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Law school needs more faculty, space

By JOHN FANCHER
H-T Civic Affairs Editor

There's a serious shortage of teachers and space at the Indiana University Law School on the Bloomington campus. Sheldon Plager, new dean, told the IU Board of Trustees Thursday afternoon.

The school is supposed to have 30 teaching faculty members, but Plager said: "I can count only 13 full-time permanent faculty in residence this year."

He said by counting himself, plus Vice President Robert M. O'Neil, whose specialty is law, and law professor emeritus Ralph Fuchs, the number of teaching faculty can be shown to be 16.

Plager said he will accommodate the curriculum with 10 visiting faculty members from other schools, but he doesn't think that should be pursued as a permanent way to run the law school.

There are two major reasons for the shortage, he said. One is the school has faculty on leave, and the other reason is it has lost faculty to other schools.

But, Plager said, bringing back those on leave would provide a full-time permanent faculty of only 20 in a school that needs 30 to teach its nearly 600 students.

"We need to recruit at least 10 new faculty," he told the trustees, adding: "It's a tremendous opportunity to attract top faculty who can strengthen our abilities."

To do this, however, will take more money for salaries than IU has been paying, he said, commenting further: "We can't compete with our present salaries."

Plager said the school falls behind Iowa, Minnesota, Northwestern and Michigan in the salaries it pays, and he feels the school must look for "sources of funds outside the state's coffers."

One of the reasons the school has a problem with faculty on leave is IU promised that kind of flexibility instead of higher salaries to attract professors to campus, Plager said.

However, he quipped: "Florida paid in sunshine, but

anyone who wanted to raid them for hard cash could do so."

The new dean said he didn't want to be in that position with the law school faculty in Bloomington.

"We need to retain the good people (faculty) we have, and it's important faculty be able to go on leave to other schools to bring back new ideas; but, at the same time we have to run a law school," Plager told the trustees.

Shortage of space is another big problem at the law school. Plager said the facility is short seven faculty offices, which didn't seem like such a problem in the past because of the number of faculty on leave each year.

The Law School Library lacks space, too, Plager said. There are not enough seats for students and not enough shelves for books. "The library has a bad case of anemia," he told the trustees.

To help the student seating situation, individual study carrels in the library are being replaced with seats around tables. "A lot of good schools are using tables now days," Plager said.

While there are shortages in faculty and space, Plager said

there is no shortage of students wanting to get into law school.

He said in 1967-68, the school had 580 applications for the entering class, which could accommodate 200. For the 1977-78 school year, the school had 1,296 applications for 200 seats in the entering class. Two hundred fifteen were accepted.

He pointed out Law School Achievement Test scores are higher today than 10 years ago, and so are the grade point averages of entering students.

Plager thinks the interest in law will continue high for several reasons. More women and minority members will want to become lawyers in the years ahead, and he believes the middle class will gain greater access to the legal profession and thus create greater demand for the services of lawyers.

The new dean thinks it's only a matter of time until there will be some type pre-paid legal services program as there is today a pre-paid medical services program.

He pointed out the poor and the wealthy today have access to legal services, but the middle class generally considers the legal profession as something it cannot afford.