

► **FOCUS:**

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Local

► **Police report**
► **Obituaries**

B3
B4

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UD faculty panel OKs minority-hiring plan

Diversify, but judge candidates on more than race, some say

By **KATE BAILEY**
Staff reporter

The governing body of the University of Delaware faculty has approved a plan designed to improve racial diversity among professors.

For years, the school has struggled to increase the number of minorities among its stu-

dent body and faculty.

The latest recommendation was overwhelmingly approved last month by the 71-member Faculty Senate. It applies when the most qualified person for a faculty position is not a minority, but a minority candidate is among the top choices. The new plan suggests hiring both candidates, which could require cre-

ating a new position.

"We're not saying that you hire someone solely based on race, but certainly we're saying that race could be taken into consideration," said Ted Davis, chairman of the Faculty Senate's Committee on Diversity and Affirmative Action.

"There's no way that you're going to have a racially diverse campus if you don't take race into consideration," he said.

But the Delaware Association of Scholars has objected to the Faculty Senate's vote, arguing that it may accomplish the

opposite of what is intended.

"It seemed to me that the resolution quite clearly said that we will make positions for blacks and perhaps other minorities that would not be there but for their color," said Linda Gottfredson, vice president of the scholars group and a member of the Faculty Senate.

"That ... could conceivably drive away good candidates who don't want to be seen as affirmative-action fodder for the university."

The Delaware Association of Scholars is a state chapter of the

national organization, which is made up of professors, graduate students, college administrators and trustees, and independent scholars.

The Delaware group has about two dozen members from UD and other state institutions.

The group's president, UD education professor Jan Blits, also said the recommendation will ultimately "chase away the very people it's meant to attract."

"No. 1, it's illegal," he said, "and No. 2, it's demeaning to the minority faculty."

Like many other colleges and universities nationwide, UD has a low percentage of racial minorities on its faculty — 13 percent as of last fall. Blacks make up 3.8 percent of the faculty.

The state's minority population is 25 percent, with blacks representing 20 percent.

Nationally, minorities made up about 13.7 percent of college and university faculties in 1997, the latest year data is available from the American Council on Education. The national

See **SCHOLARS — B2**

Scholars: Minority-hiring plan debated

FROM PAGE B1

average for black faculty is 5 percent.

The national percentage of minorities nationally is about 25 percent, with blacks making up about 12.3 percent.

"All institutions are trying to diversify their faculty," said Jacqueline King, director of the Center for Policy Analysis at the American Council on Education. "There's been improvement, but it's still not enormous,

especially for African-Americans."

Blits said he's an advocate for racial diversity among the faculty, but not if it could open the university to a lawsuit.

Advocates of the Senate recommendation brush off that claim.

"Anybody can try to sue anybody," said Gerry Turkel, president of the Delaware chapter of the American Association of University Professors.

"It's really a phony issue, to

be blunt," he said. "If you oppose the merits of it and you kind of disagree with it, that's where the argument should take place.

"To start to get into generating fear about lawsuits when there really aren't cases to talk about strikes me as disingenuous."

Gottfredson introduced a resolution to delay a vote on the racial-hiring issue until the university's attorney could comment on the issue. That resolution was rejected.

Gottfredson said the university is doing everything it can to hire minorities and that the new recommendation "goes over the line toward doing harm."

Leland Ware, a UD professor of law and public policy, disagrees.

"I can tell you as a minority that that's never bothered me or anyone else who's benefited from affirmative action," he said. "All it does is crack open a

door that's been locked historically."

University President David P. Roselle said he supports the Faculty Senate's effort.

"The issue is clear," he said. "The administration and the faculty and all people of good will want to diversify the faculty body."

The decision to make an additional hire would ultimately rest with the dean who oversees the department.

Maxine Colm, vice president for administration, said the deans would decide whether to hire an additional person, based on such things as budget constraints and the department's needs.

"We're not saying that this is mandatory," Davis said. "What people want to say is, you can't even look at race at all. ... But we're already subconsciously looking at race."

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