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## Catholic bishops seminar won't meet at Notre Dame

### Seminar moved because of 'Vagina Monologues.'

By **MARGARET FOSMOE** and **CLAUDIA BAYLISS**

*Tribune Staff Writers*

**SOUTH BEND** — A theological seminar for Roman Catholic bishops that had been scheduled for the University of Notre Dame will be moved off campus because of a planned performance of the play "The Vagina Monologues."

The Catholic bishops made the decision because they disagree with the university administration's decision to allow a student performance of the controversial play.

"Because of the likelihood of the presentation of the play 'The Vagina Monologues' at Notre Dame this year, the bishops made a collective decision to move the seminar off campus," the Most Rev. John M. D'Arcy, bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, said today in a written statement. The bishop declined a request for an interview.

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The seminar, which includes Notre Dame faculty speakers and is co-sponsored by the university's Institute for Church Life, had been scheduled for Monday through Wednesday on campus. Instead, it will be at the convent of the Sisters of St. Francis in Mishawaka.

Notre Dame spokesman Dennis Brown confirmed that the bishops moved the gathering off campus and that the decision was related to "The Vagina Monologues."

The university issued the following written statement:

"We understand that not all are in full agreement about the propriety of allowing performances of this play on a Catholic campus. Because of concerns about the play and its potential performance, we have worked collaboratively with the bishops to move the conference out of respect for everyone involved.

"Notre Dame and the U.S. bishops have worked together constructively in the past, they are working together on this current meeting, and we are sure that our partnerships will continue in the future."

Brown said the Rev. John I. Jenkins, Notre Dame's president, is not available for an interview on this issue.

Notre Dame students are planning a March 26-28 production of "The Vagina Monologues" in a campus classroom. All such student events require an academic sponsor. The departments of sociology and anthropology have tentatively agreed to co-sponsor the production.

The departments are awaiting a formal proposal from the student planners about academic panel discussions to coincide with the performances, said Mark Schurr, chair of the anthropology department. Once the proposal is presented and approved by the sponsoring departments, it also must be approved by the College of Arts & Letters.

The student planners could not be reached for comment.

"The Vagina Monologues," by playwright Eve Ensler, is a theater production that deals frankly with women's views on their bodies and sexuality. It is performed annually on hundreds of college campuses with the goal of raising awareness about sexual assault and domestic violence.

Notre Dame student productions of the play were performed annually on campus from 2002 to 2006, and an off-campus version was presented last year.

Jenkins two years ago considered banning "The Vagina Monologues" because he was troubled that the play's portrayal of sexuality opposes Catholic teachings. That prompted an extensive debate about Notre Dame's Catholic identity.

After listening to widespread campus discussion, Jenkins announced that a Catholic university

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has nothing to fear from engaging in topics of the wider culture.

He did not ban the play. However, performances must be in a classroom setting (not a theater), the production cannot be used to raise money for community groups and each show must include an academic panel discussion.

The Notre Dame board of trustees passed a resolution in 2006 expressing confidence in Jenkins and agreeing in principle with the policies he developed for evaluating campus events that touch on the university's Catholic identity.

D'Arcy has publicly criticized Notre Dame and Jenkins for allowing the play. In 2006, the bishop issued a nine-page pastoral response critiquing Jenkins' decision and his reasons for not banning the play.

The Committee on Doctrine has seven members: the Most Rev. William E. Lori, bishop of Bridgeport, chairman; the Most Rev. Leonard P. Blair, bishop of Toledo; the Most Rev. José H. Gomez, archbishop of San Antonio; the Most Rev. Robert J. McManus, bishop of Worcester; the Most Rev. Arthur J. Serratelli, bishop of Paterson, N.J.; the Most Rev. Allen H. Vigneron, bishop of Oakland, Calif.; and the Most Rev. David A. Zubik, bishop of Pittsburgh.

The committee has several consultants, including John C. Cavadini, professor and chair of Notre Dame's theology department; and Cardinal Francis George, archbishop of Chicago. Cavadini could not be reached today for comment.

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