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ABSTRACT

The results of this study reveal that predominantly white institutions are not responding in a meaningful and coherent way to the needs of black students. The impression many may have of a high national level of response to the needs of black students is based on the apparent rather than the real. While there are some few institutions that have developed comprehensive programs, the majority have been unable or unwilling to change. (HS)

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**An Evaluation
Of Higher Education's Response
To Black Students**

Indiana University, Bloomington



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by
Reuben R. McDaniel, Jr.
and
James W. McKee

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Indiana University

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About the Authors

Reuben R. McDaniel, Jr., is Assistant Professor of Higher Education at Florida State University. Before going to F.S.U. he was Director of Educational Services at Baldwin-Wallace College.

James W. McKee is Chairman and Associate Professor of Black Studies at the State University of New York at Cortland. Previously, he was Coordinator of Programs for Culturally Distinct Groups at Wisconsin State University at Oshkosh.

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Introduction

After World War II many people, without a conscious awareness of its source, adopted a two-liner described as an "Old Navy Dictum,"

*When in trouble and in doubt
Run in circles, scream and shout.*

This popular description of very human behavior in crisis is as accurate as one can state in a few words the findings of a study of 1,168 campuses and what they are doing to meet the needs of black students.

One might assume from newspaper articles, journal reports, and convention programs that the system of higher education was grappling in a meaningful way with the concerns of blacks and that institutions were actively engaged in a wide variety of programs designed to serve the needs of black students. However, the impression of an apparent high national response to the needs of black students is not actually real, because while many institutions are doing something, each is doing only a little, and this gives the false impression of a great general responsiveness.

It was obvious that institutions found themselves under pressures which emanated from (1) blacks or someone in their name, such as the federal government, and (2) a need to "keep up with the Joneses," i.e., to do what others said they were doing. The responses to these pressures took many forms and with no particular patterns. In fact, it can now be said, as a result of this study, that black students are unable to find either specific national patterns of response to their needs or general institutional responsiveness. This inability may well be the cause of much of the present sense of unrest among black students.

An Evaluation Of Higher Education's Response To Black Students

What Is Being Done and Not Being Done

A first step for most colleges was to look for young blacks who might be induced to enroll. Pressure for equal opportunity came from all sides, and few institutions wanted to be classed as *de facto* segregated colleges. In an effort to assure themselves and others of their sincerity, they either adopted open admissions policies or made special adjustments for blacks in admissions requirements. Over 82 per cent of the reporting institutions had done one of these two things. Fifty-seven per cent stated that they had open admissions, while 25 per cent adjusted their standard admissions criteria. These activities indeed permit many more blacks to enter the doors of higher education than was formerly the situation.

The next step necessary, if the door was not to be obviously a revolving one, was to provide remedial education programs of one kind or another. Clearly there was not much point in recruiting blacks to improve the institutional image if they couldn't stay in school. Slightly over 50 per cent of the institutions reported some kind of academic help program. One might logically have expected that there would have been an adjustment in the curriculum to accompany changed admissions patterns, but the institutions chose the remedial education route instead.

With increased numbers of blacks concerned with and involved in higher education, black and African studies emerged as the "new" interdisciplinary fields of study. Many institutions set up programs of these types in an attempt to meet the cultural needs of blacks, and indeed to meet the cultural needs of all students, but such programs were adopted by only 50 per cent of the reporting institutions. The remainder had no similar programs despite the growing consensus that these studies should form an integral part of the college curriculum.

Many scholars have indicated that it is not only desirable to establish special programs concerned with black studies but that the regular academic program must be adjusted in light of new data and new understandings involving blacks. Yet only 48 per cent of the reporting institutions had made any efforts in this direction. Despite the overwhelming rush of evidence revealing that traditional curricula were racist in tone and direction, 52 per cent of colleges and universities had made no effort to update their programs. It is no small wonder that large numbers of black students complain of institutionalized racism and an alien environment in the classroom.

A modest effort to deal with this sense of alienation has been attempted by providing training in race relations. While 45 per cent of the institutions reported some such training programs, the overwhelming majority were directed toward the counseling staff. Only nine per cent reported programs for faculty members or professional staff other than counselors. Granted that the majority of student contact with representatives of these institutions is with persons other than counselors, it is clear that efforts in race relations training are having little impact on the students' environments.

Another approach to managing the college environment is through the recruitment of faculty and staff. If black students had access to viable role models, they might well feel that the institution was attempting to meet their needs. Therefore, the active recruitment of black faculty and staff is one way in which colleges and

universities might express their concern for meeting the needs of blacks; yet, only 44 per cent of the reporting institutions were engaged in such efforts. Perhaps the popular notion that there are no qualified blacks to serve in the professional ranks has caused the other 66 per cent to make no attempt to recruit. From the students' viewpoints, this lack of effort means a lack of commitment. High sounding statements, such as "we will hire any qualified candidate," clearly do not satisfy even the most placid black observer of the higher education scene.

However, such seemingly meager efforts represent the only areas in which more than 40 per cent of the reporting institutions were actively engaged. Other results of this study were both shocking and shameful. Only eight per cent of the colleges were making efforts to provide residential patterns which promoted good race relations, and only one fourth were providing financial aid programs for blacks despite the considerable evidence that the economic barriers to higher education for blacks are in many cases overwhelming. Special programs to meet the needs of blacks were supported with institutional funds at only one fifth of the reporting colleges. Less than 30 per cent of the institutions had developed policy statements concerning race which might act as guides for institutional behavior. In general the picture is all too clear. Much is being said; little is being done.

Attitudes of Campus Constituencies

Would it not be expected that in 1970 the cause of the young blacks would be supported vigorously by people in higher education? Programs might be few but they would be supported. An in-depth study of attitudes was, of course, impossible with research as broad as this, but each institution was queried concerning the reactions of various members of the community regarding programs to meet the needs of black students. The results, even ignoring the possibility of a favorable bias on the part of the respondents, were startling.

The lay leadership of higher education appears not to support comprehensive institutional programs to meet the needs of black students. Only 36 per cent of the institutions reported trustee support for these efforts. Evidently the black community cannot, at present, expect that their needs will receive much consideration at the top-policy levels unless dramatic changes take place either in the composition of boards or in the attitudes of board members.

Professional educators have a reputation in some circles of supporting "liberal" causes. The results of this study show little evidence that a favorite "liberal" cause is a need of blacks. Seventy per cent of the institutions reported that there was little support within the administrative group for programs to meet such needs. Put another way, less than one third of the colleges were able to say that their administrators felt that the institution should be making efforts to meet the needs of young black students. It is no small wonder that these students feel that they must actively demonstrate if they are to influence institutional behavior.

Many black students look for faculty support as they attempt to modify institutions. This may be a futile search, for only one fourth of the reporting colleges indicated general faculty support for programs to serve blacks. The other 75 per cent reported that their faculties were little concerned over this problem. Despite the national attention which has been given to the plight of the black student and despite the fact that the faculty has much of the campus power, little evidence was present in this study which would indicate that the faculty's power would be used on behalf of black students.

The sit-in movement popularized the notion that white students are supportive of the demands by blacks for fair treatment in this country. Certainly some white students are, but if blacks think that they will receive general support from white student bodies for equal and fair treatment on the campus, they are wrong. The result of this study shows that only one fifth of the institutions had general student support for programs to meet the needs of black students.

It should be noted that there is little *opposition* from trustees, administrators, faculty, and students to programs for blacks. The general mood appears to be one of indifference. While some few institutions reported that one or more groups were opposed or very opposed to one or more programs, most of the evidence collected indicated that people just don't care. It is probably unnecessary that there be widespread support for change in order for change to occur. At the same time, those persons who feel that there is widespread support within the system of higher education for changes to meet the needs of blacks are in error. The black student finds within the system a surprising apathy as far as his needs are concerned, and this fact often leaves him "turned off" to the possibility of real change.

The Important Indicators of Institutional Responsiveness

How can one tell if an institution is responsive to the needs of blacks? What are the most significant indicators? It would be helpful to all constituencies if some guidelines could be established. Therefore, as part of this research, an attempt was made to isolate those *particular* patterns of response which would be most likely to indicate *general* institutional responsiveness.

That group of institutions which had considered the needs of black students in programming student activities was the group which was most responsive. Thirty-five per cent of all reporting institutions fell in this group. These institutions had black student activities of various kinds which permitted and encouraged unified student forces which could assist the colleges in developing other patterns of response. The fact is that institutional change is in many ways a political process and black student groups form political pressure blocks which can exercise power on behalf of black students. Institutions where there are not enough black students to form such groups or where the institutional climate is such that these groups do not form, tend to be less responsive in other ways. Perhaps black student groups, like other student groups, are forerunners of important changes in higher education and a source of untapped energy for progress. It should be noted that 65 per cent of the institutions do not have black student groups and that these institutions are lacking one possible powerful catalyst for change.

While 70 per cent of the institutions reported a lack of administrative support for programs to meet the needs of black students, the group of institutions which did report such support was the second most responsive one. Perhaps the overview of the total institution which is most often available to administrators may give them a perspective which goes beyond particular patterns of response to a general institutional posture. Therefore, it is important when looking for a clue to institutional responsiveness to search for administrative support for programs. Without such support little may be accomplished. Black students should attempt to capture the support of administrators as they try to move institutions in new directions.

One of the most significant new directions is the recruitment of black faculty and staff. The 44 per cent of the institutions engaged in this effort were the third most responsive group. This may be because the faculty is often considered the core of an institution and changes in faculty composition occur when significant changes in institutional posture are taking place. Even the presence of black candidates on campus often raises questions about specific institutional activities and causes others to examine their behavior more closely. When the black candidate talks with black students, he often can be a meaningful source of feedback to the recruiters. As the candidate reviews existing programs and policies, he frequently sees weaknesses not apparent to those who are more intimately involved with the existing structure. Thus it is reasonable to find that those institutions actively recruiting black professionals are more likely to be generally responsive to the needs of blacks.

Faculty support, which was found at 25 per cent of the reporting colleges, is the fourth best indicator of general institutional responsiveness. Faculties do have power;

they can significantly affect institutional tone. Those faculties recognizing the concerns of black students as a primary issue can cause things to happen. General patterns of institutional responsiveness can and do develop.

Particular patterns of response not clearly indicative of general institutional responsiveness included relaxed admissions and the active participation of blacks in general campus life. Evidently, simply providing access for black students and then getting them involved in the existing patterns of collegiate life were not meaningful changes and solved problems for only a few. These were not patterns which led to other significant changes. This finding does not minimize the need to provide these patterns. In fact, the evidence shows that far too few institutions have accomplished these goals. Rather, this finding suggests that relaxed admissions and involvement by blacks in campus life are not the best indicators of institutional posture and that meeting the needs of blacks means going beyond simply providing "equal opportunity" to the existing system.

What Kinds of Institutions Are Responding

The system of higher education is made up of many different types of institutions—public and private, large and small, and urban and nonurban. Some campuses are parts of multicampus institutions. Some grant doctors' degrees while others offer only two-year programs. Regional differences mean differences in campus climate. For these reasons in this study the attempt was made to learn whether or not the type of institution would make a difference in the responses to the needs of blacks. The data collected clearly showed that there were differences.

Type of institutional control was the first variable investigated. The public-local institutions were most responsive to the needs of black students. Many of these institutions are newer, have more flexible programs, and are designed to meet local needs. Thus they may find it more possible to serve specific constituencies. The public-state institutions were the second most responsive group, perhaps because their needs to respond to public issues may well have made them more sensitive to the concerns of blacks. Private nonchurch institutions were third most responsive. Although in this group were some of the more prestigious colleges and many which lay claim to being "leader" institutions, the data showed that they were not leaders in this area. The private-church college was last among the four groups studied. Despite the hope that church colleges would take the leadership in an issue such as this with such clear moral overtones, the evidence is that they either cannot or do not wish to fulfill this role.

In looking at multicampus *versus* single-campus institutions, it was clear that those campuses which were parts of multicampus institutions were the most responsive to the needs of blacks. Further, it was true that main campuses were more responsive than branch campuses. The single-campus institutions seemed to be unable or unwilling to do as much to serve their black students.

Those institutions which offered the doctor's degree were more responsive than those which did not, with the master's degree institutions ranking second. Colleges offering only the bachelor's degree ranked last, evidently being unable to marshal the resources necessary to develop general institutional responses to the needs of black students.

One of the more significant findings of this study related to the differences in institutional responsiveness by region of the country. Given the highly mobile nature of the nation's population and the increasing encroachment of the federal government in race-related issues, it might be expected that regional differences would be minimal. Yet clearly the western region was most responsive to the needs of blacks with the New England region second. The north central and the middle states regions were almost the same in their general responsiveness. Fifth in responsiveness was the Northwest region. The South was clearly last when compared with other areas

of the country. These findings should not be construed to mean that any region was taking the necessary steps to meet the needs of blacks, but rather to show that there are regional differences and that regional efforts to improve the existing situation would be profitable to both the institutions and to black people.

With presence of large numbers of blacks in urban areas and the increasing political sophistication of urban blacks, it is not surprising that urban institutions were considerably more responsive to the needs of blacks than were nonurban institutions. It is probably also true that urban institutions have a larger resource base, particularly as it relates to meeting the needs of black students. This finding brings into serious question the ability of nonurban schools to address themselves to some of the contemporary concerns of an increasingly urban population. Clearly, if black students are to be served by the large numbers of nonurban colleges, then these colleges must seek new ways to address themselves to the concerns of black students.

Size had a surprising relationship to responsiveness. Many smaller institutions are requesting public support by saying that they are more adaptable to changing conditions, but the changing condition of blacks is *not* one of the factors to which small institutions have seen fit to adapt. In fact, this study showed that the larger the institution the more likely it was to have developed patterns of institutional response to black students. Again, the problem of resources may plague the small colleges. A \$40,000 investment in a black student center is a small effort for a college of 10,000. Such an investment is a major problem for a college of 1,000. Yet black students at both such institutions may well need a physically identifiable place to which they retreat to marshal their energies.

Lest there be some misunderstanding, let it be said again that the evidence from this study permits no group of institutions to pat themselves on their backs. It is, however, useful in planning strategies for institutional change, and for change across the whole system of higher education, to note that there are differences in the ways in which types of institutions are responding to the needs of blacks.

The System of Higher Education Is Not Responding to the Needs of Black Students

This study showed that predominantly white institutions of higher education are not responding in a meaningful and coherent way to the needs of black students. While there are some few institutions which have developed comprehensive programs, the majority have been unable or unwilling to change. Despite the rhetoric concerning the responsibility of higher education to the black youth of America, this survey shows little evidence of real progress. The impression many may have of an apparent high national level of response to the needs of black students is based on the apparent rather than the real. Each of many institutions is doing a little and the number involved gives the unreal impression.

What has been done is the result of pressure—pressure from the black community, from the federal government, and from an attempt to keep up with the latest fads. This pressure has caused many institutions to act. However, this study revealed that there is no coordination, little communication, and no pattern of national response. Black students, many of whom have been led to believe that they have a place in the system of higher education, find little evidence to support this belief after they arrive on campus. Rather, they find scattered efforts to make them fit into the system.

There is a moderately favorable climate for blacks in terms of relaxed admissions standards, but these are not supported by adequate institutional responsiveness in other respects. Admissions standards should reflect institutional character, particularly in curriculum, and mere relaxation of these standards solves problems for only a few. Some institutions have attempted to close this gap through special academic assistance programs. Some have developed courses or programs focusing

on black or African studies. Some are attempting to recruit black faculty and staff. Few institutions are even willing to claim campus-wide support for their efforts. It seems, in some instances, that the mere presence of black students on campus or even their desire to come to the campus confuses the system and causes it to behave in an irrational manner.

There are differences in responsiveness among types of institutions and among institutions in various parts of the country. However, no group of colleges can claim responsiveness to the needs of black students. While differences should be recognized, the results of this study show that continued efforts across the entire system of higher education are necessary if progress is to be made. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that, if the system of higher education is to make a contribution to the problem of racism in America, it must begin to develop national patterns of response to the needs of black students. The present atmosphere among blacks is one of hope, particularly as it relates to the potential of education to help them. This optimism may soon fade if the present situation does not improve.

Some Ideas about the Future

It would be irresponsible to present an evaluation such as this one without offering some suggestions for future action. Some recommendations stemming directly from the data collected have already been given. There are, however, several general recommendations which have grown out of the analysis.

1. The black community of students, faculty, and interested citizens must make concentrated efforts to gain larger numbers of university programs relating to black student needs. They must seek a greater influence in university programs relating to these needs. Black people must make efforts to control their own destiny. Pressure works, and it should be used in an organized fashion when and where necessary.
2. Black students seeking to establish an in-depth program relating to blacks might better direct their efforts toward locally oriented and/or most firmly established institutions. This recommendation takes into account the shortage of black faculty and the seeming reluctance by many institutions to commit necessary financial resources to programs designed to deal with blacks and black culture. Combined efforts and joint programs should be encouraged and used by groups of institutions where necessary.
3. Regional, branch, and some private institutions should strive to establish specialized programs which attempt to meet the needs of black students. This means that a given college which has a low enrollment of blacks may need to take its program away from the campus.
4. Southern region schools must develop programs to meet the needs of black students rather than emphasizing ways to increase black enrollments. Although percentages of black students have risen more rapidly in the southern region than in any other, the need to respond to these students in other meaningful ways still exists. Past activities have shown that black students will begin to demand more adequate responses to their needs. All of the states in this region, some of which have populations of more than 40 per cent black, should begin to make special efforts to respond to black needs immediately.
5. It is apparent from this study that the battle to establish open admissions has been won. Institutions must now begin to recruit in areas where blacks live and and in other ways to make special efforts to recruit black students.
6. One of the national educational associations which is involved with practices and programs in higher education should develop a central clearinghouse for information in attempting to meet the needs of black students. The concern of this clearinghouse would be with issues which range far beyond equal opportunity to the total relationship between higher education and black students.

7. Institutions, in evaluating their relationships with black students, should emphasize the development of patterns of response rather than specific activities and then attempt to recruit those black students for whom the institutional patterns of response are appropriate.
8. Members of the black community, including students, scholars, and political leaders, should shift some of the focus away from the development of admissions practices which will provide equal opportunity. While vigilance in this area is still necessary, there is a need for much broader efforts by the system of higher education to meet the needs of blacks. The black community should forcibly bring this concern to the attention of higher education and have a major role in the development of general patterns of institutional response to the needs of black students.
9. Institutions of higher education should differentiate carefully between their efforts to provide opportunities for black students to fit into existing academic patterns and their efforts to meet the total range of special needs felt by black students. Both efforts may be necessary now and for the foreseeable future. However, failure to consider the broader implications of increased enrollments of black students and exclusive emphasis on special academic assistance may lead to a general disillusionment of blacks with the system of higher education.
10. Present efforts to provide courses and programs in black and/or African studies should not only be continued but should be expanded as rapidly as possible. These programs should become integral parts of the curricula at all institutions except those very highly specialized ones. Even the highly specialized institutions, which may not themselves be able to provide such programs, should, through cooperative efforts with other institutions, make programs in black and/or African studies available to their students.
11. Institutions which are in the process of developing patterns of response to the needs of black students should guard carefully against exclusive attention to the popular and the easy patterns. While disturbing the general tenor of the campus may be uncomfortable, those institutions which hope to develop general institutional frameworks which meet the needs of blacks may well have to live with discomfort, at least until the new approaches are accepted widely by the institutions' constituencies.
12. Students of higher education should devote considerable attention to special student activities programs for blacks. Those institutions which have goals of general institutional responsiveness to blacks should encourage the formation of black student groups. The most effective ways of organizing and mobilizing such groups should be studied. Research which investigates their impact on an institution should be conducted.
13. Administrators in higher education should assume greater responsibility for the development of general patterns of institutional response to the needs of black students. While special administrative offices or persons assigned coordination responsibilities may be required, it is also necessary that general administrative support be developed.
14. The preparation of blacks for faculty and staff positions in higher education and the active recruitment of qualified blacks to fill existing positions is necessary. Considerable study should be given to determine the best methods to accomplish this. Existing requirements for filling faculty and staff positions should be reviewed with the possible revision of these requirements (not necessarily *reduction*) as a possible outcome of such a review.
15. Additional study is needed on the problem of blacks in higher education. All that there is to know about the problems of blacks in higher education will not soon be discovered, but the effort to do so must be continued, even redoubled.

How This Study Was Conducted

In order that the reader might understand how the findings and conclusions presented were developed, it is necessary to outline the research methodology.

Twenty criteria for institutional responsiveness were developed by surveying closely the relevant literature on higher education for blacks. A 142-question survey instrument was devised to measure in what degree institutions in the system of higher education were meeting these criteria. The survey instrument was sent to the chief executives of 2,764 colleges and universities. There were 1,393 replies of which 1,168 were usable survey instruments from predominantly white institutions. The representativeness of the usable returns was checked by comparing them with the population surveyed. It was found that they were representative of the system of higher education in terms of the factors of type of control, highest degree offered, and region of the country.

These instruments were analyzed to establish a positive or negative category for each institution on each criterion. The percentage of institutions which fell into the positive category for each of the criteria was determined. The institutions were then grouped in various ways in order that relevant analysis might be made and the various groups compared with each other.

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