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ABSTRACT

In this review of college admission practices, four areas are analyzed: (1) changing patterns of admission standards and practices and factors that have influenced those changes during the past 25 years; (2) importance assigned to high school achievement, test scores, and other criteria in arriving at admission decisions; (3) influence of college admission standards and processes on high school curricula; and (4) practice of awarding college credit to students who are enrolled in high school. Following a description of the criteria that are generally used for individual admission decisions, an overview is presented of admission practices during each of four "eras" that fell within the period of 1957-81: (1) Sputnik Era (1957-60); (2) Post War Baby Boom Era (1964-67); (3) New Groups Era (1971-74); and (4) Stable Enrollment Era (1978-81). The paper concludes with a brief look at the immediate future. A bibliography is included. (JD)

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COLLEGE ADMISSIONS AND THE TRANSITION TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION: STANDARDS AND PRACTICES

A paper prepared for the National Commission on Excellence in Education under the sponsorship of the National Institute of Education

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I. Introduction

This paper reviews college admission practices of the past twenty-five years and highlights the effects that those practices and high school curricular changes have had on each other. The following four areas are analyzed:

.....The changing patterns of college admission standards and practices and the factors that have influenced those changes during the past twenty-five years.

.....The importance assigned by college admissions officers to high school achievement, test scores, and other criteria in arriving at admission decisions.

.....The influence of college admission standards and processes on high school curricula.

.....The practice of awarding college credit to students who are enrolled in high school.

This examination of admissions will include a brief historical view of admission practices and a short discussion on some philosophical and political assumptions on which admission policies and practices have been based. Following a description of the criteria that are generally used for individual admission decisions will be an overview of admission practices during each of four "eras" that fall within the period from 1957 to 1981. Those eras are: I. "The Sputnik Era" (1957-1960); II. "The Post War Baby Boom Era" (1964-1967); III. "The New Groups Era" (1971-1974); and, IV. "The Stable Enrollment Era" (1978-1981). The paper concludes with a brief look at the immediate future.

For this paper, the following definitions apply. "College admission" is the process followed by colleges to recruit and select a freshman class. "Colleges" are regionally accredited institutions, including two year institutions and universities, that conduct regular academic programs leading to either an associate degree or a baccalaureate. An "open door" college generally admits all applicants. A "selective" college requires that at least minimal academic standards be met to be admitted, and a "highly selective" college is one of the 200 or so in the United States that selects a class from an applicant group that

numbers from two to ten times the size of the targeted freshman enrollment.

The content of this paper has relied heavily on several dozen printed references, many of which are noted in the selected bibliography, and the writer's twenty-six years of experience as a high school teacher, counselor, and a college admissions officer (see the Appendix for a condensed vita of the writer). It is a descriptive rather than an empirical study. This analysis does not portend to cover the many sub parts of the complex and often misunderstood admission process. The dynamics of college admissions go well beyond grade-point averages and test scores. Thresher (1966) worded it well when he wrote:

> "Popular opinion about college admissions represents it as a screening based on intellectual achievement and promise. So it is, in part; but this is by no means the whole story. The sorting process involves the interaction of sociological forces of many kinds."

One might also add that college admissions is not unlike higher education itself; you can say anything about it and it will be true somewhere!

II. An Historical Perspective

A. Pre-Twentieth Century

College admissions in the nineteenth century were awarded to applicants, nearly all of whom were male, who fulfilled a specified set of course requirements. The major emphasis was on preparation in the classical studies thereby giving reason for the emergence of private preparatory schools that would assure graduates of admission to a "good" or "prestige" college. The plan clearly benefited the "well-bred" urban dweller who possessed the economic means to enroll in a preparatory school.

Two developments contributed to the early democratization of higher education. In 1862 the Morrill Act was passed providing access to public colleges for thousands of young people from throughout the United States. Those land-grant colleges combined the traditional liberal-arts courses with the more practical technical courses that prepared students for life in a rapidly developing country. Forty years later the liberals

of that day demanded that students be allowed to demonstrate their readiness for enrollment in a prestigious college without having to complete an expensive preparatory school course. The actions of those progressives paved the way for the development by The College Board of nationally administered standardized entrance tests. While it cannot be said that the meritocratic characteristics of colleges of that period were giving way to egalitarian forces, those two actions did provide greater access to college for bright students who possessed the educational skills.

B. The Authority for Admissions

Generally, the authority for admission decisions rests with each college. In some institutions that authority is delegated to each faculty, or school and college, of the university. Admission policies at public institutions are sometimes prepared or approved by state legislative bodies or state boards of education. Such is the case in California, Ohio, Kansas, and several other states. Most community colleges are "open door," although they will sometimes restrict admissions when the number of applicants exceeds the places available in a particular curriculum. Admission policies of independent colleges do not fall under governmental jurisdictions.

While the federal government has almost no direct authority for college admissions (except military academies and a few highly-specialized institutions) its influence is significant. Congress has the authority to withhold funds for research, student aid, and special projects, and with that authority the federal government forces colleges to comply with a myriad of federal laws that have an impact on student access to college. Those laws include the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

C. Accreditation

Admission practices are heavily influenced by various accreditation bodies. Accreditation is defined in the North Central Association Quarterly (1980) as "a nongovernmental voluntary means of attesting to the quality of educational institutions and of assisting institutions to

improve their programs." The process is seldom practiced outside of the United States, although it has had an influence on American education for more than a century.

It is generally believed that The University of Michigan became the first institution to assign professors to visit high schools for accreditation purposes. In 1870, the University adopted the German practice of arranging secondary school visits by faculty members to judge the quality of the academic offerings. The University was the only state institution of that period that did not conduct a preparatory program for entering students who had academic deficiencies (Selden, 1960). The "accreditation" of those high schools had the support of the schoolmasters as well as the University faculty and undoubtedly helped to improve standards. Clearly, it defined the respective roles for the University and the high schools as to who would teach what.

The accreditation of high schools takes on slightly different forms among the states. Generally, however, accreditation standards are quantitative in nature; that is they specify a minimum number of "Carnegie" units across a broad spectrum of academic and nonacademic subjects. Most plans require schools to offer a specified number of courses in English, foreign language, mathematics, social sciences, and natural sciences, as well as physical education, vocational or occupational education, and fine arts. So as not to discourage innovative practices, accrediting bodies provide for curricular experimentation. A statement in The University of Michigan Bureau of School Services manual, "Accreditation Standards," illustrates that flexibility:

> "The standards listed in this booklet are minimal; it is hoped, however, that they will provide a base for further program development, experimentation, research, and innovation. Divergence from prescribed standards is encouraged if such divergence takes the form of research or experimental design and if periodic evaluations are submitted to the Bureau of School Services."

The long, close, and mutually beneficial relationship between colleges and high schools in Michigan, which was enhanced by the development of accreditation in the state, led to still another innovative

arrangement that is now widely practiced throughout the nation. In 1947 the "College Agreement" was signed by representatives of Michigan colleges and accredited secondary schools. That agreement according to a letter sent to high schools in 1947 gave the accredited high schools of the state "the freedom and stimulation that they will use for the very great improvement of their programs of secondary education," because the colleges agreed to abolish the practice of requiring a specific pattern of subjects for purposes of college admissions. There were several conditions attached to the "agreement," but its strong and positive impact on the state's educational plan continues to influence college access in Michigan. The colleges of the state, while enjoying a solid and well-deserved good reputation, do not require a specific set of high school courses for entrance. And Michigan secondary schools have long been considered to be among the nation's most innovative and responsive to change.

III. General Admissions Procedures

Since World War II, anyone holding a high school diploma could gain admittance to a large number of colleges. Students who had not acquired a diploma could be admitted to many institutions by earning modest scores on the General Education Development test (G.E.D.). Numerous colleges admit anyone over the age of eighteen regardless of previous educational experiences. Access to higher education for all citizens is indeed a reality in America.

Today, with a substantial increase in the number of both two and four-year colleges and with the physical plant and enrollment expansion of most existing colleges that occurred in the 1960's, all prospective students have a wide variety of educational options from which to choose. It is probable that the academically weakest high school graduates, those with "D" averages, could gain entrance to several dozen, if not hundreds, of the approximately 3,000 degree-granting colleges of the United States. Students with "C" averages would be welcomed at more than one half of the colleges, and "B" average students would likely be admitted to all but 200, or so. However, an "A" average might not by

itself be good enough to gain access to one of the 75 to 100 most prestigious and highly selective colleges. It is that group of institutions, mostly private and well funded, that base admission decisions on nonacademic as well as academic factors.

While American education is characterized by its relatively easy access, the persistence, or retention, rate of U.S. students is alarmingly low. It is estimated that only 50 percent of the students who begin college earn a baccalaureate. The "open door" to college has all too often become a "revolving door," although one might say with considerable justification that some, even a little, postsecondary education is better than none at all.

Most admission personnel agree that the best predictor of academic performance is previous academic performance. Although exceptions to that principle are numerous, a good high school record will usually lead to a successful college experience. Thus, the high school record is the single most prominent factor in an applicant's request for admission to a selective college.

A student's high school record, however, is far more than mere grades. While grades are important they must be viewed within the context of rank in class. Grading practices vary widely among schools and "grade inflation," an increasing phenomenon, can be detected only if the applicant's relative standing in the class is known. Further, a review of a high school record must take into consideration the courses elected by the student. Only archaic admission policies or inept admission personnel will permit an admissions judgment to be made irrespective of the quality and content of the courses completed by the student. Progressive admission practices provide for special recognition of accelerated, enriched, honors, or Advanced Placement courses. To do otherwise is to encourage academic mediocrity among the applicants. Most colleges will recompute the high school grade-point average so that only academic courses are counted and it is usually the custom to give added "weight" to accelerated courses. That practice helps ensure consistent and fair treatment of the entire applicant group.

Finally, the quality of the high school, in terms of it's record of preparing students for rigorous college experiences, should and usually

will influence the admission decision. Most selective colleges study performance records of their enrolled students. They will search for the causes of success and failure of their students and the quality of the high school is a major component of that evaluation. Future admission decisions will then be influenced by those observations.

Entrance tests are required by most colleges and they play an important role in the admission decisions made by the most highly selective colleges. Reliable test scores help democratize the process as they provide for a way to identify capable students who may have been missed by using only the high school record as an admissions criterion. Test results also help with the identification of an applicant's educational deficiencies which will aid both the student and colleges with the important decision of college choices.

Generally, admission personnel consider high scores on a reliable and secure test as unambiguous. Students who score well on the Scholastic Aptitude Test or the American College Test, by the standards of the college, probably possess the skills needed to be academically successful at that college. It cannot always be assumed, however, that low scores, by the same standards, mean that the student lacks the necessary skills. Low scores may be attributed to nonintellectual factors, such as physical problems, non-English speaker, or misunderstood directions. Regardless of the reason for low scores they will not work for the applicant and could make the difference at a highly selective institution. College admissions tests properly administered, and professionally evaluated and used, strengthen the admissions process immeasurably and will contribute to the best interests of the student and society. A deemphasis or abolition of standardized entrance tests will result in the return to the practice of a century ago when college admissions were characterized by elitism and subjective evaluations. The unfairness of subjective evaluations is that the practice works against the best interest of the less sophisticated candidate for admission.

Achievements outside of the classroom and the applicant's personal qualities may influence admission decisions. Other factors instrumental in the decisions, particularly at the most selective colleges, include the student's statement, recommendations, and a personal interview.

Decisions may also be influenced by the alumni and legacy status of the candidate and his family, and, for public colleges, the applicant's residency status.

Although practices vary widely among colleges, minorities, athletes, and students with special skills such as music, or forensics will be given admission priorities. And at least one highly selective eastern college has announced that admission decisions will take into consideration the applicant's ability to pay the costs of attendance!

The admission processes employed by colleges are complex but not needlessly complicated. Nearly all but the highly selective institutions apply "rolling admissions" procedures. Under that plan applications are received, reviewed, decisions made, and the applicants notified of their admission status usually within a month. The majority of institutions will accept applications on a rolling admissions plan until August 1, and sometimes until the opening, or even the first week, of classes. Colleges with more selective admissions practices will estimate the number of applications they will receive and set admission standards, or "threshholds," to admit most candidates on a rolling basis. Borderline applicants are considered after deadlines or "equal consideration" dates for applications have passed, usually in late winter or early spring. Students are then admitted from that "postponed" group to fill the class. Colleges typically admit between 25 and 50 percent more candidates than are needed because of attrition after admission.

Highly selective colleges may "roll" with a small percent of their prospective students, usually the "blue chippers," the students with the best potential, and postpone the decisions on the majority of applicants until a mid-April admission announcement date. Some use the term, "precipice" admission to describe that process. Financial aid awards usually accompany the announcement. Students who are admitted have until the May 1 Candidate's Reply Date to accept the admission and will affirm their intention to enroll by submitting an enrollment deposit. Students competing for places in highly-selective institutions are advised to seek admission to one or more other colleges where admission can be assumed.

During the past twenty-five years, the processes and procedures of college admission have changed very little although there have been occasional shifts both upwards and downwards in standards, as well as varying emphases on specific admission criteria.

IV. Four Eras of College Admissions

This section of the paper is divided into four parts. Each part discusses college admissions during a specific era and briefly describes some of the forces that influenced college access during that three-year period. The four "eras" are:

The "Sputnik Era" (1957-1960)

The "Post War Baby Boom Era" (1964-1967)

The "New Groups Era" (1971-1974)

The "Stable Enrollment Era" (1978-1981)

A. "The Sputnik Era" (1957-1960)

"Shocked" is an appropriate word to describe the American response when it was learned that the Soviet Union had successfully launched it's space vehicle, Sputnik. Prior to that event, American technology had suffered few defeats and none that was as devastating to our prestige and our pride.

The federal government reaction to Sputnik was quick and decisive. A major thrust of the government's response was to upgrade the quality of U.S. education, particularly in selected subjects at the high school level. The National Defense Education Act of 1958 provided grants to high schools to strengthen mathematics, science, and foreign language offerings. The Act also awarded grants for the support of counselors, or guidance personnel. Those actions had a profound impact on both the quality of education and the attitudes of educators. They also changed dramatically the relationship between colleges and high schools in the recruitment and admission of young people.

The new attitudes about quality education gave impetus to The College Board's Advanced Placement Program (APP). Launched in 1953, the APP afforded able high school students the opportunity to pursue college level

courses while in high school with the expectation that credit for those courses would be recognized by the colleges. Copley (1961) wrote that APP "stands out as not only sound and sensible but also as having wide applicability... Few faults, if any, have been found in it by students, teachers, or administrators, whether on the secondary or college level; praise and satisfaction have been well-nigh universal." By 1960, 890 high schools offered AP courses. That year 10,531 candidates took 14,158 examinations (Bowles and Pearson, 1962) and the years following saw the rapid growth of the "sound and sensible" APP.

Other spin-offs of the new attitudes on quality education as a national priority included special projects designed to identify gifted students. The Carnegie Foundation funded the "Guidance and Motivation of Superior and Talented Students." Other similar efforts were planned and financed by the National Talent Study, the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, and the National Science Foundation.

Admission to college in the late 1950's was becoming increasingly selective. While most institutions based admission decisions on high school records and personal characteristics, a growing number of highly selective institutions were requiring entrance tests. The two examples that follow are typical of the stated written requirements of highly selective colleges. It is evident that personal characteristics were important and that specificity was not a common feature of admission policy statements:

> (Claremont Men's College) "Admissions decisions are based on (1) the secondary-school record and class rank; (2) the school recommendation; (3) the recommendation of a teacher; (4) scores on The College Board Scholastic Aptitude Test; and (5) a personal interview, if possible. It is expected that every candidate will present a secondary school program consisting chiefly of English, mathematics, foreign language, science, and social science. Character and leadership potential are also important criteria." (The College Handbook, 1959)
>
> (Columbia College) "In selecting the 650 members of the freshman class the Committee on Admissions considers not only performance in preparatory school studies, but physical fitness and such personal qualifications as willingness to work, social adaptability, community spirit, honesty, manliness, and breadth of interest. Consideration for admission is based upon the combined evidence of the following factors: The candidate's school record, a report from his headmaster

> or teachers concerning his personal qualities, his record of non-academic achievements in school and community, a personal interview whenever possible, and the tests described below. Although Columbia has no formal unit requirement for admission, the following program of studies is recommended: English, four years; mathematics, three years; foreign language, three years; history and social studies, three years; laboratory science, two years.... Candidates for admission to the freshman class are required to take The College Entrance Examination Board Scholastic Aptitude Test and three achievement tests (English Composition and two electives)". (The College Handbook, 1959)

A few institutions, including the University of California, imposed rigid high school course requirements that had to be satisfied in order to be admitted. Most public supported institutions applied different standards and sometimes different criteria for nonresident students.

In 1956, twelve percent of the U.S. population was non-White, while only seven percent of the college population was non-White. According to Wise (1958) of the approximately 3,000,000 students enrolled at all levels, about 190,000 were Black and another 6,000 were considered "other" minorities. (Note: It is likely that the number of Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian Americans combined to exceed 6,000 students, as such students in the 1950's may have been considered by many institutions as "White.")

The late fifties can be characterized as a period of cooperative efforts between college admission and high school personnel. That period saw the development of uniform applications and high school transcripts. Educators from all levels worked together to ensure that gifted youngsters were provided intellectual challenge and helpful guidance. The rapid expansion of the APP was a highly successful experiment that remains today as a model for secondary/post secondary cooperation.

While this renewed emphasis of high school preparation was taking place, admission personnel were keeping a wary eye on some demographical statistics. The onslaught of students, those who were born shortly after World War II, would soon be knocking on the college doors. The question was frequently asked but seldom answered: "Was higher education, particularly the admissions community, making preparations for the 'double digit' college enrollment expansion that would occur each of several years in the mid-sixties?"

B. "The Post War Baby Boom Era" (1964-1967)

The mid-sixties was an era of rapid growth and change in U.S. colleges. As predicted, new freshman enrollments increased dramatically during each of the years 1963 to 1965. That increase was due to two factors: The number of eighteen year olds in the population had increased significantly and the rate of college attendance of eighteen year olds continued to increase (from 26 percent in 1963 to 31 percent in 1967.)

Revolutionary changes in college admissions occurred during the "Post War Baby Boom Era." Most large and small institutions grew larger, usually without the benefit of good planning. Hundreds of new institutions were founded during the period, including community colleges and public four-year institutions. Schools of education and "regional" colleges became universities offering a full range of academic programs. Admission requirements were upgraded at most colleges and student and parent anxiety levels arose proportionately. The problem of rapid growth was exacerbated by the decision of Congress during the late 1960's to allow college students deferment from military duty. Consequently, many of the students enrolled in college were there for reasons other than an education.

As institutions expanded, once again little attention was given to demography. The expansion of the sixties created serious problems for educators in the late 1970's when a declining eighteen year old age cohort resulted in partially filled residence halls and classrooms. Americans learned that rapid expansion has its consequences and they would be costly ones.

Increased enrollments were much more controlled in most highly selective institutions. Those colleges simply became more selective! Highly qualified woman applicants scrambled for the few places in one of the prestigious Seven Sister institutions as they could not be considered for the Ivy League colleges and a number of other eastern institutions. Colleges with traditionally low admission standards eagerly awaited the "overflow" to spill into their classrooms so they, too, could become more selective.

The College Board Manual of Freshman Class Profiles (1967) includes descriptions of the academic characteristics of freshmen who enrolled in 1966. Some examples:

(Stanford University): 92 percent of the candidates admitted from public high schools were in the top 10 percent of their classes. Ninety-seven percent had scores above 500 on the SAT's.

(Yale University): Mean SAT scores of the 1,025 freshman matriculants were Verbal-697 and Math-711.

(Northwestern): 60 percent of the freshmen were ranked in the top 10 percent of their classes and half of the students scored above 589 on the SAT Verbal and 618 on the SAT Math.

(Rice University): Of the 590 entering freshmen, 107 were valedictorians and 43 were salutatorians. Sixty three were National Merit Scholars.

(University of Michigan): 64 percent graduated from the top 10 percent of their high school classes. Of the 4,430 students, 41 percent scored above 600 Verbal and 60 percent scored above a 600 Math.

(University of Virginia): 62 percent graduated from the top 10 percent of their high school classes. Of the 1,258 freshmen, 45 percent scored above 600 on the SAT Verbal and 70 percent scored above a 600 on the SAT Math.

While most institutions enjoyed the ultimate "sellers market" in higher education, there was a noticeable deterioration in the well cultivated cooperative arrangements that characterized earlier relationships between high schools and colleges. Because of what was at that time perceived as a never ending supply of good students, admission personnel did little to maintain a rapport with high school counselors. And counselors were openly disturbed by the effects of rapidly escalating admission standards on college choices of their students. An adversary relationship resulted and the damage that occurred in the 1960's continues to plague the admissions process today.

Nevertheless, college admission standards did influence high school curricula. Selective admission practices clearly favored the applicant who fulfilled the "basic five" subject matter areas (English, mathematics, foreign language, science, and social science) and high schools had little choice but to offer those courses that colleges felt candidates for admission needed to be "competitive." Many high schools took pride in and indeed gave publicity to the percentage of their graduating

seniors who received letters of admission from selective institutions. Admission practices had a significant and a positive impact on high school curricula without the benefit of mutually planned curricular adjustments.

The Post War Baby Boom Era was a very difficult one for both admission and high school personnel. It was an era that was uncomfortably wedged in between the pleasant years of innovation and cooperation which characterized the late 1950's and the early 1970's, an era that fostered new attitudes about national priorities as the New Groups who sought access to colleges were accommodated.

C. "The New Groups Era" (1971-1974)

The tumultuous 1960's gave way to a new era in which higher education along with the rest of society confronted some complex and important social issues. It was during the early 1970's that the proponents of egalitarianism in higher education experienced repeated successes. The composition of student enrollments underwent significant changes as campuses were becoming increasingly populated with minorities, older students, foreign students, and students from the lower end of the economic scales. Single-sex institutions were becoming coed and, toward the end of "The New Groups Era," colleges were recruiting disabled students! The guilt feelings of Vietnam War remained with us, Watergate was just ahead, and the frequently heard slogan on campus was, "Open it up or shut it down." The sanctity of the halls of ivy had been challenged.

Some of our most prestigious colleges were scenes of unrest as Blacks demanded a bigger share of the places in those institutions as well as the funds to support their education. Violence erupted at Columbia, Berkeley, Cornell, Wisconsin, Michigan, and many other institutions that were perceived by Blacks as being unresponsive to a crucial national problem. The Blacks would not accept the suggestion that they should enroll in "lesser" institutions where the gap between their previous educational preparation and the intellectual expectations of the institution would not be as great. Their impatience with the "system" was understandable: The leadership of the country, those who occupied the top positions in business, industry, the professions, and government,

generally came from the institutions that enjoyed the best academic reputation. The Blacks wanted a share of those leadership positions.

As might be expected, admission offices became the center of campus controversy. Debates were held over definitions of such words as "quota," "target," "goal," and others. But while the campus resisted change, there was little that could be done to prevent it. Admission standards were "adjusted" and the great experiment in the democratization of education was underway.

The social consciousness that prevailed in the early 1970's had a substantial influence on the college curriculum. Some colleges decided to disallow academic credit for military officer training programs. Responding to student demands for "relevancy," foreign language, mathematics, and laboratory science courses were either reduced or dropped as requirements for the baccalaureate. Psychology and sociology were the most popular courses on campus and engineering and business enrollments declined. Not a few students attended college to "see ourselves as others see us." One did not attend college to prepare for a future; one attended college to "sort things out."

High school personnel were confused and angry. Many colleges maintained rigid entrance requirements while relaxing their own degree requirements. Students often found the college academic expectations of them somewhat lower than what they had experienced in high school. In contrast to the era of the late 1950's, educators from the two educational levels were not communicating very well with each other.

As might have been expected the high school response to the less rigorous college curriculum was to make their program less rigorous, at least for some students. It should be noted, however, that most high schools continued to offer honors and accelerated courses and the Advanced Placement Program was still experiencing a healthy growth. High schools nonetheless diversified their curriculum to allow all students a better opportunity for a high school diploma and the good grades needed for college admission. In at least one excellent high school, no less than 44 different courses in English were offered, with such titles as argumentation, mass media, film making, business English, and general English. As colleges dropped foreign language requirements, so too did high schools.

College admission standards changed little during the period and enrollments increased by several percentage points each year. Grade inflation became a problem at the college level in the early 1970's due at least partially to the more flexible curriculum. But a strange phenomenon was occurring. While students enrolling in college had higher high school grades and were receiving yet higher grades in college, standardized entrance test scores were declining. The College Board reported that the mean scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, which measures verbal and mathematical skills and is required by most highly selective colleges, had declined each year since 1962-1963 and that the declines were becoming more precipitous during the 1970's. Numerous studies have revealed a multitude of reasons for the drop in scores, but unquestionably at least part of the decline can be attributed to the lack of high school preparation in English and mathematics. (Note: High school personnel are quick to remind colleges that their students are taught by the products of the colleges who must share the blame for the problem.)

The 1970's saw U.S. campuses become more cosmopolitan as the New Groups enrolled. Few will argue the claim that the increased numbers of minorities, older, and foreign students have strengthened colleges as learning and cultural centers. The early 1970's was an era of social commitment. Colleges turned outward and assumed a responsibility to help correct some of the societal problems that were having a devastating effect on America. Meritocracy would need to wait for a while as colleges took care of some social chores.

D. "The Stable Enrollment Era" (1978-1981)

The outward look of the "New Groups Era" soon gave way to the inward look of the "Stable Enrollment Era." Instead of raising questions about 'how can we help?' colleges were asking, 'will we survive?' While very few colleges actually closed, most have had to cope with shrinking resources and enrollments and, for some, a decline in the quality of their academic programs.

Colleges are now suffering the after effects of the rapid expansion in the 1960's. Physical plants are not fully utilized and are in need of repair. Faculty size is being reduced primarily by attrition which

results in an increase in the median age of instructors. Bright young college graduates, who would and should teach at the college level, must seek employment elsewhere. The "Stable Enrollment Era" can be characterized as a period of litigation, consumerism, accountability, and negotiation. These are new elements in the mentality of both high school and college educators.

College entrance requirements at the more selective institutions differed little from those of the previous era. However, the moderately selective institutions of both the public and private sectors introduced lowered admission standards, particularly where they depended on large enrollments in the nonscience liberal arts areas. Student interests in the 1970's shifted from psychology, sociology, and journalism in the early part of the decade to engineering, business, and computer science in the later years.

An increasing number of colleges relaxed specific high school course requirements to encourage enrollments, although both college and high school personnel recommended that prospective students enroll in a balanced program of studies. In a report prepared by the Office of Academic Affairs of the Oregon State System of Higher Education (1978), it was revealed that the typical high school student who planned to enroll at the University of Oregon or Oregon State University completed 4.1 years of high school English, 3.3 years of social studies, 1.4 years of biological science, 1.6 years of physical science, 3.2 years of mathematics, and 1.5 years of a foreign language. The Oregon experience is probably typical of the national patterns of high school courses elected by college-bound students.

The results of a study released in 1981 by the National Center for Education Statistics revealed that high school students in 1980 compared to those in 1972 completed fewer high school courses in foreign language and social studies, about the same number of English and science courses, and a slightly higher number of mathematics courses.

The term "marketing" found its way into the language of the admission officer. Less than a decade ago pressures were on admission personnel to seek out minority students to help carry out some social responsibilities. Today, the pressure is to seek out any students to assure the existence of the college as a viable institution.

"Marketing," the packaging and selling of a college, is now freely stated and without feelings of guilt or a need for an explanation. A few years ago one would not imagine the day would come when college catalogs displayed four-color covers featuring a sun set over a field of grain or a bikini-clad woman gazing contendedly over the Pacific surf. Numerous admission "consultants" have borrowed the most modern Madison Avenue techniques as they practice their entrepreneurship.

Thresher (1966) writes about recruiting:

> "For most colleges in the United States recruiting and selection go on concurrently, one or the other being more emphasized as conditions change. It is a kind of paradox that many of the most selective colleges carry on the most vigorous recruiting. The naive view that selection and recruiting are alternatives--that one recruits when he needs more students, and selects when he needs fewer--is so over simplified as to be quite misleading."

Meanwhile, education is experiencing a paradox. A "return to the basics" move on the part of colleges is coming at a time when high schools have their "liberalized" curriculum of the mid-seventies in place and are finding it difficult to hire new young teachers because of enrollment and funding reductions. Mean Scholastic Aptitude Test scores continued to decline. Several highly selective institutions introduced writing assessment programs to bring freshmen up to a satisfactory level of competency before enrollment in freshman composition. Many high schools, including some large ones with strong academic traditions, lost their accreditation and their students are being asked to submit additional tests to validate their readiness for the highly selective colleges.

During this "Stable Enrollment Era" colleges are experiencing a credibility problem. While expounding the need for high academic standards, big and fast football players with few or well-hidden scholastic skills, are being vigorously recruited, and, they are earning their baccalaureates. Lucrative television revenues that result from successful athletic teams are now having an impact on college admissions. There is some evidence that the double admission standard is causing the image of higher education to become somewhat tarnished.

The financial problems experienced by higher education in the 1970's has diminished the enthusiasm of colleges to fulfill their commitments to increase minority enrollments. Further, in June 1978, a significant U.S. Supreme Court decision was announced. Allan Bakke, a White, and an unsuccessful applicant to the University of California Medical School at Davis, had brought suit in the California Supreme Court claiming that his rights were violated when special minority admission slots were filled with less-qualified applicants. The U.S. Court in a somewhat ambiguous and divided decision ruled that admissions could be "race conscious" but that strict racial quotas could not be applied. Justice Powell in writing the majority opinion stated that "the attainment of a diverse student body is a constitutionally permissible goal, supported by first amendment values embodied in the concept of academic freedom" (McCormack, 1978). The word "diversity," not "quota," was to guide admissions personnel as they sought to increase minority student enrollments.

While the Advanced Placement Program continued to expand, other programs which allowed students to earn college credit while in high school appeared. One major plan was Project Advance, sponsored by Syracuse University. High school teachers, after a brief training period, were appointed adjunct professors and approved to teach Syracuse courses in their high schools. Thousands of high school students from various parts of the nation earned Syracuse University credits which were subsequently accepted at many but not all other colleges. Several other institutions conducted similar programs. While some educators viewed the plan as highly beneficial for bright, motivated high school students, others considered it as a lowering of standards as senior year accelerated high school classes were being replaced by college credit courses. The critics charged that by lowering standards for entry into college courses (completion of grade 11), the college degree when earned would be of lower quality.

Further, because of budget reductions at the high school level, many school districts developed dual enrollment plans with area community colleges. Under a typical plan, seniors with a "B," or better, average are permitted to enroll in credit courses at the local college. Under such an arrangement high schools are relieved of the responsibility of

offering honors and accelerated courses that, because of lower student volume, are more expensive than traditional courses. The end result, however, is that by shifting to the local college the responsibility for offering a more challenging academic program, some high schools have broken with a long held tradition in the United States; that of offering to gifted students rigorous and enriched high school course work at the honors or accelerated level. The expectation had been that those students would then enter more rigorous courses in college thereby resulting in a richer baccalaureate.

In the late 1970's the International Baccalaureate, a comprehensive college level curriculum for academically talented and highly motivated high school students, was gaining recognition and acceptance in the United States. Originally developed in Europe as a common educational certificate that would give holders access to universities throughout the continent and Britain, the International Baccalaureate had until recently been offered by only a few international schools in the United States. Now more than 30 high schools, both public and private, offer the program and the certificates awarded are becoming increasingly recognized by the leading institutions in the United States and elsewhere. The International Baccalaureate provides syllabi and controlled examinations in the following areas: First language (English); second language; study of man (social sciences); experimental sciences; mathematics; and, additional options in the arts, languages, etc.

The various methods for awarding college credit to high school students have been studied, discussed, and debated. An institution's policy for accepting such credit will have a major effect on admissions and on the high school's decision to offer, or make arrangements for students to enroll in, college credit courses. The current trend, for better or for worse, will have a substantial impact on the quality of education in the United States for years to come.

The "Stable Enrollment" period is now giving way to the "Declining Enrollment" era of the 1980's and beyond. The inward look of the late 1970's may be viewed as a self-serving period in which intitutional survival was paramount and student and societal interests were secondary. For sure, cooperative relationships between colleges and high schools were left unimproved. It was an era in which financial constraints brought about by the combination of declining numbers of

eighteen year olds and double-digit inflation caused educators to depart from long held beliefs that certain educational principles must be preserved regardless of the forces that are operating against those principles. A country, shaken by the traumas of Vietnam and Watergate, sought excuses if not answers for what was perceived by some as rapidly deteriorating educational offerings. Standardized test scores declined precipitously. Teacher strikes became common. College freshmen could not write a simple paragraph. More than ninety percent of the college graduates could not speak a second language. Some colleges, public and private, recruited hundreds of foreign students to ensure financial solvency. A few admission counselors, or "head hunters," were given bonuses for every enrollment they recruited.

Indeed, education in the United States was suffering a severe case of loss of credibility!

V. What's Next: Some Thoughts

The "Chronicle of Higher Education" (March 24, 1982) reported that beginning in 1986 the University of California would adopt "tough" new admission requirements if the recommendations of a faculty committee are accepted by the board of regents. The article stated that, "They would raise from eleven to sixteen the number of year-long courses that students must take in basic subjects in high school, add social science and fine arts as fields in which students may take required courses, and specify that seven of the required courses be taken in the last two years of high school. Grades in honors courses would be given extra weight in computing grade-point averages." Those recommendations, if approved, will have a substantial effect on high-school course offerings in California. Similar expressions of concern by both high school and college personnel are needed if we hope to preserve and restore excellence in American education.

Admission policies and practices are central to the evaluation of the relationships that exist between high schools and higher education. The professional behavior of educators at either level can have a substantial impact on the practices and policies of the other level. For example, if a major state university decides to either expand, reduce, or eliminate

its foreign language requirements for admission, high schools will be under community pressure to adjust to the changed policy. Further, while the faculty of a college, for sound educational reasons, may wish to increase the foreign language entrance requirement, it is often reluctant to do so for fear of losing prospective students. Reduced enrollments usually mean reduced faculty positions. Regretfully, educational issues are all too often based on practical economic rather than the more desirable educational considerations. In this example, all parties will likely agree that this country is "second language illerate," but who will provide the initiative to correct the situation? Clearly, the college must reexamine its mission and define for its prospective students the standards that it expects of its degree holders. Many colleges will, and probably should, continue to set low or moderate standards. What is needed, however, is a substantially higher number of colleges that will follow the courage of their convictions and require higher standards for their degrees. Priority for access to those institutions would then go to the most promising high school graduates based on their overall classroom achievement, test scores, and carefully selected nonacademic factors. By using this approach high school personnel would be encouraged not mandated to provided well balanced and intellectually challenging academic programs for their citizens.

The college experience should become even more accessible as this century winds down. While the most selective colleges will continue to refuse large numbers of qualified students because of space limitations, excellent colleges are available for all who can benefit from them. A deeper concern, however, is the high rate of attrition, both voluntary and involuntary, that will likely prevail. Studies on attrition reveal that most students leave college for one or a combination of the following reasons: inadequate academic preparation; lack of finances; or, poor college choice. All three problems are correctable.

Academic preparation has been discussed extensively in this paper. It is important that young people are properly trained and counseled so that when they leave high school all of the options commensurate with their ability and achievement levels will be available to them. All students deserve the right to study the subjects of the five basic

disciplines and, on a selective basis, fine arts, vocational studies, and nonacademic courses.

Students who show academic promise should have access to reliable college-level coursework while in high school. Programs such as the Advanced Placement Program and the International Baccalaureate offer nationally recognized certificates of achievement based on standardized and secure examinations at nominal costs. While dual enrollment and other college sponsored credit courses for high school students can be valuable, such programs are vulnerable as abuse and exploitation can occur. High levels of achievement result from high expectations and the APP and the International Baccalaureate place very high demands on those students who seek the challenges those certificates offer.

We should establish as a national priority a funding base to support young Americans with the best minds to enroll in those institutions where their intellects can be stretched to the maximum. Many exceptionally talented people are finding that their choice of a college is being influenced by their ability to pay the exorbitant costs and, as a result, society has failed to take full advantage of an important resource. Maybe, as has been suggested, we should reinstitute an adaptation of the G.I. bill whereby any one who served his or her country, either in military or domestic service, would receive funding for four years of post-secondary education. Such a plan might increase military enlistments without substantial increases in salaries.

A major effort must be exerted to improve elementary and secondary education for minority populations. Colleges are not always able to bridge the educational gap that often exists when ill-prepared high school graduates enroll in selective colleges that do not offer comprehensive remedial courses. Current practices lead to frustrated students and wasted money. A massive government effort is needed to assist deserving young minority Americans.

Standardized testing for admission purposes has come under much criticism in recent years. While there is ample evidence that testing has and continues to improve rather than restrict access to higher education, some law makers, consumer advocates, and educators claim that there is frequent abuse of admissions testing. If those criticisms are proven

to be true, the abuses, not the tests, should be eliminated. Presently, legislation to give federal and state governments unprecedented control over admission testing programs is pending. The passage of the Educational Testing Act of 1981 or any of the similar laws proposed in at least fourteen states will constitute an unnecessary governmental influence on a process that is best left to the jurisdiction of institutions.

Finally, if any improvement in the complex process of college admissions is to be realized, leaders from the college and high school sectors will need to work out mutually conceived strategies. Faculties from both educational levels must work together to ensure students an orderly and educationally sound transition from high school to college. High school counselors and college admission officers must create new and better ways to inform each other of the characteristics of their respective schools. And above all student interests must be paramount regardless of the financial constraints faced by educators.

Americans expect that the rich traditions of their educational plan, one that has served this republic well, will be preserved. Few, if any, responsible people have called for a complete "educational revolution." We now enjoy a plan that is characterized by diversity, accessibility, and quality. It is a plan, however, in which improvements can and must be made. The educational processes must constantly be evaluated and innovative practices put into action as this nation responds to a constantly changing society.

VI. Conclusion

This paper briefly summarizes the complex process of college admission and it describes some of the forces that have influenced access to college during the past quarter century. A critical examination of the admission process as it has been practiced in recent years should aid us as we create new strategies to guide us in the future. Thus, this paper concludes with some points to consider:

1. Education is a fragile process, and its future must not depend on any single support source or power base. State and community initiatives

and demonstrated commitment are paramount to the maintenance of a sound educational delivery system.

2. College admissions facilitate the enrollment of qualified and motivated high school students in appropriate colleges. College admission should not be used as a mechanism to preserve faculty positions, full capacity residence halls, personal egos, nor winning athletic records.
3. High school and college administrators and teaching staffs must cooperatively address the crucial academic issues of high school-college transition, particularly in the area of curriculum evaluation and revision.
4. Standardized aptitude and achievement testing must be preserved as an admission criterion. Valid, reliable, secure tests should be employed to help students and colleges make proper educational choices.
5. Bright motivated high school students must be given opportunities to enroll in coursework that will first stretch and then satisfy their intellectual curiosity. The credit awarded for the Advanced Placement Program, while valuable, is less important than the experience afforded students to confront a well-conceived and rigorous academic challenge.
6. Generally, dual enrollment and other college-sponsored credit awarding schemes for high school students should be discouraged. Secondary schools, public and private, have a responsibility to provide academically accelerated courses to all students who can benefit from them. Students who participate in accelerated high school coursework should be directed toward those colleges with the highest standards and expectations of their students. All baccalaureates are not and should not be of equal quality.
7. Colleges that require rigid high school course distribution for admission should relax those requirements and move toward placing a greater emphasis on the total preparation of the student, which would include test scores, the quality of the applicant's high school, the degree of challenge of the high school courses completed, and carefully selected and evaluated nonacademic factors.
8. Generally, high schools need to increase their requirements for graduation, not only for college admission but as preparation for

life in an increasingly complex society. All high school graduates should have demonstrable competencies in the five basic academic groups (English, mathematics, a second language, science, and social science).

9. Massive efforts and resources are needed to improve educational oopportunities for minority and low income youth in elementary and secondary schools. Many students from inner cities and rural areas cannot be expected to compete successfully with the more advantaged students, particularly in the highly selective colleges.

10 American education is not terminally ill, but more than band aids and pain pills are needed to correct some flaws. A good dose of sincere attention from citizens and their government representatives, at all levels, will make education more resistant to potential dangers and more responsive to a continually changing society.

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   5) Chairman, Admissions, Evaluation, Placement Committee
   6) Small committee to draft response to Bakke decision

B. College Board
   1) Chairman and member (Advisory Committee on International Education)
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   4) German/American degree equivalency project

C. Other
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