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Law school broke deal prof alleges

By RICHARD SEVEN
Of the Emerald

The University's only black law professor is charging the school with breach of promise, failure to follow procedural rules and unfair treatment.

Ron Griffin, assistant professor of law here since 1974, said in a prepared statement Wednesday that a personnel committee expressed complaints about his work in 1975-76. He was told its concern could be resolved with a major improvement in his work. However, the committee again found Griffin's work unsatisfactory.

In the spring of 1977 Griffin says he reached an agreement with Chapin Clark, law school dean, in which the two decided Griffin would seek employment elsewhere next year in return for Clark's promise to write a favorable recommendation for him and not issue a notice of non-renewal for next year to the professor.

Griffin further says that even though the recommendation was to be given to him in 1977, he didn't receive it until last February. At that time in February, three faculty members made unfavorable statements about Griffin's competence to the University of Tennessee, where Griffin was looking for a job.

Then, March 1, the dean issued a formal notice of non-renewal.

Griffin argues the conditions of his leaving were violated because of three incidents, and for these reasons he has decided to stay.

First, Clark failed to issue a written recommendation in 1977 as was promised. Second, Clark issued a notice of non-renewal March 1, 1978, and third, members of the University faculty gave the University of Tennessee unfavorable information about his competency.

Clark says he assisted Griffin in finding new employment mainly by telephone.

"All the schools I talked to about Mr. Griffin were done by telephone," Clark says. "No school ever asked me for a letter. I did not breach my promise to Mr. Griffin. I carried out my promise by assisting him in relocating."

Clark says an evaluation process carried out by the law school and the University found that Griffin should be given a notice of non-renewal. However, Clark says he withheld the notice to help Griffin find another job.

"He promised me that he would resign at the end of that year in return for his recommendation," Clark says. "He did not resign at the stipulated time and after eight months I had to give him his notice."

Griffin says he didn't turn in his resignation at the end of last year because Clark had still not given his letter.

Griffin's memorandum continues to charge the law school with failure to follow procedural rules because of committee bias, lack of substantive due process and failure to follow the law of the case.

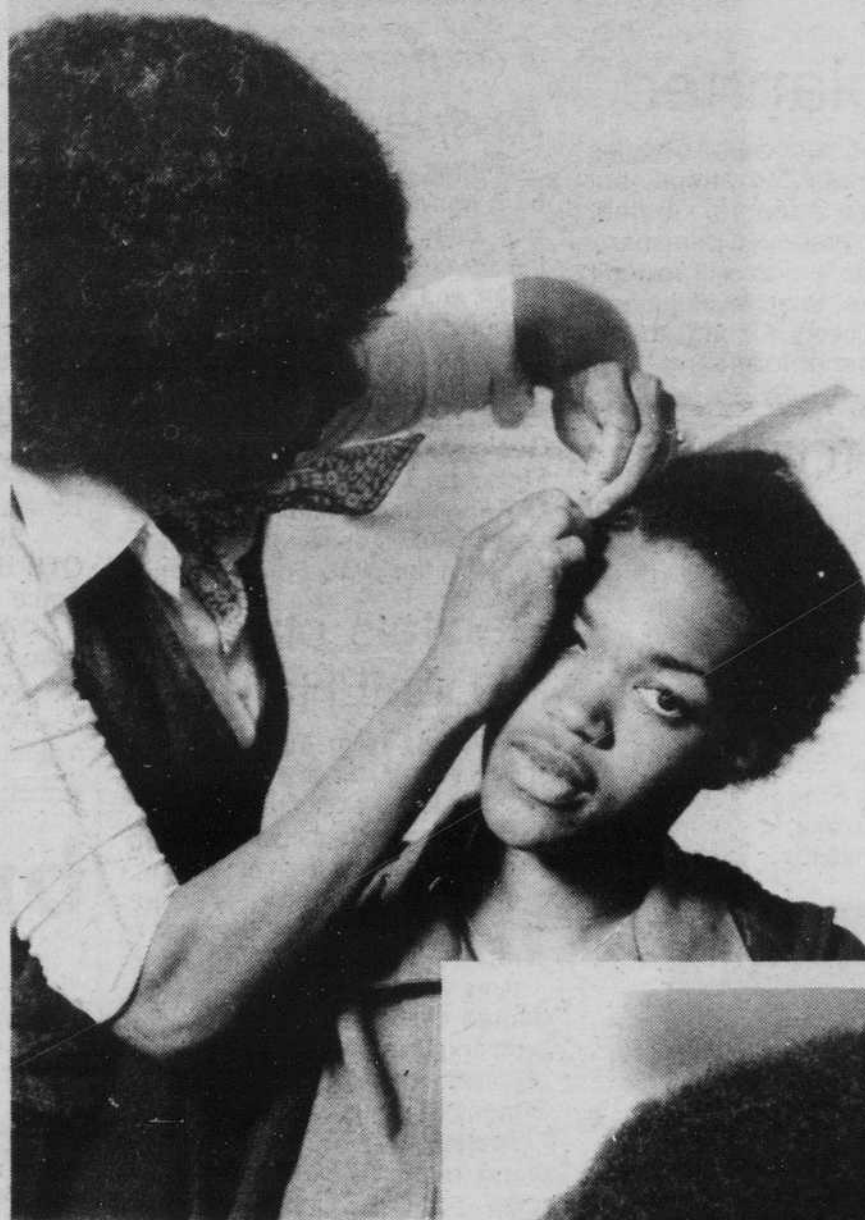
Griffin argues that the majority of the faculty should vote on retention matters. Only six of the 30 faculty members voted on his future, and he claims three of them were biased.

The committee changed the criteria in evaluating his work also, according to Griffin. He says one year they cited his teaching performance needed improvement. The next year, when his teaching record improved, the committee chose to scrutinize his writing and downplayed his teaching performance, he charges.

Griffin also lists a number of instances where other faculty members charged with the same liabilities were given a chance to make adjustments. Griffin conversely claims he only received bad reviews.

"I was prepared to leave this school if I had received an unimpaired scholastic report," Griffin wrote in his memorandum. "I well recognize how difficult it was to work, much less make a meaningful contribution, in a non-supportive faculty environment. Since the law school was unwilling to transmit an unimpaired report, I am now unwilling to leave silently."

"I now respectfully request that the judgement of the dean be reversed, that the dean be enjoined from issuing a notice of non-renewal and that I be granted a personal leave of absence."



*It's all
a matter
of style*

Students try out the latest hair fashions during the fashion clinic held Wednesday in the EMU Ballroom lobby in one of the many events during the University's Sixth Annual Black Arts Festival. The festival which began last Friday, continues through the week, celebrating the cultural contributions of blacks in the arts and promoting understanding of blacks in America. Events still to come include a talent show and a disco dance.

Photos by
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