

The News Journal
A Gannett newspaper
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President and Publisher

OUR VIEW

STARTING PLACE

UD's Faculty Senate offers workable plan to increase minorities

The University of Delaware Faculty Senate has overwhelmingly approved a plan to increase the

WHERE WE STAND

Creating positions for good candidates will alter status quo.

number of minority professors at the state's largest institution of higher learning, one heavily subsidized by public money.

It is a good plan. Racial minorities comprise 13 percent of the faculty; only 3.8 percent are black. But some colleagues oppose it.

The voluntary plan, proposed by the Faculty Senate and supported by UD President David P. Roselle, is cumbersome. But so is the problem.

The idea is if a minority job candidate finishes among the top hiring choices, but is ultimately passed over, that person might be offered a newly created position. The decision would be up to the department head, who would consider whether budget and teaching needs supported a new hire.

This strategy is meant to avoid bumping a white candidate in favor of a slightly less qualified minority candidate. It puts pressure on the university to increase its staff to implement its stated commitment to diversity.

Once opponents of affirmative action attacked bumping, calling it reverse racism. Now they are attacking the dual offer proposal, claiming it insults minority staff. They have no standing to speak for minorities. Professor Leland Ware, a black scholar who holds the new Louis Redding chair in law and public policy at the university, is in a far better position to comment. And he said he isn't bothered by such a plan. He called it "cracking open a door that has been historically locked."

Opponents seem to have a vested interest in keeping down the number of minority colleagues who might become competitors. The standard affirmative action dodge is to claim the door is no longer locked, but that doing anything special to invite minorities through does harm. It is an ugly, selfish manifestation of the status quo.

These same people, centered in the Delaware Association of Scholars, scream for academic freedom if somebody tries to stifle their ideas. Well, academic freedom can work more ways than one.



News Journal file

The University of Delaware campus is in Newark.