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AUTHOR Harcleroad, Fred F.
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ABSTRACT

Useful definitions for both "educationally disadvantaged students" and "survival" are proposed. The approaches and results of many nationwide collegiate programs directed at recruiting and sustaining such students are discussed. Two basically different approaches are being taken: (1) the remedial approach; and (2) the "cultural difference" approach in which black culture and urban problems are stressed and field experience in the community is often part of the courses. Two programs, in particular those at Stanford University and Northeastern Illinois State College, are cited for their remarkably high survival rates. The latter, with its components, is described in some detail. On the basis of the review, the author concludes that disadvantaged students are clearly able to survive in college. Experience in a wide variety of institutions provides enough commonality of methods and results to encourage every institution to provide specialized personnel and services for establishing or improving college programs for the increasing numbers of disadvantaged students. (TL)

DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS: WHAT MAKES FOR COLLEGE SURVIVAL

(Speech prepared for delivery at the 1971 Conference of the American Association for Higher Education, March 16, 1971)

Fred F. Harcleroad
President, The American College Testing Program

A useful definition of "educationally disadvantaged students" was developed by The Florida Community College Inter-Institutional Research Council for its 1970 study of compensatory education practices in 24 Florida community colleges. This study concerned students "considered to be educationally disadvantaged because of either one or a combination of the following conditions: low ability, low achievement, academic under-preparation, psychosocial maladjustment, cultural or linguistic isolation, poverty, neglect, or delinquency." The United States Office of Education, in its division of Student Special Services, identifies disadvantaged students basically according to five general areas: first, low income; second, migrant background; third, receiving welfare or vocational rehabilitation benefits; fourth, students from inner-city public housing or model cities programs; or fifth, black students. These specific criteria, for example, were employed at the University of South Florida in its development of the special plan for counseling and assisting culturally disadvantaged students reported by the Southern Regional Education Board's special study of the black community and the community college. Other less carefully defined writings have often referred to disadvantaged students as students from ethnic minorities with limited cultural and environmental backgrounds. Much of the literature describing efforts to assist disadvantaged students basically describes efforts to assist black, and occasionally Chicano, American Indian, or Puerto Rican students.

Defining "survival" meaningfully also poses a problem. The Carnegie Commission's January 1971 report, "Less Time, More Options," presents a generalized model of college student success and attrition without recognition of AA degrees or vocational/technical education certificates, and reports that 53 percent of the entering students will survive to a bachelor's degree. This is an extremely limited model of educational survival and my paper presumes that worthwhile survival could mean, also, success in achieving an AA degree or a vocational certificate or completing a freshman year in any type of higher education institution.

A number of specific steps and services are critical and important in increasing the incidence of survival in all forms of higher education. Recent research studies conducted by The American College Testing Program indicate

that almost any student wishing to enter higher education can be successful if guided to an appropriate institution. Julian Stanley urges that each student "attend a college more geared to his level of academic competence." He goes on to say that "not many colleges in the United States are highly selective. There exist at least 2,000 others of all sorts to accommodate most levels of developed ability and achievement." Donald Hoyt's study, "Forecasting Academic Success in Specific Colleges," provides information on almost 1,000 of the nonprofit collegiate institutions and can be extremely helpful to students who wish to learn the differences in academic demands which are made by various colleges. Clearly, analysis of institutional demands is a first step in improvement of survival rates of educationally disadvantaged students. For example, in 1970 the College Careers Fund of Westchester, New York, through one of the founders of the program, John Whitlock, "reported that they try to fit the college to the person, not the other way around." Prospective students were found by combing lists of high school dropouts, checking with local police departments for chronic troublemakers, and recruiting students standing on street corners in the slums of southern Westchester. Volunteers tutored some of them in a preparatory or special summer school program. Counselors helped students select appropriate campuses and later, after enrollment, made trips to the campuses to visit their students. In three years the program has sent 123 students to more than 50 colleges. Eighty percent of the students have remained in school or graduated, and during the 1969-70 school year the retention rate was 91 percent. Certainly, this is survival far beyond the normal expectation for students who meet all the criteria for normal admission to colleges and universities. The tutorial and follow-up programs are extremely important in the success of this private effort, but the initial selection of colleges which seem to be appropriate for the students is the first and most important step.

Results of this type are exceedingly important to work toward in the next decade. The U.S. Census Bureau's current reports have included a number of facts that bear on this problem. For example, during the last five years in the 1960s, the number of black students enrolled in colleges more than doubled. In 1960, 63.7 percent of the white students in high school graduated from high school, and by 1970, 58 percent of the Negroes and other minorities had graduated from high school. However, in 1970 a clear disparity could be seen between whites and blacks finishing college in the study of the persons aged 25 to 29. In this group only 10 percent of black students and other minorities had completed college as compared with 17.3 percent of the white group. Thus, although the number of black and other minority students entering college was increased during the 60s, the percentage graduating (surviving) was appreciably lower.

The Carnegie Commission's special report of December 1968 indicated that "the proportion of Negroes in the American college population is less than half of the proportion of Negroes in the population as a whole, and half of the Negroes in college attend predominantly Negro colleges."

Allan Cartter reported in his perceptive studies of future minority group student enrollments in the Educational Record, Fall 1970, pages 334-335. He indicated that the total freshman enrollment entering colleges and universities in the fall of 1970 would have been increased only 50,000-75,000 if the percentage of nonwhite and white high school graduates had been essentially equal. He cites further the estimates of the effect of open admissions on the City University of New York for September 1970, in which only 7,500 additional students entered the freshman class, with less than a third of them nonwhite. Nevertheless, it is clear that large numbers of black and other minority students must and will enter the colleges and universities of the United States in the coming years, and that extensive efforts will be necessary in order to make this a challenging and worthwhile experience rather than a dismal, failing experience.

Disadvantaged students of <u>many differing ages</u> are also taking advantage of the open-door opportunities in colleges and universities, particularly community colleges. Essex Community College in Newark, New Jersey, is a good example. Only 38 percent of the applicants for admission to its initial freshman class were young and just out of high school. The remaining 62 percent represented all age groups within the college area and approximately half of the students were enrolled on a part-time basis. Many of these were working full time and had come to the school because of the wish to increase their skills or to move into a new field of occupaticnal endeavor.

Hundreds of colleges and universities have made conscious efforts to recruit educationally disadvantaged students from minority groups. Many of these institutions would be considered the most academically difficult of any in the United States. For example, the new University of California at San Diego --established primarily as a prestigious graduate research university--has established its third college, a new undergraduate college of which Dr. Herbert York, the acting chancellor, has stated that "less than half of its first class of 130 students failed to meet the standard criteria for admission to the university." In addition, about 30 freshmen have been selected and admitted at both Revelle College and Muir College, the other undergraduate colleges of the university without meeting the normal criteria for admission. The large majority of the students are from disadvantaged neighborhoods and most of them are minority students. The "third college" is described as one "to provide a good, fitting academic environment for youngsters from minority schools and neighborhoods and environments that they can better relate to." Another objective is to encourage more minority youngsters to go into the professions such as medicine and law.

The University of Iowa, likewise, has specifically recruited students in its educational opportunity program and finds that on normal measures of academic potential the typical EOP student needs specialized assistance. The university provides such special help through tutorial and counseling and guidance efforts, plus special financial help in order to save them from worry.

Indeed, Thomas Sowell, a black professor at the University of California at Los Angeles, has been quoted extensively in the New York Times Magazine, December 13, 1970, indicating that some colleges and universities are bending over backwards to select black or minority students who are "authentic ghetto types," and in some cases not admitting black students who are competent or with much better opportunity to be successful without many types of compensatory education programs. He indicated that able black students often still require special help in order to make up for gaps in their education, just as many white students who are clearly admissable to college still require special attention for gaps and weaknesses in their education.

In this generation colleges and universities are making special efforts to overcome the deficiencies of many past generations. In doing so they must realize the special problems which exist for students moving from disadvantaged cultural environments into the hostile and foreign culture of the college or university. Harry Edwards in his sociological analysis entitled, "Black Students," describes in some detail the April 1969 confrontation at Cornell. He concludes that white faculty members and students alike were unable to understand the emotions and feelings of the small group of black students, and wrote, in these strong words: "The strange inability to understand one's fellowman reflects a peculiar form of racism, attributing as it does to blacks a different kind of humanity from that of whites. As long as these attitudes persist, communication between black and white at the university will remain difficult." (Page 183) Similarly, Van Allen of the Southern Regional Education Board, speaking at a workshop for counselors held at Jackson State College in March of 1970, said "...the manner in which the law has been applied to blacks has had its influence in shaping the black culture. For example, because for so long any white person could and did to some extent take the law into his own hands in relationships with blacks, children of black families living in our urban ghettos learn very early to be evasive and protective of the members of the family and they carry this feeling and behavior pattern into college." He stresses the difference between black and white cultures and goes on to state that "unless we accept the concept of two cultures, we will continue to make the mistake of treating two patients having different symptoms with the same medicine. As you know, the outcome can be tragic and in so many instances in the past it has been tragic for both black and white individuals." He indicates further that "the difference between successful counseling and unsuccessful counseling will come from understanding the motivations of the students based on their previous life." White counselors will have to make a real effort to become, as the young people would say, "blackenized," or try "thinking black." It simply means that the white counselor should familiarize himself with the black experience, study blacks as blacks have been forced to study whites over the years, and plan activities and make decisions involving black students on the basis of understanding of the motivations that are operable in the black experience. (pp. 39-44 in "Pre-college Counseling and the Black Student.")

Frank Cervantes in discussing the problems of Chicano students as they go on to college education indicates that "the Anglo-American school system and the Chicano culture clash head-on and the loser is the Chicano student and his society." Southwestern colleges of the United States have less than two percent representation of Chicanos in their student body, in spite of the fact that the college age population in the area is almost 20 percent of Chicano background. San Diego State College increased the number of Chicano students to two percent during the years from 1968-70, but the percentage of Chicano students in San Diego County is from 12 to 14 percent. (pp. 22-23 in "Financing Equal Opportunity in Higher Education.") One of the important reasons for part of this problem is "the family-cultural background. In Chicano society, the family is usually placed before the individual. Therefore, the individual is expected to stop being a financial burden on the family as soon as possible and begin helping to support the family." There is pressure on the student to go to work and not only to work but to support the other parts of the family. Financial aid is absolutely critical so the Chicano student will not "be as great a burden to his family and will be able to spend more of his time on his studies."

Even among the academically talented students in minority groups there are definite problems in making a move from high school to college. McWilliams in his recently completed follow-up study of academically talented black high school students from Denver, Colorado, high schools indicated that "educational counseling for black students is very poor and...high school counselors of black students must become interested in their students and more aware of their needs and aspirations." His study was primarily of black students in the top 10 percent of their graduating class. However, he indicated that the "educational counseling for the average and marginal black high school student was exceedingly poor or even nonexistent." He recommended that counselors "create an interest and a desire for college attendance on the part of their black students" and that if they were going "to do this, it is not possible to sit in the counseling office and wait for the students to come in and seek advice, the counselor must go to the students." (pp. 94 and 98)

Finally, Morgan's very complete study of "The Ghetto College Student" also emphasizes the problem of the "two cultures," a black one and a white one. The black student attending college "is required to learn in a new and different culture, one which has little relevance for him, while the white student is learning in a familiar culture which has a relevance he accepts and understands. While the white student is only extending his knowledge, the black ghetto student must learn the new culture, keep up in it, and be evaluated by it at the same time that he operates from a new base." Morgan further indicates that there are two basically different approaches being taken by colleges and universities in assisting students to meet these problems. He calls the first the "remedial approach," and the second, the "cultural difference approach," in which black culture and urban problems are often stressed and field experience in the community is often part of the courses. The students are taught by

persons intimately acquainted with the problems of the culturally different group and the use of methods based on language technology and experience close to the students.

Edwin Gordon's ambitious study of over 4,000 colleges and universities is an attempt to go even further in determining collegiate compensatory programs for disadvantaged youth. Initial findings of his study indicate that a majority of the institutions (which include universities, four-year colleges, junior colleges and nursing schools) do not have any special programs. Over 50 percent of the universities responding do have a special program for the disadvantaged already in operation, while only about 30 percent of the four-year colleges and junior colleges report such special programs.

Special programs for black students, and particularly those from large urban ghettos, must place "heavy emphasis on language training and improvement of communicative skills." However, valuable compensatory programs include many activities such as tutorial programs; special counseling, on either an individual or a group basis; special financial aid programs, including workstudy, loans, and scholarship grants; individual tutoring, particularly in skills fields; special field trips; preparatory summer courses; special medical services; and special housing and classroom facilities. Of course the most important characteristic of all in any of these programs is the relationship between faculty and the students, with understanding of the cultural shock involved in moving into the college a basic necessity for a successful program.

A number of specific programs have contributed greatly to the survival of black and other minority students in college programs. Upward Bound, in particular, has had many successes. In the report published in May 1970, Upward Bound was reported to have sent 72 percent of its enrollees on to college and about 65 percent of the enrollees remained in school, slightly higher than the national retention average for students generally. This program, if course, recruits sophomores and juniors in high school and carries them through the summer prior to their entry into college. It tries to provide sustained support and encouragement to all of the participants to help them in maintaining their college aspirations and to encourage and motivate them to go on to higher education. It develops basic skills necessary for survival in college, through intensive summer and after school tutorial programs, enrichment activities, and meetings between secondary school and college faculties. A special relationship is established between the enrollee and the specific college which the student may attend. The personalized relationships which are built up through this program, plus the remedial skills which are provided, have definitely assisted in making this pre-college program highly successful.

There are many differing special programs at the college level. A recent study of the Inter-Institutional Research Council of The Florida Community Junior Colleges has provided data on the extensive compensatory education practices in 24 of these colleges. Fourteen of the 24 institutions had less

than 10 percent of their enrollment from disadvantaged student groups, one fourth of them had 10 to 20 percent, and four of them had more than a fourth of their students classified as disadvantaged. The Afro-American student group was eight and a half percent of the total enrollment, and over half of these students were classified as disadvantaged. The Spanish-American group was 6.8 percent of the total enrollment and 18 percent of them were disadvantaged. Of the remainder, almost all were Caucasian and 9.5 percent of this group was classified as disadvantaged. In classification by community background, 12 percent of the urban students were classified as disadvantaged students, 25 percent of those with a rural background were so classified, while only 8.7 percent of the suburban students were disadvantaged. Of the total group of disadvantaged students 58.3 percent were white, 31.3 percent were blacks, and Spanish-American or Oriental-American groups made up the difference. Teachers of the disadvantaged students were predominantly white Caucasians with some specialized training of a workshop type, and possibly college course work or in-service education training programs at the college itself. Sizes of special classes were not exorbitantly large, averaging around 22 students. A wide variety of instructional methods were used but individualized, tutorial instruction and individualized programmed instruction were in use in most of the institutions. The success of this series of programs is still being evaluated and the results should be known in the near future.

On the other side of the continent, the California State Colleges recently reported on a fairly extensive program involving 3,150 students in the Educational Opportunity Programs. These students were from minority and impoverished groups and were admitted to the college in spite of low grades because they indicated some aptitude for college study. The percentage of students in this program who were still in college after two years was 60.1 percent. Over half of those who had dropped out had left in good academic standing and were eligible for return. Forty-eight percent of the students in the program were black, 36 percent were Mexican-American, 13 percent were Caucasian, and 3 percent were listed as Asian-Americans. High survival rates of this type mean that such programs can be extremely successful in helping educationally disadvantaged and impoverished students.

In the same state, at Stanford University, a small select group of black students, 21 in number, was admitted to Stanford in the fall of 1965 as a result of what is described as an "intensive program to increase minority enrollment." Their scores on entrance exams were low and some had been dropouts or poor disciplinary risks but a faculty group determined they had good university potential. By August of 1970 all but two of the 21 had graduated which was better than the class as a whole. Special attention, of course, was given to selecting students with drive and motivation to succeed, and special assistance was given to make it possible for them to succeed. However, survival rates for specialized universities of this type further indicate the importance of choosing an appropriate institution.

The Project Success Program of Northeastern Illinois State College, started in 1968 with research and financial assistance from The American College Testing Program, provides another striking example of the value of special educational assistance programs for "high risk" students. In this program a pilot group of 30 normally inadmissable students were admitted in the fall of 1968. Of the 30 admitted, 27 attended the fall 1968 trimester and 23 had grade point averages of C or above. Three of the remaining four had grade point averages of 2.6-2.9, barely below the C average. Twenty students started the third trimester in the fall of 1969 and in March of 1971, 16 were still in college, 14 of them in Northeastern Illinois State College. In other words, approximately 60 percent of the original entering group were still in college making progress towards their degrees, when under normal circumstances none of them would have been admitted to college. One of these students will be graduating in December of 1971, and several expect to graduate in April of 1972.

The program was so successful that a second comparable group of 30 was enrolled in the fall of 1969 and 25 entered the second trimester with satisfactory grades. A third group of 97 students was admitted in the fall of 1970 (with even lower qualifications than the prior group) and at the end of the 1970-71 fall trimester, three students had averages above 4.0, 31 had grade point averages between 3.0 and 3.9, and 47 were on probation between 2.0 and 2.9. Of the 11 who had lower averages, some had remained in college because they felt that they were just getting used to the collegiate situation.

What accounts for this high survival rate? The students were provided with preadmission advisement, financial aid programs, and registration programming for 12 and 13 credit hour schedules of regular classes. Faculty members in the classes did not know the students belonged to this specially admitted group as these are standard services available to every student. Northeastern Illinois provided academic, vocational and personal counseling by a coordinator who was a black, male social worker experienced both personally and vocationally in intercity life. In addition, they provided individualized tutoring beyond regular departmental services in such areas as reading, mathematics, and composition, with the tutoring provided by members of minority groups who had been successful in achieving advanced status at the college. Specialized facilities in the campus union also provided for the group as a whole, including the office of the coordinator and a general workroom/gameroom space where the students could be tutored, could study or could share experiences. More importantly, this area served as a semi-escape from the foreign community of the college itself during periods of time when the students felt the need either to get away or to obtain support from their fellows. In addition, the coordinator and additional black counselors from the counseling center provided opportunities for the students to visit other colleges and to gather as a group at a weekend retreat for mutual consideration of their college experience.

Obviously, the survival rate at Northeastern Illinois State College for high risk students is not quite as high as the phenomenal survival rate at Stanford University, but it closely approximates the survival in the California State Colleges. The additional cost of the specialized programs in 1968-69 was less than $300 per student beyond the regular basic budget of the college. This is a very modest amount to expend for the tremendous increase in the potential benefit to the student and to the society. Undoubtedly Stanford's cost per student in both the selection and the special assistance areas was much higher than at Northeastern Illinois State College or than it would be at a community college. The gain in human potential and in individual human welfare from this modest expenditure is almost incalculable. Personal discussions with the people involved in these projects indicate that coordination and direction of such programs need to be in the hands of understanding and concerned members of the minority groups involved. It helps immeasurably for the involved students to work with coordinators, counselors and tutors from a variety of backgrounds who can provide differing role models--all of which have been essentially successful in the collegial atmosphere.

Clearly disadvantaged students can "survive" in college in far greater numbers than has generally been considered possible in the past. Experience in a wide variety of institutions provides enough commonalty of methods and results to encourage every institution to provide specialized personnel and specialized counseling and services in establishing or improving collegiate programs for the increasing number of students with limited backgrounds but the drive and motivation to enter into a new culture, a college or a university, in the hope of developing a better life for themselves and their families, and to improve the society in which they live.

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