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June Lyle
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Law school expects record applications

By June Lyle ^{IDS}
Indiana Daily Student 3/28/89

Applications to IU-Bloomington's School of Law are expected to reach an all-time high this year, reflecting a nationwide increase in law school applicants.

The IU School of Law is projecting a 35 percent application increase over last year, compared to a 26 percent increase nationwide, according to Frank Motley, assistant dean and director of admissions.

The number of applicants for next fall already has reached 1,650, nearly surpassing the 1,750 applicants for the 1972-73 academic year.

Officials expect more applications because they will be accepted until the beginning of the fall semester, said Pat Clark, admissions coordinator. About 400 students will be accepted, but only 200 of those probably will enroll in the fall, she said.

Regardless of the number of applicants, the law school will maintain a class size of about 200.

"This just means that it's getting harder and harder to get into the law school," said Bryant Garth, professor and dean of the law school.

Motley said the larger pool of applicants allows the school to be more selective, keeping out some

applicants who might have been admitted last year. He predicted that an LSAT score of 37 or higher will be needed to gain admission this fall, a slight increase over past years.

Garth attributes the larger increase in applicants at IU to the growing reputation of its law school and the new law building completed in 1986.

"People know that IU has been one of the law schools on the move over the last decade, and new facilities will get people's attention," he said.

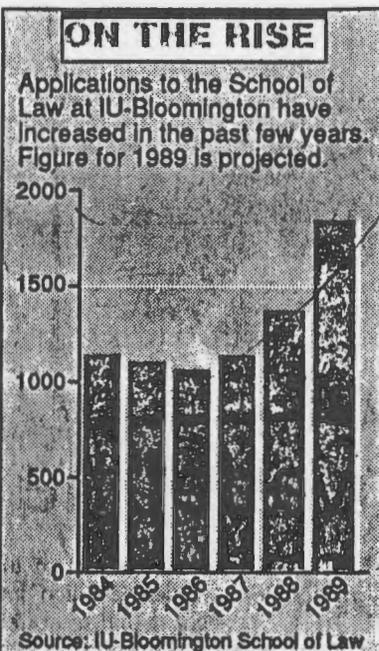
Media attention is a key factor in the national surge of interest in the law profession, Garth said.

"Anything that focuses attention on the profession is going to increase interest," he said. "The obvious example is (TV's) 'L.A. Law,' which focuses attention on the glamorous lifestyle."

Garth also cited newspapers and other media, which focus on the high starting salaries of some lawyers, as a cause for the recent increase in applicants.

"I'm not sure those media give the right impression, and sometimes I think they lead people into law school for the wrong reasons," he said.

Many of today's law students focus on the more profitable areas of



MARK SIPLE/Daily Student

law, such as securities, litigation, environmental and trade law.

"That kind of law is one important part of the profession, but I don't think it should be the main part," he said. "It would be a shame to have all young lawyers aspire to that kind of practice."

The growth of large law firms has provided many opportunities for young lawyers, Garth said. He said the salary discrepancy of public-interest law discourages many prospective lawyers who are often burdened with debts from their law school education.

"Often, there is a \$40,000 differ-

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ence between the salary of a lawyer in a big firm and a lawyer in the public interest areas," he said.

Jamienne Studley, executive director of the National Association for Law Placement, said just over 3 percent of lawyers go into public-interest practice.

"It's a kind of a challenge to awaken our students to these other dimensions of law practice," Garth said. "We're doing a better job of that, but we still have a long way to go."