "holy obligation" for parents not to have a child who is likely to be born with a physical or mental disability in order to lessen the public burden.

2. Accepting Disabled Students

Sophia's fact-finding committee on the handicapped decided in January 1982 to seek measures to enable handicapped students to take entrance exams while not treating them with special favor. Students led by Minoru Nabe continued to urge the school to



The university bulletin announced on January 12, 1982 the plan to allow the disabled to take entrance exams.



Students' paper reported on April 1, 1984, a disabled person passed an exam.

take action through panels. The school's committee, set up in the autumn of 1982 for the president, officially decided to allow disabled persons to take entrance exams from 1983. The school asked disabled examinees to inform the school for making arrangements. Other universities such as Waseda and Rikkyo were already allowing handicapped persons to take entrance exams in 1982.

Three physically-challenged persons took an exam in 1983, and all failed. In 1984, a person in a wheelchair passed the test to enter the Department of Physics in the Faculty of Science and Technology. The school had renovated elevators, bathrooms, dormitory and other facilities.

After a blind student entered Sophia's French department in 1987 by taking a

test in Braille, her professor recorded French books by reading them out loud for her and escorted her going home until she got used to commuting while student volunteer also helped her.



Bathroom for the disabled.

3. Student Volunteers

The Students' Volunteer Bureau set up in 1983 played a key role in helping disabled students with study and campus life. Sophia's volunteers continue today to help their fellow students and other needy people.



Section for persons in wheelchairs in the Bldg 10 auditorium.