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Merging law schools: a game of politics?

THE I.U. Law School-Bloomington faces a great danger. There is talk of merging the state's two law schools into one institution and a lot of people in Bloomington feel threatened — with good reason.

The talk has surfaced after articles in the Daily Student, Indianapolis Star and Louisville Courier Journal appeared two weeks ago explaining Trustee Carl M. Gray's resolution that the I.U. School of Law-Bloomington and I.U. School of Law-Indianapolis merge under one dean with cooperative faculties and a single curriculum.

There are more reasons not to merge than to merge and Bloomington law school-affiliated individuals seem more aware of this than do those connected with the Indianapolis school.

Ironically, merging will do just the opposite.

The two law schools are as distinct as the cities in which they are located. Bloomington law faculty members have taught at Indianapolis (and vice versa) when necessary, students at each school are permitted to take classes at the other school and the libraries have almost daily consultation.

According to Douglass G. Boshkoff, competition does exist between the two law schools, but the interaction is healthy.

There are many circulating rumors that blame several people in Indianapolis for trying to weaken Bloomington's law school while strengthening the Indianapolis law school's reputation and academics.

Ironically, merging will do just the opposite.

The basic reason given for merging is to eliminate the competition between the two law schools and to establish a stronger legal education system in the state of Indiana.

If the answer is "yes," something must be done to prevent this cheapening of an otherwise strong educational system.

Any education system that is so unsteady it has to be "re-evaluated" every few years, is not going to be very appealing to other lawyers, law students and legal educators.

It would be very unfortunate if Indiana's legal system gradually decreases as Indianapolis tries to find ways to make it "the strongest possible structure."

In the eyes of many people the state's legal education system has already suffered from the enactment of Rule 13 in 1974.

Rule 13 requires anyone wishing to take the Indiana bar exam to study 54 stated hours. This restrictive rule was supposed to "offer guidance" and increase the amount of people passing the bar exams, but according to a study done by Boshkoff, "the only possible predictor of success is law school grade point average... Course selection is definitely not a factor."

Individuals at Bloomington are unhappy with the restrictions of Rule 13, and if Boshkoff's study is accurate, the question again arises.

Does a political struggle exist that is forcing these changes on Indiana's legal education system?

If the answer is "yes," something must be done to prevent this cheapening of an otherwise strong educational structure.

And if the answer is "no," then it is about time some of these persons who are professionally trained to think – begin doing so.

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