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Search for new law dean nearing end

By Jennifer A. Daniel
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The three-year search for a permanent dean of the IU-Bloomington School of Law appears to be nearing an end.

In late December, the law dean search and screen committee presented a short list of three finalists to IU-Bloomington Vice President Kenneth Gros Louis.

Of the three, Gros Louis said, the committee recommended one candidate for the position. That finalist, who is from outside the University, met with Gros Louis and members of the law faculty at the beginning of the year.

"The law faculty is enthusiastic about him," Gros Louis said Monday night. "But he is highly sought after and has other opportunities."

Gros Louis said the committee's choice for the office liked IU, and he added that the "chances are good" the finalist will accept the position.

"In the worst light possible," Gros Louis said, "if he doesn't come here he will still have a very favorable impression of IU — it won't be because of anything negative here."

After discussing the appointment with IU President John Ryan, Gros Louis will make a final recommendation to the IU Board of Trustees. The trustees are expected to formally announce the selection at their March meeting, and the new dean will take office July 1.

The 13-member committee has been working to recommend a permanent dean for the law school since 1984 when Sheldon Plager resigned to return to teaching.

Since that time, the school has had three deans. After Plager's resignation March 23, 1984, Morris Arnold, an IU professor of law, was named to succeed him.

Arnold served less than a year, and stepped down Dec. 31, 1985, to accept a federal judgeship. Another IU professor, Maurice Holland, filled the position as acting dean until June 30, 1986, when he left to become dean of the University of Oregon School of Law.

Bryant Garth, professor of law, became acting dean last July, on the condition he would hold the position for one year. When the new dean takes office, Garth will return to teaching and researching law, he said, adding that he would like to become a permanent law dean later in his career.

Details about the new dean are sketchy.

The qualifications for the new dean have stayed the same throughout the search, said J. William Hicks, professor of law and chairman of the search and screen committee.

"We're looking for somebody who has some proven expertise in scholarship and administration," he said. "These standards are the same for law schools all over the country."

The fact that the school has been without a permanent dean for the past three years reflects positively on the school, several law school faculty members said.

"Whenever you have a dean with high (national) visibility, like Dean Arnold, you run the risk of losing them to something like a judgeship," said Colleen Pauwels, a member of the search and screen committee and the director of the Law Library. Pauwels also said the school has been functioning well without a permanent dean.