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Law School meets accreditation standards

by Tiba Altona

The library of the I.U.-Bloomington Law School finally is meeting accreditation requirements, but the school’s problems aren’t over, according to Sheldon Plager, law school dean.

In a question-and-answer session Thursday with about 150 law students, Plager said, “Ours is a fully accredited law school, but we still have space problems in the library.”

He explained to the students that chairs and tables were taken out of the library last fall to provide space for books. In an accreditation report of the Association of American Law Schools, the law school was required to provide study space in the library for at least 65 percent of its students.

“We were caught in a bind,” Plager said. “To provide adequate seating space in the library we had to jam bookshelving space. So we still have the problem of providing space for the books.”

Colleen Pauwels, acting law librarian, said the library now has 383 seating spaces to serve the school’s 578 students—enough for 66 percent of the school’s enrollment.

“We purchased furniture and re-arranged things to be placed perfectly in compliance with requirements,” Pauwels said.

To deal further with the space problem, the University requested $10.4 million to remodel the Law School Building. On Nov. 9, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education recommended that the request not be forwarded to the Indiana General Assembly for consideration this spring.

Arguing against the remodeling request, the HEC said the University’s enrollment decline left space elsewhere on campus. “It seemed unreasonable to ask for more space,” Plager said.

Although the law school had stable enrollment in the midst of last semester’s decline, Plager said, “We’re not being hurt but we’re not being helped.”

The law school’s request was denied by the commission also because many of the books purchased by the I.U.-Bloomington Law School Library are purchased by the I.U. Law School in Indianapolis. “They didn’t like the idea of two state law schools buying the same books,” Plager said.

“I don’t know how we get the decision reversed,” he said. “No more money is coming in, and we need more for the library.”

He told students that he is appealing statewide to I.U. alumni for help in getting additional funds.