

Proposal: New building may attract more students, faculty to law school

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there are too few of them." "It helps to have natural light," he said. "It would help students' attitudes because the current building feels kind of closed in."

Both Gordon and Moore agree that the new law school, especially the library, would benefit the community.

"There are people out in the community who would rather do their own law research as well as practitioners who don't have huge libraries of their own who can use our library resources," said Moore.

"More books will become accessible," Moore added. "Because of the lack of space, we have some in storage now that can't be used as easily."

Gordon emphasized community outreach.

"We would like to have a building that allows us to focus on a

community of learning within our school and within the University as a whole, as well as within the State of Oregon," Gordon explained.

"We can achieve that through more space for conferences, an improved library and a greater ability to use technology. We're not looking to be this tall, imposing facade, but more of a building that you might want to peek in and look around and be a part of," she said.

Both Gordon and Moore agree that the new building could increase the law school's prestige and attractiveness to prospective students and faculty.

"The law school administration understands the need to attract some really good professors," Moore said. "If they come here and they think that their office is going to be in a closet, it could affect them."

"A new law building will also draw students. There are probably a high percentage of students who choose other schools over ours because of the building," Moore said.

Furthermore, law student groups such as the Women's Law Forum and students who produce journals such as the Journal of Environmental Law, will stand to benefit from the move.

"Currently these groups do not have offices in the law school building or, if they do, they have inadequate ones. They will get better space in the new building," Gordon said.

"I'm glad they are proceeding with the project even though I may never take a class there because it's important to look toward the future," Moore said. "We're doing that by constructing this new building."

Applicants: Law students look for prestigious schools while seeking education

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Katherine A. Jernberg said. The University's School of Law has been climbing the national ranks in the U.S. News and World Reports annual "America's Best Graduate Schools." In 1995, the magazine listed Oregon 40 out of 177 accredited law schools in the United States, which marked the first time the School of Law broke into the top 50. It also listed Oregon in its list of top 10 schools for environmental law. The school slipped back slightly in 1996, to 52 out of 177.

Megan Larson, a third year law student from Indiana, said she did not base her decision to come to Oregon on rankings as much as she did on reputation.

Larson had read that "they have a good environmental law program and an environmental law conference."

"The [conference is the] only one of its kind, and it's put on by students," Larson said.

Larson said she had also been accepted to the University of Arizona and the University of Georgia, but a student from Oregon called her over the summer to answer any questions she might have. It was that kind of personal touch that helped her make the decision to move to the Northwest.

With fewer students applying to law school, competition for the best and brightest students becomes even tougher. The personal touches Larson mentioned become instrumental in getting students to attend the University of Oregon after they have been accepted.

"We've been able to maintain our students because we do a thorough and energetic job of educating our applicant pool of how great our law school is," Jernberg said.

This is getting more difficult as law schools across the country relax their admission standards in order to fill their classes.

"There is a domino effect of the most prestigious law schools offering admission to students who may not have been admitted in year's past because fewer students are applying," Jernberg said.

So a student who has been accepted at the University of Oregon and Cornell University, which is ranked 11th, may go for the school with the more prestigious ranking. Law students, in particular, are more sensitive about the prestige factor when choosing a school compared to undergraduates, Jernberg said.

There are a number of reasons fewer students are applying to law school.

"Careers in technology and science that didn't exist 10 years ago are skimming off the most intelligent and able students," she said.

The amount of realistic information about what lawyers do has done a lot to dispel the myth that a career in law is glamorous.

"Their reputation and their ethics as perceived by the public - people are taking a second look at that," Jernberg said. "The cost of a legal education is a roadblock for a lot of people who might otherwise be interested."



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