Faculty Delays Vote On Wolff Proposals, Will Act Next Month

By James M. Fallows,

The Faculty spent most of its meeting yesterday discussing plans for changing the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, but it adjourned without taking action on any of the proposed reforms.

After nearly two hours of debate on a 24-point plan suggested by the Committee on the Future of the Graduate School (Wolff Committee), the Faculty decided not to vote and to bring up the Wolff recommendations again next month.

The only concrete action in response to Wolff's proposals came in the middle of the debate. J. Peterson Elder, dean of the GSAS, announced that he would appoint a special student-Faculty committee to investigate sources of graduate student income--one of the issues considered by the Wolff report.

The Faculty debate centered on a motion asking for approval "in principle" of the findings of the committee chaired by Robert L. Wolff, Coolidge Professor of History. Wolff's report, released last month, proposed 24 specific reforms, grouped under four main headings:

* The size of the grad school--Wolff proposed trimming the total enrollment by at least 20 per cent within five years, and cutting back the enrollment in most departments to its lowest level in the period between 1960 and 1968;

* Financial aid for grad students--the report said that all students who get first-year financial aid should be guaranteed a second-year renewal of aid, and that the grad school should work towards five-year guarantees for all grad students who qualify for assistance;

* Grad student morale--the report devoted a section of the low morale of graduate students and suggested the creation of a Graduate Student Center and closer student-Faculty contact to boost morale;

* Salaries for teaching fellows and graders--the report recommended raises for both, a $500-$1000 increase in teaching fellows' pay and an increase of about 40 per cent for graders.

All four areas of the report came under discussion at yesterday's meeting. Wolff opened the debate by discussing each of the 24 specific points briefly and then urging the Faculty to consider all the proposals as one unified package.

Wolff was followed by Robert G. McCloskey, Jonathan Trumbull Professor of American History and Government. McCloskey seconded Wolff's motion for approval of the plan and said that the provisions for guaranteed financial aid would help raise grad student morale, as well as improve the University's position in competitive recruiting of students.
"Financial insecurity contributes to the low state of graduate student morale," McCloskey said. "The morale of problem is a serious one, and this one way to cope with it."

McCloskey added that the guaranteed aid would not add much to the grad school's net cost, since most qualified students currently get aid during all their years at GSAS. "This would just regularize what is the state of affairs anyway," he said. "Why not turn it into a guarantee and save the worry?"

Elder then spoke and said he approved of the general principle of the report. However, he said he "wanted to be cau- tious because there are so many open-ended financial commitments."

Covering the specific areas of the report, Elder said that he "liked the idea of cutting the size of the school, for the obvious educational and financial reasons." However, he urged that the reduction be done with flexibility, since certain departments--especially the sciences--"haven't sinned anywhere as much as the humanities."

Elder added that he supported the two-year aid guarantee, but that he was "leery of the 5-year guarantee--leery of the idea of having tenured graduate students." As a possible alternative to that plan Elder suggested a more thorough investigation of income sources for grad students. Elder said that he would name a special five-member committee--to be chaired by Thomas K. Sisson, assistant and made up of two Faculty members--to study sources of income."