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EDUCATION FOR DISADVANTAGED.

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ANTIOCH COLLEGE HAS INITIATED A PROGRAM TO PROVIDE A COLLEGE EDUCATION TO SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS WITH HIGH ACADEMIC POTENTIAL. THE PROGRAM OFFERS A CHALLENGE TO THE SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE TO BREAK TRADITION AND BECOME LESS PROVINCIAL BY ADMITTING STUDENTS DIFFERENT FROM THE TRADITIONAL COLLEGE POPULATION. THE FIRST GROUP OF 11 STUDENTS, MOSTLY NEGRO, FROM THREE LARGE CITIES WAS CHOSEN BY INDIGENOUS SELECTOR GROUPS BECAUSE EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS IN THEIR OWN NEIGHBORHOODS WAS FELT TO BE IMPORTANT TO THE SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM. ADMISSIONS STANDARDS WERE LOWERED TO ADMIT THESE STUDENTS, BUT GRADUATION STANDARDS WILL REMAIN THE SAME. EXISTING COLLEGE ADMISSIONS STANDARDS, CURRICULUMS, AND TEACHING METHODS ARE NOW BEING EVALUATED TO DETERMINE THEIR RELEVANCE IN EDUCATING DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS TO PROVIDE THEM WITH GREATER OPPORTUNITIES. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN "ANTIOCH COLLEGE REPORTS," NUMBER 7. (MR)

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7 Education for the Disadvantaged

The Rockefeller Foundation in 1964 made grants to a number of colleges, which they will use to attract students with excellent academic potential but who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Antioch College, one of the recipients, expects its first students under the Antioch Program for Interracial Education to arrive on campus this year. Director of the Program is Dr. Dixon Bush, a member of the Dean of Students' staff. Dr. Bush describes below how and why Antioch embarked on the Program. This is the seventh in a series on new program developments and research at the College.

By Dr. Dixon Bush

Background

Colleges and universities in the United States face an encounter with what has been called, without particular definition, the "disadvantaged student." Most usually this student is described in the abstract. He is either white or Negro. He comes from a background where economic want is the most pervasive characteristic. He is the object of the courageous words we are saying in the poverty program, the domestic Peace Corps. He is a major concern of social agencies, particularly in the inner city. He is often alienated from his present situation and seeks to move into a different ecology by means of college education. Even though the civil rights movement has underlined the need of Negro students in this group, it is well to remember that something better than half the young people who will be seeking college as a means of economic and social mobility are not Negroes.

Education and Mobility

Education in America has a long history of dealing with the socially and intellectually mobile person. It has generally been the large state universities, the municipal colleges, and the adult education and extension programs of the public schools that have successfully served the needs of the new citizen and the upwardly mobile citizen. Only to a lesser extent has the small residential liberal arts college participated in meeting this kind of educational need. Perhaps the closest thing to it that colleges all over the country experienced, and certainly in the same historic vein, was the (by ordinary standards) unselected group of students who flooded the campuses of the country under the auspices of the GI Bill after the Second World War. This flood of students was viewed with considerable alarm by many colleges. Events of the twenty years since do suggest, however, that this relatively unselected population, with the means and the will to continue its education, justified the investment made in their educations. Although comprehensive and systematic assessments are lacking, very likely many of our present college faculty would not have received appropriate training had it not been for the provisions of the GI Bill.

More distant in our educational history is the education of the successive waves of immigrants who came to the United States from the early 1800's through to the early '20's of this century. They represented one of the largest migrations of human beings the world has seen. Their integration and amalgamation into our society was in large part due to their education at all levels. While the movement into the society often took two or three generations, many of the larger colleges, particularly municipal and state institutions in the eastern portion of the country, participated heavily in this venture.

Because of a confluence of circumstances it seems clear now that the universities and the small residential colleges of whatever stripe are on the verge of a new flood of eager, intelligent students who do not fit the ordinary recruiting or admissions pattern. Some of these will be Negro students with rising aspirations stemming from the dynamic nature of the civil rights movement in the country. The balance will be the impoverished who have had their aspirations raised by the possibility of federal scholarship programs, National Defense Education Act loans, poverty programs, work-study provisions of legislation now pending, and the general affluence of the society. The disadvantaged, this new breed of students, have antecedents in poverty, in lack of opportunity, and in discrimination. These antecedents are of both class and caste nature. Race is a part of the picture, but only a part.

Role of the Small College

The small liberal arts college may have little interest

in meeting the educational needs of these students. Certainly the option exists for the colleges to plead quite plausibly that they are ill-equipped financially or otherwise to meet this educational challenge and to defer to the great state universities and municipal colleges. A decision to decline the challenge is very tempting for a small liberal arts college, comfortable in its traditions and acclimated to dealing with a homogeneous academic community based on common economic, religious, or cultural beliefs. But, for a number of persuasive reasons based on enlightened self-interest, the small college should not decline this challenge. These are listed here as separate entities, although actually they are inextricably intertwined, and are separated only for purposes of description and analysis.

1. The population of the small college, traditionally and increasingly, has been provincial in terms of class, caste, and economic antecedents. The small college without great assistance from tax monies has been driven inevitably to economic exclusiveness. This may change quite drastically under provisions of pending legislation, but at the moment and probably for some time to come the student body is provincial. We live in a world in which our destinies and indeed our existence depend upon realistic understanding of the total human population. The members of a provincial college community are at a severe disadvantage in the conduct of their lives and in facing the decisions they will be expected to make because of their education, affluence, and influence. These students desperately need to understand the realities, the beliefs and the values of the vast population that knows a world different in almost every respect from their own.
2. The same kind of analysis and argument is applicable to the facilities of the small liberal arts colleges. Faculty exchange programs, Fulbright grants, numerous conferences to consider educational problems—all of them, at least collaterally, tend to dispel the provincialism of the academy. Leaves, consultant work with both industry and government, and graduate teaching internships add to the cosmopolitan experience of many faculties. That these ends might be significantly furthered by a student body of more heterogeneous antecedents is quite clear. This would bring the faculty to the encounter where they live, in their teaching relationships, making them more aware and more sensitive to the breadth of possibility in the world, with clear gain to them and to all of their students.
3. In terms of pedagogy, the system in a small college and a great university as well is rarely put to test because of a homogeneous student body and an isolated faculty. Having chosen the students at input, having chosen the faculty at the end of a severe screening process of graduate education (which is at the far end of the same input), we are in danger of devising a perfect machine to work with the material we choose, but producing an education that would be hard put to meet a relevance test based on the realities of a more extensive universe.

One of the most persuasive responses to the posing of this kind of extensive problem is the assertion that the small college and most of the large universities have never excluded students of any background or religion or race. Whatever the truth of this assertion, one should note that application to college generally comes only at the end of successful completion of extensive screening in the first twelve years of schooling, as well as the less visible screening of expectation and aspiration within social class and caste in the society. To be "open to" students of any background may thus, for practical purposes, have no meaning whatsoever. A student from a family where success is measured in terms of achieving the basic necessities is unlikely to apply even to a state university let alone to the ostensibly more expensive private residential college. Something as simple as the loss of his potential income to the family may be a major factor in his decision not to apply to a college. Even if that factor could be overcome, he still may be stopped by the published yearly costs in almost any of the colleges. For the small residential college in particular, this means that if we are to have anything approaching a heterogeneous population we must actively recruit the disadvantaged. Failure to do so will merely attract, through some system of aids and awards based on need and past achievement, the lower economic edges of the very population with which we presently deal. This, while perfectly defensible and laudable, does not face the question of education for the disadvantaged, nor would it produce a heterogeneous student population. And, since colleges are the gates to graduate school, our faculties will come from the same background as our student body.

Experience indicates that if we are to seek a heterogeneous population by going to the bright, intelligent, but differently prepared student, we will have to be flexible and learn new skills in order to teach them. The college will have to be able to speak to a diverse population rather than to a homogeneous one. This is a difficult challenge for any institution, but is by no means beyond reach. This does not mean that the college should "water down" what it teaches. It does mean that it must be able to teach in terms of the students' capacity to hear and that its teaching and curriculum must meet a more rigid test of relevance, both immediate and long-range, than the college has deemed necessary in the past. This is a challenge that can be an exciting one to most institutions and faculties, but it may also be difficult, time-consuming, and painful.

Antioch's Plan

With some understanding of this many-faceted situation, Antioch College embarked last year, with the aid and encouragement of several foundations and many individuals, on a program in interracial education that we call "risk recruiting." From what has been said so far, it should

be clear that we apply the term "risk" not to the students, but rather to a situation: The College has staked its reputation as a teaching institution on the proposition that it can teach those things valued in higher education to a population it is unaccustomed to, in an unfamiliar idiom, with a success that will be invigorating and exciting for the institution, its students, and its faculty. We plan to do this with every intention of learning from the students we have sought without exploiting them. We will meet their needs, and in the process meet the needs of the College.

Finding the Students

To this end a group of faculty at the College has been, over the past year, recruiting disadvantaged students in four areas. We chose three large cities where, because of our alumni and co-op employers, we thought we could move with some ease. They are also areas where there are large concentrations of disadvantaged students. Our initial effort has been largely with Negro students because they represent some special problems as a sub-population of the disadvantaged. We expect in the coming years to include other sub-populations: whites, Indians, and Puerto Ricans.

We realized that none of us on the faculty could find the students we wanted in any of the cities or regions where we wished to work. We decided that we should seek indigenous selector groups in these areas, and, in effect, say to them, "This is what we want. You find them and recommend them to us and we will accept your judgment." This was something of a risk for both parties in the conversation but it has indeed worked. We now have accepted the first echelon of eleven students for the fall of 1965 and are conferring with some thirty or forty other students who will be in their junior or senior year in high school this fall.

In seeking out the selector group in Chicago we resolved to use individuals who were deeply involved in social work and knew intimately many of the neighborhoods where disadvantaged students lived. In St. Louis we sought the help of the West Presbyterian Church, which had remained in a neighborhood that had changed from white middle class to predominantly Negro following the Second World War. We asked the minister of the church and his associates to put together a selector group for the St. Louis area. This resulted in a hard-working committee made up of persons representing a wide range of backgrounds. In Philadelphia we sought the help of institutions that had a relationship with the College as co-op employers for a number of years. They consisted of three social service agencies working in settlement houses and one church that was very active in providing tutoring at all levels in North Philadelphia. In southwestern Ohio we were eclectic in our approach; we could travel to nearby cities and seek help from whatever sources could be found.

Several exciting and useful things have emerged from this process of recruitment by selector group. We discovered that in all of the areas where we have worked, there was no shortage of energetic, intelligent, and dedicated persons who would give their time and energy unstintingly to help in recruiting and tutoring, and who would be hospitable to any college that is willing to undertake the education of the disadvantaged. They have been unfailingly helpful to the institution and to the faculty visiting the city to discuss recruitment. They are very willing to work with any institution and to fill any prescription that they are given. The means to discover students with minimum expenditure of time and energy by the colleges are clearly available.

Conditions Necessary for a Sound Program

We believe that the number of conditions necessary for a small college to embark upon a program of recruitment and teaching of disadvantaged students are few.

1. It needs funds, which may be secured through grants, or under various governmental programs pending or now in force, such as NDEA scholarship and work-study programs, or state loan and scholarship arrangements. Or it may have sufficient internal loan funds, or may want to commit a percentage of tuition income to such a program. Obviously combinations of resources are indicated to put together a financial base for a program. At no time in recent years has the financial outlook been as encouraging as it is now.
2. There needs to be commitment within the college structure to the desirability and need in the institution for such a population, and a willingness to work out both the financial base and the other conditions that will make this teaching both possible and successful.
3. The college must identify two or three faculty members who see advising and counseling as a creative part of their teaching function. This is no problem on most campuses and should represent none to any college with the commitment to embark on the teaching of disadvantaged students.

With these conditions met, the program is ready to move. It does not represent a major change in the direction of the institution. It is simply a resolve to use a portion of the teaching, financial, and administrative bases of the institution to meet the needs of disadvantaged students, whether the program involves two students or twenty. At Antioch we have decided on a total of fifty to sixty students over a three-year admission period and have encountered nothing but encouragement at all levels in the College.

While many of the disadvantaged students do not have the backgrounds to which we are accustomed, they will bring strengths that we have long coveted in our regular student body, but in degrees and forms that are somewhat unfamiliar to us. They will be practical people, at odds with their present environment and ready to learn and move from it. They will be tenacious and capable of the sustained hard work necessary to translate components of the curriculum into forms that have meaning to them. The guidance and tutelage they will need from creative faculty

will make possible a transition into an ecology with which they are unfamiliar. The students' skills in accommodating to this ecology will be at least equal to those of the more protected population to which we are accustomed. It may mean that we will need to interrupt or rearrange some of our sequences of study. Antioch's policy resolution of the problems involved in working with these students hinges on this concept: We will relax our admissions standards but maintain our graduation standards. We expect the students under this program to be indistinguishable from or superior to others on graduation. We expect that the withdrawal rate will be substantially lower for this group because the stakes are substantially higher than for the population we normally recruit.

Preliminary Observations

Although our program is still too new for us to be able to present firm conclusions, we have been able to make some pertinent observations.

One of the most striking of these has to do with the early identification of potential students. Early identification is a very attractive idea, but we have found that in practice it is exceedingly complex. We wanted to identify students in the tenth grade so that we could prepare them for college work, assuming that their level of academic achievement would be considerably below that of our usual student. We found—and this was not really a surprise—that in the tenth grade the students' sense of the future is neither precise nor pressing. As a result our first objective in working with tenth and eleventh graders has been to generate a more clearly defined sense of the future. We have avoided concentrating on any one college, but have stressed, instead, the idea of preparation and education beyond high school. (This general approach is necessary if we are to avoid dilemmas later on.)

We have also begun to wonder about the adequacy for this group of the customary measurements of achievement. In very few cases have standard test scores corresponded to our personal judgments or those of our selectors. Many times we found that seniors who had impressed us very favorably during interviews had low verbal and mathematics scores. Their IQ's often were on the lower edge of the usual freshman class. Because of the apparent inconsistencies between written test and personal judgment, we are working with our Testing Office to develop new measuring instruments. The empirical results of college performance will have bearing on the validation of these instruments, of course.

We have found that our relationship with these students must be highly personal. They seem to believe that people accomplish things only through personal dealings, a belief that may be rooted in a pattern of dependence upon influence for any kind of achievement. But there is another aspect to this: We have the impression that rarely before has any adult in a position of power sat down and talked individually with them about their lives, their aims, and how schooling might fit in. According to the selectors, this kind of individual encounter has a powerful effect on the students.

We believe that the encounter must be on the students' home grounds—in a neighborhood situation, such as a settlement house, church, or in the home—and preferably not in the high school. This is primarily for the benefit of the interviewers, who can be misled as to the exact nature of the environment from which the students come.

Finally, we see a value in bringing prospective students to the campus some time during their senior year in high school for a visit of several days. We have done this for testing purposes; but we also wanted the students to see the College. We expect this to help them develop a realistic set of expectations. It is not inordinately expensive, and we feel there is no substitute, particularly for the disadvantaged group, for immersion in the College environment. We have put them in dormitories and our regular students act as their hosts. They visit classes and go to social events. We expect the experience to help them construct a "landing place" psychologically, so that their move to campus will not be so abrupt a severance of ties at home and so that the campus will not seem strange to them when they arrive to register.

Questions for Study

We expect this program to produce some extremely interesting research problems, and at least partial answers to questions of long standing that have wide implications:

1. How effective are our present admissions standards, which are based on past performance, board scores, and achievement skills, in producing the kinds of graduates that we want? Are we getting what we say we are after?
2. If the answer to the above is negative or uncertain, what other indices might we develop by a bold departure from the admissions criteria to which we are accustomed?
3. Is our curriculum (which may be admirably suited to a preselected population) relevant to a heterogeneous student body?
4. Are our methods of teaching able to meet the challenge of diversity, or are they effective only for a limited population?
5. What are the alternatives that our institution might consider if changes are indicated in response to the above questions? Can we reasonably expect that some new academic recipe would produce a new vigor that would prove to be beneficial to the institution, the faculty, and students?

This then is the present state of the undertaking at Antioch in anticipation of the great movement of disadvantaged students that seems to be facing American colleges. We think that in the coming decades these questions will be posed for us by the nature of the society in which we live. We hope to be ready to offer an effective and sensitive response as the questions arise.

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