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W&M Names Spong Head of Law School

By Wilford Kale
Times-Dispatch Staff Writer
WILLIAMSBURG—Former U.S. Sen. William B. Spong Jr. was named an expected Saturday to be the dean of the Marshall-Whyte School of Law at the College of William and Mary.

Spong, who had been suggested for the post by law school faculty members since early May, was also named by the William and Mary board of visitors as the first Dudley Warner Woodbridge professor of law.

The president-elect of the Virginia Bar Association will officially become dean on July 1. Beginning Jan. 1, however,

Spong will formally join the faculty as Woodbridge professor and dean-designate on a part-time basis, while he concludes his law practice in Portsmouth where he is senior partner.

Dr. Thomas A. Graves Jr., William and Mary president, in announcing Spong's appointment, said that Professor Emeric Fischer will continue until July 1 as acting dean, a post he accepted in August when James P. Whyte Jr. resigned to return to full-time teaching.

Spong Only Choice

Spong was the only choice of the search committee, which on Nov. 3 asked the board of

visitors in a secret meeting in Richmond to consider only Spong. Graves and Spong met several times during the past three weeks to work out arrangements for the latter to take the job.

Apparently Spong's concerns about administration of the law school were allayed. The board of visitors also announced that it intended to modify its own bylaws by July 1 in order to provide for the law school dean to report directly to the college president.

Currently, the law dean and other school deans report to the vice president for academic affairs. The new arrangement will provide more authority for the law dean, and other changes worked out will give the law school more autonomy within the William and Mary academic structure. Areas of faculty promotions and hiring were also discussed by Spong and Graves prior to the board's formal action Saturday.

Confidence Expressed

Contacted at his home, Spong said he thought the post "was something I wanted to do and should do." He expressed confidence that he could play an important role in solving some of the problems at the law school, which have been made public in recent American Bar Association reports.

"My work with the Virginia Bar Association has increased my own interest in the National Center for State Courts (to be located here) and there will be an important future relationship between that center and the William and Mary law school," Spong said.

He added that being named the Woodbridge professor was "personally pleasing since it was Dr. Woodbridge who first hired me to teach international law at the college in 1948-49."

In early discussions, Spong is believed to have told college officials that it would be important for him to be named to the post this year so he would have an opportunity to help the law school in its new building request, which will be before next year's General Assembly.

Spong brings to the post, faculty members have said, excellent academic credentials as well as extensive legal understanding and state political acumen. He attended Hamden-Sydney College and graduated from the University of Virginia Law School. He did graduate work in international law at the University of Edinburgh and Cambridge University.

He served in the Virginia House of Delegates in 1954-55 and the State Senate from 1966, after which he was elected to the U.S. Senate.

He was defeated in his reelection bid in 1972 and returned to law practice. He taught part-time at U.Va. in 1973 and has served three semesters as Cutler lecturer in law at William and Mary.