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Recruitment and Support of Culturally Distinct Students. Ethical and Educational Implications.

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Recently, colleges and universities have been recruiting and admitting students whose poverty-neighborhood environments and educational and ethnic backgrounds may have prevented the continuation of their education beyond high school. We already know that these "culturally distinct students" have college adjustment problems that traditional remedial programs are unable to alleviate. Their needs involve such questions as potential alienation, search for identity, and available staff with whom communication is possible. It must now be recognized that it is just as important for advantaged as it is for disadvantaged students to be on a college campus. Intercultural understanding today is necessary for survival, and integration can only occur in situations where communication and shared experiences across cultural barriers become reality. Among other things, colleges now need to change instructional practices, examine curricula in terms of their relevance to the components of the student body, and provide counseling that covers a broader spectrum than that normally provided. To fulfill the moral and educational responsibilities attendant upon the diversification of the cultural composition of students on their campuses, the roles of all institutions of higher education must be redefined. (WM)

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STUDENTS: Ethical and Educational Implications

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Section 6  
Monday morning, March 3

RECRUITMENT AND SUPPORT OF CULTURALLY DISTINCT STUDENTS\*  
Ethical and Educational Implications

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We are increasingly conscious of the necessity for institutions of higher education to recruit and admit students whose backgrounds, for a variety of reasons, would not have stimulated them to apply for admission to college and whose performance levels on the traditional criteria for admission would have been barriers to the acceptance of their applications. Only recently, however, have we realized that goodwill and open doors are not enough to change the situation and that educational and ethical implications penetrate deeply into decisions involving new policies regarding recruitment and admission of these students, implications which relate to the basic philosophy of institutions of higher learning relevant to social change. If it is true, and we believe that it is, that some form of education beyond high school is necessary for a large proportion of the population if they are to realize the opportunities now open, and if it is true, and we believe that it is, that such factors as poverty and neighborhood environment and ethnic background prevent many people from continuing their education, then colleges and universities must reexamine not only policies and practices regarding recruiting and admission but also their resources for providing higher education to a student body made up of individuals from highly diversified backgrounds.

Another forward step was taken when we became aware that remedial programs in reading and other basic tool skills did not meet some of the basic needs of "culturally distinct students" whose requirements are far more complex than these remedial programs on campus. Many colleges and universities have long accepted a number of students who fall below cutoff points on entrance examinations and have often provided remedial courses to strengthen academic preparation. This type of special training has met with remarkable success when deficiencies in reading, composition, and mathematics were the causes of difficulty in adjusting to college education. But the special needs of culturally distinct groups, and particularly of black students being admitted to previously predominantly white institutions, involve such questions as potential alienation and search for identity, special resources in counseling and the availability of staff with whom communication is possible, and the inclusion of black culture in a curriculum usually based on Western civilization as cultural history through the channel of Greece and Rome and Western Europe. The distance from desegregation to integration is a long one. Integration is a "happening"; it is something which happens to individuals in situations where communication and shared experiences across cultural barriers become a reality. The steps taken to provide desegregation on a campus are not the same steps which may create a setting which will facilitate the "happening" we call integration. The decision to recruit and admit "culturally distinct" students whose performance records may not meet conventional standards deserves not only the undergirding of

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of goodwill and guided studies programs but also new concepts of counseling resources and of student life on the campus, concepts so new that they are still only vaguely defined.

A third progressive step in our thinking may have to be taken before we have much hope of success in expanding the role of the college in the education of culturally distinct students. We must see why these students should be a part of the campus for the sake of all students. We must recognize that we have entered a critical point in history where intercultural understanding is necessary for survival. The idea of "universal" in the meaning of "university" calls for the presence on the campus of people, both students and faculty, of diverse cultural backgrounds, and for a transition in the curriculum to an intercultural concept in all branches of learning. One's search for identity will not arrive at maturity until he sees himself both in relation to his own culture and in relation to other cultures. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin has most forcefully expressed the urgency of moving out of a narrow academic provincialism in his concept of the convergence of man upon himself. The period of the dispersal of man around the planet and the formation of semi-isolated cultures is over. Man is inevitably converging upon himself.\* As a consequence intellectual or cultural "apartheid" will be disastrous. Convergence requires effective communication and understanding among diverse social groups. It is just as important for advantaged students as for the disadvantaged on a college campus that the disadvantaged be there.

... An open-door policy which admits culturally disadvantaged students without provision of resources to meet their needs is disastrous. This point has particular significance when the admission includes students who will constitute a racial or cultural minority on a campus. We have learned that desegregation does not necessarily result in integration, that in a mixed student body alienation may be keenly experienced. We have learned that the needs of so-called disadvantaged students extend far beyond the traditional remedial programs in reading and mathematics and English grammar.

I shall mention briefly only a sample of the resources which may be required in each college:

- 1) New student recruiting procedures - and at least one new staff member who will know how to communicate with potential candidates, with counsellors and Head Start and Upward Bound staff, and with community people who may provide information on motivation and aspiration factors.
- 2) Counseling: The services provided for disadvantaged students must cover a broader spectrum than those normally provided, as these students often have not had the advantage of family or neighborhood counseling suited to the type of planning they must now do or to equip them to face some of the problems of personal identification in a new social milieu.

\*See his Phenomenon of Man published by Harper and Row, and in paperback as a Harper Torchbook.



- 3) Instruction: The traditional patterns of courses in reading and basic tool subjects alone will not meet the requirements for compensatory learning. To some extent these learning experiences must be provided through instructional methods included in regular courses, which will necessitate special training for some faculty members. Much experimentation and research are still needed in this field.
- 4) Courses of study: The inclusion of material in the field of black culture becomes very important, particularly in relation to the identity growth of black students. In addition, the question of majors appropriate to the aspirations of these students must be reviewed. In other words, the curriculum must be examined in terms of its relevance to the changes in the student body.
- 5) Campus ethos: When a college takes steps to diversify the composition of its student body in terms of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds, there should be a clear awareness that changes will occur in the campus ethos and in community life. Many tragic events and destructive polarizations may be prevented, or at least alleviated, by thoughtful advance planning. To accomplish such planning, student and faculty leaders should participate both in the decision-making to alter the admissions practices and in the formulation of new educational and social resources to meet the needs of the modified student body. One might hope that assistance might be secured from the faculty in the behavioral sciences and from the professional staff in the student personnel services, but the final responsibility involves the total resources of the campus.
- 6) Fiscal responsibility: The previous discussion should make it obvious that the new policies concerning recruitment and admission must be undergirded by budgetary appropriations to support the new dimensions of educational programs and of other campus resources which will be required. Fortunately there have been enough institutional ventures into this field to provide fiscal data appropriate to program requirements.

In conclusion, we must face the realities of contemporary social change and their implications for higher education. We have not really done so, and when we do, we shall discover that some of our most cherished traditions will have to be modified. The issues of our time will not even be confronted if we approach the task of expanding educational opportunity in the manner of dilettantes or even in the spirit of an expanding charity. We face instead the responsibility of redefining the roles of each and all institutions of learning which are to teach students beyond high school. It is only in this context that we will fulfill the moral and educational responsibilities attendant upon the diversification of the cultural composition of students attending our campuses.