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Fisher president discusses law school prospects

By [NATE DOUGHERTY](#)

Rochester Business Journal

May 6, 2009

St. John Fisher College's plans to move forward with a law school in downtown Rochester will advance only if the college will benefit and there is a demonstrated need and benefit to the area, college President Donald Bain said Wednesday at a forum hosted by the Monroe County Bar Association.

The school has not made a determination whether to move ahead with the law school, Bain said. The Center for Governmental Research Inc. is conducting a study to determine the demand for lawyers and a law school in Rochester, and when the results come back in August Bain said a decision will be made whether to pursue the school.

"If it shows there is no reasonable chance of success, we won't do it," Bain said. "However, I will go after Moby Dick in a rowboat with a jar of tartar sauce, that's what an optimist I am."

Bain faced questions from those in attendance about the mission and breadth of the law school, which remains in the exploration phase. He noted that there will be challenges to creating the school, such as the 200,000 or so volumes the school would have to acquire for a library, at a minimum cost of \$3 million.

He said the school's mission would be to make legal education accessible for students who might otherwise find it difficult to attend law school. The school would stress a values-based approach and focus on building leaders.

An initial study noted that there is a deficit of 127 seats in law school not being filled by the nearest law schools at Syracuse University, University of Buffalo and Cornell University. St. John Fisher's law school would attract students from within the college's established recruitment area.

Because the school would focus on giving traditionally underrepresented students an opportunity to attend law school, Bain said considerations for financial aid have already been built into projections. He noted that similar exploratory efforts at SUNY Colleges at Binghamton and Stony Brook have fallen off in light of state budget cuts.

Bain did face some difficult questions from the panel and from attendants. When asked about a recent article that the number of new attorneys admitted in New York each year far outpaces the number of jobs, Bain said there will always remain a need for lawyers.

“What other state has the financial center of the world?” Bain said. “Of course we have more attorneys—we’re a busy place.”

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