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1969–1975: James P. Whyte, Jr. (Acting Dean
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W&M Hunt For Dean Not Begun

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W&M Hunt For Dean Not Begun

By Wilford Kale
Times-Dispatch State Staff

WILLIAMSBURG — The president of the College of William and Mary, Dr. Thomas A. Graves Jr., said Saturday that he hopes to name a new dean for the Marshall-Wythe School of Law by early next year.

Dean James P. Whyte Jr. stated his intention to resign in an announcement Friday at a law school faculty meeting and in a letter to Graves, which was immediately conveyed to the school's board of visitors meeting on campus.

In the letter, which Graves declined to make public, Whyte asked to be allowed to return to a teaching position not later than June 30, 1976, Graves indicated.

Graves said he has not decided what direction the school will go in searching for a dean. "I have not even thought about a search committee," he said.

Not a Surprise
Whyte's decision, however, did not come as a surprise to Graves, the president indicated. "The dean has been considering such a move for quite some time," he added.

Graves said that Whyte had done "an extraordinary job" as dean and had worked "very hard" during the last six years. "Marshall-Wythe is on the threshold of being one of the great law schools in this country," he said.

Whyte's leadership has resulted in large growth in "quantity and quality" at the school, Graves said.

A college spokesman noted that it was not unusual for a law school dean to resign after about five years and return to teaching.

Several faculty and student opponents of Whyte said the dean resigned under fire, but other faculty members denied such comments noting that the dean has had "the strong backing" of the majority of the faculty "for a long, long time."

"There are always dissenters," one professor said. "And they will claim this as a victory. I'm not in that group and I'm sorry to see him step down."

Another faculty member said

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he felt whatever "student-faculty pressure" was involved played a part only in the timing of the resignation and not the decision to resign. "He's been considering resigning for a long time," the professor said. "It's been no secret around the law school to students or faculty that he wanted to return to full-time teaching."

Another teacher said he felt Whyte's decision to submit his resignation came at a time when a "small group of disgruntled faculty" members were ready to air some complaints about Whyte's leadership.

"Rather than force the law school through another situation of faculty members airing some petty gripes, I believe Dean Whyte decided to make his already determined resignation public now. Then those gripes would be just moot," he said.

Whyte has declined to comment on his resignation, saying he had conveyed his feelings to Groves in his letter.