

New Governance Plan An Issue at CUNY Law

Newsday (New York)

February 23, 1989, Thursday, QUEENS EDITION

Copyright 1989 Newsday LLC



Section: NEWS; QUEENS CLOEUP; Pg. 23

Length: 494 words

Byline: By William Douglas

Body

Fearing that their input in policy-making and tenure issues would be drastically reduced, students and faculty of the Law School at Queens College are rallying for revisions in a proposed governance plan for the school.

At two recent public hearings before members of the City University of New York board of trustees, more than 75 people complained that the plan, which the board is scheduled to discuss at its regular meeting Monday, limits the authority of the law school's dean, faculty and students.

"Don't put us in a body cast because we stubbed our toe," said Theresa M. Molloy, a member of the school's board of visitors who is a first-year law student. "We need to be autonomous. Dean [Haywood] Burns needs time to do the job he can do. It takes time to create a law school. Don't abandon us."

Officials of the law school, CUNY and Queens College have been working for months to develop a plan that would better outline exactly how the school functions.

A study by the American Bar Association last year criticized the law school for having "ambiguous" lines of authority.

The school, which opened five years ago amid fanfare for its nontraditional commitment to teaching public interest law, has come under fire for its students' low rate of passing the state bar examination.

In addition, some law school faculty members and CUNY officials have been embroiled in a legal battle surrounding the denial of tenure and attempted dismissal of two founding faculty members.

"I think that the thrust of the plan, which is to define very carefully the relationship of the law school, college and university, is to strengthen the mission of the law school," said a CUNY spokesman, Vice Chancellor Jay Hershenson.

But students and faculty members say the proposed plan flies in the face of the school's nontraditional mission.

Faculty members complained to the board that the plan is unclear on how tenure will be granted. Several faculty members say the plan signals a shift in tenure criteria from an emphasis on teaching, service and scholarship to a university-wide standard of published works and scholarship.

"It is critically important that the current tenure standards continue," Brooklyn Law School Professor Elizabeth Schneider told the board last week. "CUNY Law School's demanding curriculum requires a variety of skills and abilities of its teachers. The demands of CUNY faculty are unique."

Students who addressed the board expressed concern that the plan limits the number of students serving on committees within the school and dilutes student power on the school's assembly, a policy and decision-making body.

"It appears to us that we have been decimated in the governance plan," said Frank Allen, a third-year law student and president of the school's student association.

"I don't think it was intentional," he said. "For heaven's sake, see to it that we are given a significant voice in governance, not just tokenism."

End of Document