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Trustees approve review committees

by Kelly Rohrs

At President Richard Brodhead's first Board of Trustees meeting since he took office, the University's governing body heard reports about a variety of topics that have dictated discussion on campus in recent months.

The Trustees approved the creation of two committees that will review concerns about the social responsibility of University investments. They passed a set of guidelines governing investments last February after a flurry of discussion about the University's financial stake in issues such as the conflict in the Middle East and the situation in Sudan.

A group of faculty, administrators and a Young Trustee will initially review any substantial community request for symbolic financial action. If the committee finds that a corporation is causing "substantial social injury" and a "change in the company's activities could have a direct and material effect," it will send the request to a second group, as dictated in the official Guidelines on Socially Responsible Investing.

"We're trying to have a filter mechanism, not just to filter everything out, but to make the committee concentrate on seriousness in these cases," Brodhead said.

The second committee, a group of nine community members including faculty, administrators, a student and an alumnus, will propose appropriate action to the president. This may include voting a particular way in a shareholder resolution, writing to company management or the withdrawal of financial support.

The president will then accept or veto the recommendation and explain why. Before the University takes any action, the Board of Trustees must approve it.

Brodhead said community consensus about the issue should be commensurate with the proposed action.

"Big decisions aren't going to be made on the part of some fragment of the community," he said. "They are major statement of the whole institution and the whole community if they were to go forward."

The issue of divestment has gained momentum on campus this semester with the University's decision to host the Palestine Solidarity Conference. The conference encourages universities to withdraw financial holdings from Israel.

Brodhead said the official process established this weekend does not change his stance on divestment in this case. Noting the nuances of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he has said numerous times that there is not enough evidence or consensus to support divestment from Israel.

The Board also heard a report about changes being considered to campus safety as the University seeks to enhance its ability to prevent and respond to security concerns, but Peter Nicholas, chair of the Board, noted that it is not the Trustee's place to dictate solutions.

"I think the Board's concern really is just that we're aware and understand," he said. "And that we continue—as we do every year—to think about tradeoffs that openness in a place like this creates in terms of safety."

Despite earlier indications that the Trustees would discuss construction plans for social space on West Campus and the renovation of Central Campus, neither project received much attention this weekend, administrators said.

"There is this sort of underlying sense that there's much more momentum in that regard than

there really is," Nicholas said.

Brodhead noted that the University will commence both projects quickly, but that it is just getting to the stage where broader discussion is appropriate.

In other business:

The Trustees approved revisions to the graduate and professional student Young Trustee position. Under the new system, a student will be selected every year to serve a two-year term, with voting rights only in the second year. Under the previous system, a student was selected every three years and voted during the entire term.

A \$4 million renovation to the Nanaline H. Duke Building on Research Drive gained approval. The plan calls for structural upgrades to the basic sciences research building that primarily houses Medical Center departments.

Two of the buildings in the recently completed Center for Interdisciplinary Engineering, Medicine and Applied Sciences complex were named after major donors. One part is now the Michael J. and Patricia W. Fitzpatrick Building; a second is the Jeffrey N. Vinik Building.
