Name change modifies image

By Linda Moschell
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To boost student enrollment and faculty professional standing, the Department of Home Management and Housing wants to change its name to Consumer Economics and Housing.

Nancy M. Rudd, chairwoman for the name-change committee, said the main reason the change is needed "is to get accurate information to the public, particularly to prospective students, with regard to our programs. We lose majors because of having 'Home Management' in our title."

The name-change proposal has been sent to various departments for comment, but Loren V. Geistfeld, chairman of the Department of Home Management and Housing, will make the final decision.

Rudd said she believes the Department of Economics will be against the name change because people may confuse the two departments.

Rudd said protests would not force her department to choose another title. "If we get unfavorable comments, we will respond to those comments, but we have no intention of backing down on this," she said.

A spokesperson in Geistfeld's office said all departmental replies were received around two weeks ago. The proposal will probably be voted on next week by the executive committee of the College of Home Economics, she said.

Passage there would send it to the Council on Academic Affairs for approval.

Elmer Baumer, associate provost for Academic Affairs, said the council mediates when a department objects to another department's proposed name change. "If there are problems, a subcommittee of the council will negotiate a compromise solution," he said. If no compromise can be reached in subcommittee, the matter goes before the entire council to be worked out, he said.

Barbara M. Newman, chairwoman of the Department of Family Relations and Human Development and a member of the executive committee, said she supports the change. "I think it's an appropriate clarification of the department's emphasis and strengths. It comes closer to saying what students who are enrolling are interested in."

"Does the term 'economics' belong solely to the Department of Economics?", she asked. "If the name change will be confusing to students, if people feel this presents serious confusion to those considering enrolling, it will need to be discussed," she said.

The proposal states the word 'economics' is needed in the department's title because economics is stressed in the course work and because faculty members have strong economics backgrounds.

It also states the three largest and "most prestigious" departments of this type have "consumer economics" in their titles, including Cornell University's Consumer Economics and Housing; University of Illinois's Family and Consumer Economics; and University of Maryland's Textiles and Consumer Economics.