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Senate discusses committee on racial understanding

By Damon Kiesow
Staff Writer

After more than an hour's debate Tuesday night the General Student Senate voted to allow the committee on Racial Understanding to pick its own co-chairs and student members.

The committee was formed last week in response to what is being called a racial attack on two University of Maine students Feb. 17. It will study, and attempt to find answers to race relation problems at the university.

Debate arose when senate president Brent Littlefield appointed senators Jenine Serviolo, and LeAnn Pinkham co-chairs of the new

standing committee.

Two members from six different minority groups on campus will be represented. African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Franco-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Native-Americans, and international students will most likely form the bulk of the committee.

The other members, appointed by Littlefield, are Senator CJ Cote, Panhellenic President Dale Young, and Senator Ethan Strimling.

Strimling, who sponsored the creation of the committee, requested that he, not Pinkham, be made co-chair along with Serviolo.

Strimling and Serviolo were running mates in the recent student government elections and

co-sponsored seven resolutions in senate last week aimed at increasing racial awareness at UMaine.

Strimling read a letter from the African-American Student Association, to the GSS, which supported his bid to be chair of the committee.

The letter was written by Jamal Williamson, president of the association.

"...in continuing with your commitment to combat racism at the University of Maine, we strongly recommend that you select Senator Ethan Strimling as Chair, and Senator Jenine Serviolo as Vice Chair of the standing committee."

Williamson said in the letter that Strimling and Serviolo had established "a positive working relation with our association," he added that their "leadership, knowledge of minority issues, and track record" would "be an asset to the committee."

"They wrote this letter," Strimling said, "Be-

cause they have worked with us already."

Strimling said he and Serviolo had been working with the African-American students and the multi-cultural center even before the attack last Sunday.

"We feel that it is very important that that relationship continues," he said.

Senator Jim Mahoney pointed out that Strimling was already on the committee and said he should be able to work effectively without being co-chair.

Stavros Mendros, president of student government, said that Pinkham had the knowledge and experience to "do an excellent job as co-chair."

"We felt it was a good compromise," he said, "we felt she (Pinkham) could offer a different point of view."

Mendros said he felt Strimling and Serviolo were too close ideologically and would not bring the necessary diversity to the committee.