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Law faculty delays BLSA vote



CD/Greg Kilduff

Law Dean Richard Merrill

By AMY LEMLEY
and SCOTT FERGUSON

Law School faculty members decided yesterday to defer voting on a Black Law Students Association request to place a BLSA member on the Law School's Minority Admissions Subcommittee, opting instead to create a committee to further study the proposal.

In addition, the faculty passed the Gay and Lesbian Law Student Association's proposal to include non-discrimination "on the basis of sexual orientation" on all admissions materials.

The BLSA vote was not deferred for lack of support, Law School Dean Richard Merrill explained, adding, "I didn't hear people say students could not contribute something useful to the admissions process, but I would say [faculty members] wanted to study the question first."

"One of the main reasons the faculty decided to defer action," he said, "is virtually all admissions decisions have already been made." He added the admissions committee will be almost inactive until next spring's applications process.

"People were reserving judgment until more information was available," Law Admissions Assoc. Dean Albert Turnbull said.

The study committee "will consist of faculty and students, including student representatives of BLSA and other minority students in the Law School, to explore whether and how students ought to be involved in evaluating admissions applications," Merrill said.

Committee members will study the "roles of both BLSA and other minority students in the admissions process," he said, as well as "whether students generally

should be involved in the process.

"There was some concern about both students judging students and the issue of the confidentiality" of applicants' files, Merrill said.

The study committee will also examine admissions processes elsewhere in the University to consider "whether the Law School should be concerned with having a unique process, if indeed it is unique," he said.

Merrill added he expects the study committee will reach a decision "no later than October."

The GALLSA proposal did not cause as much debate among faculty members, Merrill said.

"I reported to the meeting, indicated my disposition toward [the proposal], asked if there was any dissention, and not a soul spoke," Merrill said. "So we'll go behind it and incorporate it into general admissions policy information."