

CD 4/27/84

BLSA leads in fight for racial equality

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The Black Law Students Association experienced a very active year under the leadership of outgoing President Butch Hollowell and newly-elected President Marva Camp, setting the tone for heightened awareness around the University toward minority concerns.

During the year, BLSA became more visibly involved in a number of University-wide minority-related issues, including affirmative action and minority faculty hiring.

The high point of this activism came in November, when more than 100 University students gathered on North Grounds to protest the lack of a full-time black Law faculty member at that time.

The protest became more of a celebration when Assoc. Law Dean Lane Kneedler announced earlier in the month that attorney Alex Johnson would join the faculty in January, becoming the University's first black full-time Law professor in more than a year.

Concerns Committee, BSA Chairman Louis Anderson worked with Dean of Students Robert Canevari, Afro-American Affairs Dean Paul Puryear and Student Council President Rory Clark to increase black input among University media groups and in social programming.

But this reform spirit threatened to dissipate when Anderson was forced to resign his post in February, after a dispute with administrators members over his academic standing left him without status as a student.

In a speech to the BSA members a week after his reinstatement, Anderson said he would return as BSA chairman and pursue a more militant stand in dealing with administrators.

This new approach was reflected in yesterday's amphitheatre gathering to support Assoc. Sociology Prof. Vivian Gordon, who has threatened to resign in light of charges that members of the University administration discriminated against her because of her race and sex.

Law professor in reaction to Johnson's appointment, typified BLSA's attitude throughout the year — "we look at this as a step toward future steps."

BLSA's attempts to move forward continued last month, when the organization's members presented a proposal to the Law School requesting the placement of a BLSA representative on the Law School Admissions Committee's Minorities Admissions Subcommittee.

Camp said she believed the subcommittee was doing a good job at present, but she added a minority student's understanding of the problems facing minority applicants would make the group more effective.

BLSA members presented the proposal to the Law School faculty at a meeting on April 4. The faculty members voted to delay the decision on the matter until the proposal could be studied further.

And throughout the year, BLSA members worked with representatives from the Virginia Journal of International Law to draft an affirmative action program — the first such plan ever enacted by a student organization at the University.

The plan allows the Journal managing board to take minority status into account favorably when selecting applicants for the publication.

Although BLSA did suffer some setbacks this year — such as when Virginia Law Review staff members rejected an affirmative action bylaw amendment in October — second-year Law student Michael Ross' selection this spring as national BLSA chairman gave black activism at the University renewed vitality.

Ross said he planned to lead BLSA in a national political action plan which included working for the defeat of Ronald Reagan in November's presidential election, supporting black institutions of higher education, and opposing American companies with business connections in South Africa.

While Hollowell and Camp brought BLSA to the forefront of University minority activism, the Black Student Alliance pursued reforms through more traditional University channels.

As a member of the recently-formed four-member Minority

of her race and sex.

Similarly, gay student groups worked more visibly within the system, and were able to claim several successes in their attempts to gain greater acceptance within the University community.



Louis Anderson

The recently-formed Gay and Lesbian Law Students Association asked the Law School Admissions Committee to adopt a policy of non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Earlier this month, the Law faculty approved a GALLSA proposal to place a disclaimer on Law admissions materials stating the school did not discriminate on the basis of sexual preference.

And members of the Gay Student Union, under the leadership of President Rob Berry, recently changed the organization's name to the Lesbian and Gay Student Union.

The organization was given a further boost this week when the Student Activities Committee agreed to reclassify the LGSU as a service organization, entitling it to receive Student Council funding.

But before the LGSU can receive the \$220 council set aside for the group, the Board of Visitors has to approve the reclassification at its June meetings.

So while LGSU members can content themselves with this year's progress, they — and other minority groups on Grounds — look toward the immediate future realizing many more battles loom on the horizon.