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ABSTRACT

The roles of urban community colleges, state universities, and state government in promoting the attainment of bachelor's degrees among urban community college students were investigated in the following urban settings: Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Miami, Newark, Philadelphia, Phoenix, St. Louis, and Tampa-St. Petersburg. In each city, the community colleges serving the highest proportions of minorities and the public universities to which a majority of their students transferred were assessed. Surveys of students who transferred from community colleges to adjacent public universities were undertaken, along with visits to state agencies. It was found that the urban community colleges enrolled large numbers of minority students who were underrepresented in other segments of the postsecondary system, and many of these students were severely underprepared for college. Strategies selected by the community colleges included providing a supportive environment, emphasizing vocational education, and reducing the rigor of academic work. It is concluded that leadership in improving the transfer process and improved communication between university and community college faculty are needed. The use of common course numbers and standardized course descriptions is recommended, along with exit competency testing at the community college. (SW)

IMPROVING BACCALAUREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR URBAN MINORITIES

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Improving Baccalaureate Opportunity for Urban Minorities

During the past two decades urban community colleges have opened access to student populations whose characteristics differ in significant ways from the traditional college student. The nature of these differences and their implications for the adaptation of institutional practices have been widely discussed (Cross, 1982; Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, 1980; Astin, 1982). Of particular interest from the perspective of social equity, has been the tendency for urban community colleges to enroll disproportionate numbers of minorities (Olivas, 1979; de los Santos, 1980; Cohen and Brawer, 1982).

There is no shortage of studies which use institutional data banks to compile retrospective reports of transfer student performance at public four-year institutions. The findings are remarkably consistent given the widely varying conditions under which they have been conducted and the resultant difficulties in comparing results. The general assessment has been that transfers were well prepared to compete academically at the four-year level. Despite persistent findings that native students and transfers from other four-year institutions do better than community college transfers, it seems clear that community college transfers over the past two decades have achieved very respectable performance records. While recent studies involving the University of California system (Kissler, 1980) have raised concerns about declining performance of transfers, at least three other studies have suggested that the performance of transfers has remained relatively constant or may even be improving (Anderson and Beers, 1980; Richardson and Doucette, 1980; Brass, 1982). Where studies have been sufficiently sophisticated to correct for entry level differences in aptitude or high school performance, the differences in subsequent performance between transfers and native students have tended to disappear (Richardson and Doucette, 1980; Thompson, 1978; Hodgson and Dickinson, 1974).

Despite the generally positive picture suggested by most available data, there are reasons for concern. Most studies of persistence do not provide results that are disaggregated by ethnic status. Information that is available indicates continuing underrepresentation of Blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans in four-year institutions. As well, there are growing concerns about losses in proportional share of degrees among Black males and a leveling off of proportional share of degrees among Hispanics despite proportional increases in the numbers graduating from high school (Wilson and Melandez, 1984).

A part of the problem may result from the tendency of most persistence studies to assume traditional patterns of attendance among an increasingly part-time and non-traditional student body. Arguably, the best effort to take into consideration the differences between urban and residential institutions in terms of student characteristics and attendance patterns reported that 15 percent of all regular graduates needed more than five years to earn a baccalaureate degree. For open admission students the comparable figure was 25 percent. Perhaps most striking was the finding that after eleven years, 43 percent of open admissions students had earned degrees compared with 62 percent for regular students. After the first five years, graduation rates for the two

groups tended to converge. The results for two-year institutions in the system were similar if less dramatic (Lavine et.al, 1984).

To a considerable degree, improvement in access for minorities can be traced to the rise of urban universities, to the growth of urban community colleges and the advent of need based financial assistance. If problems exist involving the performance of transfers and the degree completion rate of minorities, it seems logical to focus research efforts where the problems are likely to be the most acute. Policy solutions generated in urban areas are likely to affect at least modest improvement in their suburban and rural counterparts. Generalized studies of entire systems, especially those that focus on the analysis of available institutional data seem unlikely to teach us anything that we do not already know. Worse, they may serve to conceal the full extent of the issue by the use of aggregate data.

Those studies that have considered the issue of articulation and degree achievement for urban minorities have suggested some of the areas that need examination. We suspect that basic skills deficiencies are critical (Kissler, 1982). Special assistance is required in mathematics, biological sciences and physical sciences (Anderson and Beers, 1980; California State Postsecondary Commission, 1981). Financial aid procedures at the transfer institutions are critical (Menacker, 1975) as are administrative procedures for admission (California State Postsecondary Commission, 1981). Community college practices in such areas as tutorial services, course placement, standards for programs and course scheduling also deserve careful scrutiny (Russell and Perez, 1980; Kissler, 1982). By no means the least important to academic achievement are the priorities adopted by administrators and the strategies used to pursue them (Richardson, Fisk, and Okun, 1983). Overlaying institutional considerations are the arrangements for articulation prevailing at the state level (Kissler, 1981).

Minority students require more time to complete degrees but when such time is provided, initial ethnic differences in graduation rates are substantially reduced, and in some instances, over the longer time span eliminated (Lavine et.al, 1984, p. 12). But is time all that is required? The answer generally seems to be no (Olivas, 1979; Astin, 1982; Wilson and Melandez, 1984). To develop better understanding of the policy issues that relate to the achievement of baccalaureate degrees by urban students who attend public community colleges and universities serving high proportions of minority students, the Ford Foundation provided identical grants to Arizona State University and Florida State University. The purpose of this paper is to provide a description of the project and to report preliminary findings in selected areas.

The Study as Policy Research

To date, much of the research that has been done on student achievement has emphasized the rigorous application of statistical procedures to determine whether programs produce their intended results. While such studies have added to our knowledge base, they have been largely unsuccessful in addressing the issues of interest to this project. Field work oriented toward policy analysis has emerged in the last several years as a promising alternative for getting at the larger issues, which govern policy decisions at institutional, state and federal levels. The issues on which this study focused include:

1. What is/should be the role of state government and its coordinating/regulatory agencies in promoting achievement of the baccalaureate among urban students who begin their postsecondary education in community colleges?

2. What is/should be the role of the urban community college in providing transfer opportunities for their students?

3. What is/should be the role of the public urban university in transforming opportunities in the community college into baccalaureate achievement?

4. How many of the students currently enrolled in urban community colleges possess objectives and previous academic preparation that suggest transfer to a four-year institution is a reasonable and productive course of action?

5. Among those who have the prerequisite objectives and academic preparation, how many actually transfer, and at what stage of their academic careers?

6. How do transfers from urban community colleges perform at a major transfer institution?

7. What strengths and weaknesses do students and the faculty who teach them at a transfer institution attribute to their community college preparation?

8. What types of cooperation among urban community colleges, public urban universities, and state coordinating/regulatory agencies offer the most hope for improving the chances of minority and low income students for earning a baccalaureate degree?

9. What changes or enhancements to the policies, programs and services of urban community colleges, public urban universities, and state coordinating/regulatory agencies offer the greatest hope for improving baccalaureate achievement for minority and low income students?

Wildavsky (1979) describes policy analysis as "...an activity creating problems that can be solved." He continues by noting that policies represent attempts to resolve the tensions between objectives and resources, planning and politics, and skepticism and dogma. But policies produce unintended, as well as intended results, and so arrangements for resolving tensions must be constantly monitored to identify situations where imbalances exist or appear to be developing.

Easton (1965) defines a political system as the interactions through which values are allocated for a society. Political systems function within an environment where they are constantly subject to influences or "inputs" which are expressed as demands or supports. These influences cause disturbances which, in turn, require decisions and actions from authorities in order to reduce the stress that results. The decisions and actions of authorities are termed outputs to distinguish them from outcomes which are the consequences of decisions. Or, as Easton puts it, "...an output is the stone tossed into the

pond and its first splash; the outcomes are the ever-widening and vanishing pattern of concentric ripples."[8]

This study examined eight states, each viewed as a separate system for providing, among other services, postsecondary education for its residents. While each of the eight states has its own unique environment for providing public higher education, all eight states are subject to similar incentives and regulations in the larger national environment of which they are a part. Because our interest focused on opportunities to earn the baccalaureate for students who began their postsecondary education in an urban community college we have further limited the scope of the inquiry to three major actors within each state system. These actors include the state coordinating/regulatory agencies for higher education, the public urban community college and an adjacent public urban university.

During the past two decades, postsecondary education has been under pressure in each of the eight states in this study to improve access, particularly for urban areas where many minority students reside. Each of the eight states has created new urban community colleges and urban universities, or expanded existing ones. Incentives for enrolling more students have been offered in the form of enrollment-based funding formulas. The option of expanding without serving urban students has been severely constrained by the absence of authorization for student housing.

Institutional response to these inputs have largely met, or even exceeded, original objectives in terms of number of students served. But, like Easton's expanding pattern of concentric ripples, there have been additional outcomes, unintended, and largely unanticipated. Community colleges have expanded access by broadening mission and now serve objectives and clientele not anticipated at the time they were established. Urban universities and urban community colleges, established as elements of a system for promoting access, have not always seen the necessity for functioning in complementary ways. While minority students have increased their participation rates through the efforts of urban community colleges and urban universities, they attain the baccalaureate at rates sufficiently different from their majority counterparts to cause demands upon the system for a re-examination of current policies and practices.

Conduct of the Study

The basic methodology involved comparative case studies conducted in nine major urban settings (Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Miami, Newark, Philadelphia, Phoenix, St. Louis, Tampa-St. Petersburg). In each city, the community colleges serving the highest proportions of minority students and the public universities to which a majority of their students transferred were invited to participate in the study. Representatives from participating community colleges and universities met with the principal investigators to develop the research design and to agree upon data collection procedures.

During Fall, 1984, site visits were completed to each of the participating institutions. Each visit involved interviews with administrators, faculty and support staff. Institutional research offices provided available data as well as copies of studies that had been completed. In addition to interview notes, institutional studies and policy documents collected during the site visits; a

survey was designed to collect information from students who had transferred from a community college participating in the study to an adjacent public university.

In Spring, 1985, visits will be made to state agencies having governing or coordinating responsibilities for postsecondary education in the eight participating states. From these data sources, a draft report will be developed comparing the policies and practices as these are perceived to impact on the opportunities for baccalaureate achievement in the eight states. Representatives from participating institutions will review the draft report for accuracy and will meet to develop recommendations for improving opportunities for students to earn baccalaurate degrees in the urban areas they serve.

The results reported in this paper have been drawn from the interview data and institutional documents collected during the Fall, 1984 site visits. They should be regarded as preliminary hypotheses subject to validation or revision through a process of triangulation that will include testing them against data from the surveys, as well as verification by representatives from the institutions and their respective state agencies.

Results

Coding the results of the interviews produced 22 categories. With slight adaptations they served to organize both university and community college data. We have selected three categories to report here: Context, Strategies for Improving Student Achievement, and Strategies for Improving Transfer Opportunities. For each of these categories we report a synthesis of information obtained from interviews and documents for participating community colleges and universities. Finally, we discuss the implications of this data for the policy issues guiding the study.

Context

The study focused on urban community colleges. In order to be designated urban, the college had to enroll a significant proportion of minority students as well as be located in an urban environment. None of the institutions participating enrolled less than 20 percent minorities excluding Asiatics. With the exception of two institutions, minority representation ranged from 38 to 95 percent. Faculty estimates of the numbers of students who might enter with the objective of transferring ranged from 40 to 50 percent. The number who actually transfer is probably somewhere in the 10 to 20 percent category.

The figures are estimates, partly because students do not follow neat patterns of attendance in urban areas. Unless prohibited from taking courses at a community college after matriculating in a university, as was the case in one city, students may move freely among institutions during their lower division work, taking courses more as a function of convenience than because they are offered by a particular institution.

The perception that courses were less rigorous in community colleges appeared to be fairly consistent among faculty, both in community colleges and in universities. Faculty perceptions were supported by grading patterns and the so called "transfer shock" or drop in grade point average occurring when students move from the community college to the university, where competition

for grades is more rigorous and fewer allowances are made for the part-time working student with otner demands on his/her time.

Students in these community colleges came preponderantly from city school systems. Interestingly, each urban area seemed to feel that its public schools were the worst in the nation, at least judged by interview comments and articles in newspapers. While there was general agreement about problems of the public schools, the predominant attitude among community college faculty and administrators was sympathetic or even defensive rather than critical.

Placement on the basis of the assessment of entering competencies in reading, writing, and mathematics remains voluntary in most of these institutions. There is growing pressure, however, to make placement mandatory. One of the states recently passed a law requiring placement in reading. Of those students who are assessed, the percentage requiring remediation upon admission ranges from a low of 50 percent, all the way to 85 percent or more. While it is difficult to make informed comparisons about the level of preparation because of variations in the tests used, as well as standards for assignment to specific classes, it is clear that these community colleges work with students that are largely underprepared by any standards one can apply.

Opinion about the importance of earning an associate degree was fairly evenly divided. The faculty members in some districts viewed the credential as meaningless, while others stressed its importance. The importance attached to the degree appeared to be a function of whether it was emphasized by articulation agreements as a preferred credential. Where the degree was emphasized, the ratio of sophomore to freshman students was on the order of one-to-three or four, significantly below the one-to-five average reported by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges.

Much of what we learned about student characteristics came from sifting through the perceptions of those who worked closely with the students on a day-to-day basis. The districts to which these colleges belong do not have a great deal of information about their students beyond the basic demographics required for reports. With few exceptions, the districts do not know why students are there, except as a function of the courses in which they enroll. Their information about what happens to students while they are at the institution and after they leave is fragmentary. Some universities provide feedback others do not. Even where such information is provided, districts may give little attention to the data. A majority of these colleges are experiencing enrollment declines, some quite severe.

The baccalaureate degree granting institutions participating in the study were all large, research and doctoral degree granting universities with the exception of one comprehensive university serving a predominantly minority student population. For the purposes of this report, we have chosen not to include the data on the comprehensive university since its demographics and practices were significantly different as a function of its mission.

The minority enrollment in participating universities ranged from 10 to 15 percent of the total undergraduate student population. In most universities, the proportion of minorities is declining. Minority students who transfer to these universities are likely to experience problems because they move into an essentially all-white environment. To understand the impact of the transition

requires awareness that for many of these students, the university represents their first experience in an institution where minorities are not in the majority. Almost uniformly, university environments were perceived by minorities as cold or hostile. A minority staff member commented on this perception, "The university treats all students badly but minority students perceive it as racist."

Attrition among minority students is high. Typically, minority students excluding Asiatics, will graduate at rates well below those for their non-minority counterparts. Their proportion in graduating classes was less than half of their proportion in entering classes. Of course, graduation rates for all students tend to be low in urban universities, but this is partly a function of the time periods over which they have typically been measured. For new freshman, graduation rates may be in the low 20s for five years, rising to the high 20s at the end of six years. Those institutions that have had student information systems long enough to be able to study persistence over longer periods, generally report figures similar to those of the City University of New York (Lavine and others, 1984). Urban students, including minorities, continue to graduate over extended time periods with rates moving into the high 30s or 40s when the study period is extended as long as 11 years.

University faculties, without exception, would prefer more traditional and better qualified students. It is a source of concern that demographics are moving in the opposite direction. The institutions in this study had more transfers than native students in their junior classes, and the numbers of entering freshman continue to decline. Of course, not all transfers come from community colleges. Students also move freely among the four-year institutions, at least within a state, reflecting the high mobility of an era of portable student financial aid. Even so, a majority of transfers come from community colleges and the largest single feeder for each of these universities, contributing as many as one-fourth of all transfers, was the adjacent urban community college. The location of a community college with a predominantly minority student body, sometimes within a few blocks of the public university where the percentage of minorities was only about 10 percent and declining, naturally caused stresses within the political systems of many of these states.

The odds against which minority students must struggle are no where better reflected than in the academic probation statistics. In one university, Blacks who constituted 7 percent of the student population represented 19 percent of those on probation; for Hispanics the comparable figures were 5 percent and 12 percent.

Most universities agree that their attention disproportionately has been placed on recruitment rather than retention. At the same time, it is difficult to get agreement about the nature of the retention problem and what, if any, corrective action should be taken. In one university, the chair of a committee on retention indicated that the committee had not met in more than a year because the previous meetings had been so uniformly unproductive.

While reading and communication skills are important to student success in the university, the greatest problem area seemed to be mathematics. Attrition rates for minorities attempting entry level college mathematics courses were as high as 80 percent in some institutions, (in such courses, average attrition of

all students exceeded 55 percent). Even in advanced mathematics courses, attrition rates for students may be in the 35 to 45 percent range. Mathematics courses serve as the gatekeepers for high demand majors in business and engineering. Primarily because of poor math backgrounds, minorities are being systematically excluded from such programs.

Even with the difficulties described above, and in spite of pervasive attitudes among university faculty members that work done in community colleges is generally inferior to the work required in universities, transfer students perform reasonably well. There is a clear relationship between the amount of time spent in the community college and the likelihood of success in the university. In each instance, the more time spent in a community college, the better the chances for success at the university. While university reports are difficult to interpret because community college transfers are frequently included with transfers from four-year colleges and universities, it appears that minorities constitute a higher proportion of students who transfer than they do of native freshmen. Even more important from the perspective of this study, is the evidence that minority students who transfer after completing two years of community college, perform at levels that are not significantly different from their non-minority counterparts. For at least Black students, attendance at a community college may have a positive impact on subsequent success as suggested in at least two other studies (Avakian and others, 1982; Breneman and Nelson, 1981). This finding is contradictory to the conclusions reported by Astin (1982).

Strategies for Improving Student Achievement

There seems to be growing recognition, especially among institutions serving high concentrations of minority students that "something for everyone" is not enough. Or, as one Black president stated, "This college has not clearly defined the opportunities that it offers for students. Nor have we done enough to show them how to take advantage of the opportunities we do offer." Many faculty and administrators alike, were critical of letting people walk in off the street and enroll in classes, often after the semester was underway. As we previously noted, most of the community colleges in this study are losing enrollments. There is concern about students going elsewhere, or not coming at all. Despite this concern, there is considerable and growing sentiment that admission practices, which in some institutions disrupt as many as the first four weeks of classes, must be reformed. There is also growing sentiment for the use of standardized tests for course placement on a mandatory basis. One English department chair put the issue concisely, "When you lose students because they are unwilling to begin classes on schedule, or resistant to participating in assessment procedures, you're not losing much."

In addition to tightening up admissions and assessment procedures, steps are underway to strengthen the rigor of educational programs. Increasingly, remedial courses are housed in departments rather than administrative units devoted to basic skills. A number of colleges have already terminated the practice of awarding credit toward degrees for remedial courses. Where the practice continues, it is under study for possible revision. Special blocked programs have been established by many of the colleges to serve students who read below seventh grade level, or who are in need of English as a Second Language. On the other end of the continuum, one district has established a more rigorous liberal education program with the requirement of a foreign

language as an alternative to the current watered-down general education programs available in many community colleges. The intent is not only to challenge the more able student, but in addition, to send a message to the public schools and prospective students that community colleges are interested in more able students, as well as the underprepared. Concurrently, there is a renewed interest in honors programs with at least two districts awarding scholarships on the basis of merit rather than need.

All of the colleges in the study provide a variety of special services or laboratories designed to supplement classroom instruction. There has been substantial investment in technological aids such as Plato. By and large, the results of the technological supports have been disappointing. While the systems have demonstrated their ability to contribute to student learning, they only work if they are used, and getting minority students to use automated systems has been extremely difficult.

By contrast, tutors and peer tutors have been positively received. Uniformly, institutions report good experiences with tutorial services. Despite this experience, it is still the exception for an institution to make a commitment to meeting the demand for tutorial services as a priority. Learning laboratories in mathematics, reading and writing are widely used. They seem to work best when they are offered in a supplementary role to classroom instruction under the supervision of instructional departments, and staffed by faculty and tutors. Some colleges encourage use of learning laboratories by students having academic difficulty through sending them special letters pointing out the relationship between academic progress and maintaining eligibility for financial aid.

Community colleges have traditionally emphasized guidance and counseling, and most of the institutions in the study have comparatively large counseling staffs. In addition to providing academic advising for undecided students and the traditional one-to-one relationship, counselors typically teach course emphasizing study skills, career development, and human potential. Among institutions with the highest concentrations of minority students, there is considerable emphasis on motivational activities that provide recognition for academic success.

In most of the colleges in the study, standards for progress are still lax, but there is growing awareness of the need to place more responsibility on students. Urban institutions, which typically have 60 percent or more of their students on financial assistance, have been helped by federal requirements mandating that students on financial aid be making satisfactory progress toward a recognizable, educational objective. Unfortunately, as a recent letter from the American Association of Community and Junior College Office of Legislative Affairs has pointed out, the colleges have been more conscientious about adopting regulations than they have been about enforcing them.

While most institutions still lack the ability to do the type of student tracking that is necessary to provide close monitoring of student progress, some of the colleges have initiated such systems, and others are currently working on this capability. In one college, all students with the requisite number of credit hours are contacted by letter and encouraged to apply for graduation. The college using this approach indicates that its graduation rates have almost doubled. Another institution has developed a

computer profile of a transfe. student. By searching its data base all students who fit the profile can be contacted. Such students are treated as potential transfers regardless of their stated intent.

Most colleges in the study are not satisfied with the progress they have made in improving conditions for student achievement. The area remains a high priority, however, and it i clear that many of the experimental programs do increase student chances for success. Still, the attrition rates remain discouragingly high under the best of circumstances. A majority of those who enter fail, at least in terms of successful transfer or graduation. While it is tempting to rationalize these failures by retrospective reconstruction of student motives for attending, disenchantment with this alternative has led many institutions to structure new programs aimed at helping as many as possible be successful.

University practices contrast sharply with those of community colleges. Frequently university faculty members believe that urban schools produce few graduates qualified to attend public universities. This judgement may extend to community colleges serving high concentrations of minorities, as well. In general, universities prefer to have students enter as freshman rather than transfers. This preference is reflected in their recruiting practices, even though it is not supported by their retention statistics.

Typically, universities have special programs permitting waiver of admission requirements for up to ten percent of their entering freshman. It is through these special programs that large numbers of minority students gain access. With the exception of special programs in engineering and business, there do not seem to be well-defined strategies for the recruitment of minorities. The lack of such programs, combined with the competition for qualified minorities provided by private institutions, limits the number of students that attend public urban universities.

A number of practices work to the disadvantage of the university in recruiting and retaining minority students. Transfers, who experience special considerations when attending community colleges, find that universities do not extend deadlines. Those who make late decisions about attending find a poor selection of classes. Students not admitted to the college of their choice may be placed in a "denied engineering" category and assigned to the college of arts and sciences, where they lose all contact with their program of choice. Once in the college of arts and sciences, they may face minimum grade point restrictions on movement to another college with little chance of meeting such requirements because of previous deficiencies.

Those who are admitted without meeting normal admissions standards, often find t[illegible]ves assigned to special programs. These programs exhibit many of the [illegible]acteristics found in community college programs. The difference is th[illegible]ices are likely to be fragmented and not well integrated with other academic [illegible]as. The programs provide counseling, tutorial services, and remedial work. The full-time people who teach in them are typically not on tenure track. Part-time faculty may be recruited from the full-time faculty through use of over-load payments, or from outside the institution. Students who are required to enroll in these programs frequently view them as punishment. Their advisors have difficulty finding enough courses in the rest of the university to keep the students qualified for financial aid. Sometimes

it comes down to a choice of a particular section where an instructor is noted for being generous.

Universities make few concessions to underprepared students. Class size is very large. Withdrawal policies are more stringent than in the community college. There is less likelihood of students being able to gain acceptance of remedial courses towards degrees. Writing and math courses have competency exams that students must pass in order to exit.

Special support services, including learning laboratories and tutoring, are most commonly provided as a part of a special program that is categorically funded and limited to students who meet special criteria, such as those applied in trio programs. The services are concentrated at the intake level rather than designed to assist students achieve at advanced levels. Typically, universities avoid putting their own money into such services, so programs remain small and vulnerable to university politics.

In spite of a generally inhospitable environment for special services aimed at the underprepared, many positive programs have been designed. Because minorities are rare among senior faculty and administrators, several of the programs attempt to provide a mentoring service by use of peers. Most universities perceive residence halls as an important service that would help them achieve greater success with minority students. In support of this belief where urban universities do have residence facilities, they are used disproportionately by minority students.

While universities generally fall far short of the mark set by community colleges in adapting their environment to the needs of minority students, there are some areas where they place greater emphasis. Universities are better at tracking students and identifying those in danger of academic failure. Substantial emphasis is placed on providing students with early warning, and encouraging them to seek assistance from an advisor or member of the faculty. Most universities have initiated attempts to work with public schools. Some of these efforts are focused specifically on improving teacher performance through interventions guided by colleges of education, working with arts and science faculty members. Most of the universities make some attempt to provide high school counselors with follow-up information about the success of their students. Such information may also be provided to community colleges. Finally, a number of universities offer academic bankruptcy policies to permit students who have experienced academic failure to be forgiven a certain number of failing grades. At the same time, increasing attention is being given to requiring students to demonstrate specific competencies before they can be admitted to the junior level. Universities experience the fewest problems with such policies when they are applied to their own students as well as to those who enter from community colleges.

Unlike community colleges, universities typically evaluate the outcomes of their special programs. The results show that these programs are successful in helping students to achieve. Despite such evidence universities are ambivalent about their desirability. While there is a desire to help more minority students succeed, the priority is placed on strengthening research capabilities and graduate programs. Working with underprepared students competes for university resources, but not very effectively.

Strategies for Improving Cooperation

Most community colleges appear to know more about promoting successful transfer than they are practicing. Part of the problem rests with prevailing attitudes toward students. They are described as lacking the foundation skills necessary for success in baccalaureate oriented programs. Mathematics is a particular problem. Considerable emphasis is placed on the environment from which these students come, and the failings of that environment in terms of instilling necessary motivation and the willingness to defer immediate gratification. Students are described as wanting the best of both possible worlds, immediate help in finding employment and transfer credit. However, those providing these assessments also agree that institutions could do a better job than they are currently doing. Part of the answer seems to be expecting more from students. If the prevailing judgement of student deficiencies is accepted, the tendency is to rationalize failure rather than to promote success.

Repeatedly, institutional representatives emphasized the need for more and information as a critical requirement. Even though program guides exist, there is need for better information about the courses that will transfer. Students need to be advised against taking too many hours in the discipline at the lower division level. They need help in interpreting conflicting program guides, and such assistance must come early rather than late in their community college careers. Mentioned as particularly helpful would be some opportunity for an early contact with a program representative from the prospective transfer institution.

The decline in high school graduates has fostered a significant number of attempts to improve program articulation. Unfortunately, few, if any of these efforts are observable among the universities included in this study. Community college representatives did report that private institutions and regional schools were almost too liberal in accepting credits.

One favored strategy is the inverted degree. Students completing a technical major enroll for an additional two years during which they take the general education courses typically completed during the freshman and sophomore years. This arrangement is frequently offered by small private liberal arts institutions. More complex than the inverted degree is the open university degree offered by a number of universities, both public and private. The model seems to be the Empire State Program. The credentials of those applying are carefully evaluated. Students may receive credit for previous work taken in a variety of fields. In addition, credit is given for life experience. Following a comprehensive evaluation of credits applicable from these sources, individuals design and implement individualized degree plans. Both the inverted degree and the open university degree seem better suited to credentialing individuals who have already achieved success in their selected career than in providing new opportunities for the unemployed or underemployed. Both do, however, provide students who have completed technical programs in a community college with an opportunity to earn the baccalaureate.

The program most favored by community colleges is the Capstone degree, or Two-Plus-Two Program. Examples of this form of articulation were in evidence among the community colleges and universities participating in this study, but were extremely rare. Interestingly, some of the examples of Capstone degrees

were in areas such as nursing and engineering, generally regarded as the most difficult to establish. Capstone degrees were less evident in the arts and science areas where they might have been more easily implemented.

A final alternative to program articulation involves the common course numbering system and common course descriptions, pioneered by the State of Florida. Examples of this form of articulation also were rare. Most states were aware of Florida's experience but regarded the resultant degree of standardization as undesirable.

In short, most institutions know more about program articulation than they are using. As one result, students must still choose between emphasizing course requirements of the institution to which they plan to transfer, and graduating from the community college in which they are currently enrolled. One of the contributing factors is the absence of a priority on transfer. There is also concern about the emphasis that is placed on vocational education. While no one suggests that vocational education is unimportant, the amount of attention it is given seems to be directly proportional to the percentage of minority students enrolled at an institution.

The level of communication between universities and community colleges is very dependent upon leadership from the top. In cities where chief executive officers have made improvement of articulation a priority, dramatic developments have taken place. In one state, an articulation council has been established with the authority to convene committees of university and community college faculty to work on articulation problems. In other states, the only communication that occurs is between representatives of the University Admissions Office, and the community college transfer counselor. In areas where improved articulation has been a priority, several practices have emerged as offering special promise. Feedback on student performance is considered critical. Faculty interchange is frequently mentioned as desirable, but for the most part, has not taken place. The difficulty involves providing university faculty members with an incentive to exchange with their community college counterparts. The communication problem cannot be laid exclusively at the door of either the university or the community college. In those cities, where relationships are most distant, there is also a high degree of competition for the same students brought about by a failure of the states to require clear mission delineation.

Some of the problems students experience when they transfer can be attributed to the characteristics of the university environment. As previously noted, there is an absence of role models for minority students. The very process of evaluating transfer equivalencies can provide a student with one year of credit for two years of work. Alternatively, the student may be given two years of credit, but told it will require an additional three years to complete a four year degree. There are also differences in methods of calculating grade point averages. Typically, community colleges count only the last grade earned, if a course is repeated. Universities will count all of the grades and may use the results to determine admissability to a professional program. University faculty have serious reservations about the rigor of work completed at the community college. As one response, advanced courses at the junior level may approach the attrition rates reported in the classes taken by entering freshman. This seems to be particularly true in mathematics. One math department chair stated, " 'A' students in the community college will be

'C' students here. 'C' students won't make it." The most unfortunate aspect of the situation is that many students could complete mathematics requirements at the community college before transferring and would be well-advised to do so. Unfortunately, they frequently do not get such advice, or if they do get it, don't act on it with the result that they may be excluded from a program at the university on the basis of a requirement that they could have completed before transferring.

The influence of specialized accrediting associations are also mentioned frequently as a barrier because they are used by university faculty as a rationale for moving as many of the specialized courses for a major as possible into upper division status. The situation is not helped by the failure of community colleges to define courses required in a major.

All of these conditions add up to difficulties for students in negotiating the transfer process. Many of these difficulties could be avoided. One university administrator commented, "If a sense of collegiality could be created between university and community college faculty, ninety percent of the problems would go away." But that sense of collegiality does not exist at present. Articulation guides, while helpful, do not bridge the gap. The expectations of the university and of the community college are very different. Students appear at the university without being socialized into the expectations they will have to meet. The results are predictable.

Improving Transfer Opportunities

There is some risk associated with developing hypotheses at this point about the conclusions of the study. The risk is offset by the need to interpret data continuously as a part of the process of analysis. The statements which follow represent approximations or tentative hypotheses. As additional data is collected and the analysis of existing data expanded, these initial hypotheses will undergo continuing refinement.

With this qualification, a number of observations can be advanced in terms of the policy issues that guide the study.

1. Urban community colleges presently enroll large numbers of minority students who are underrepresented in other segments of the post-secondary system. Many of these students are severely underprepared for college as a consequence both of their socio-economic environment and their experiences with public school systems that are in a state of crisis. Strategies selected by urban community colleges to respond to this clientele includes providing a supportive environment, emphasizing vocational education, and reducing the rigor of academic work. In attempting to serve as many students as possible, urban community colleges may be short-changing those who have both the aspiration and the ability to transfer. Urban community colleges have a critical role to play in the achievement of the baccalaureate degree by minorities.

2. Probably less than half of the students attending urban community colleges do so with the intent of continuing to the baccalaureate degree. Of those who have the intent, probably no more than half can overcome their deficiencies in basic academic skills. The percentage of those achieving the baccalaureate degree as a function of those who are capable of achieving the degree will be greatly enhanced, however

if community colleges expect more of their students and provide the advising, the assessment, the support services, and the necessary quality of instruction to help them meet expectations.

3. In most states, available data does not answer the question of how many capable of transferring actually do so. We do know that substantial numbers of community college students transfer to public universities despite substantial barriers and the absence of cooperation that could reduce those barriers. We also know that students who complete a community college program are more likely to be successful than those who transfer early. There are many pressures on students to transfer earlier than appears to be in their best interests. While many of the variables that contribute to baccalaureate achievement by urban students in general and minority students in particular are beyond institutional control, there are a significant number of variables that could be altered to improve opportunities given the necessary will and resources.

4. The strengths that community colleges bring to offering baccalaureate opportunities include their commitment to underprepared students, their willingness to work with them, the experience they have had in providing remediation, the priority attached to establishing a supportive environment, and the willingness of all segments of the institution to accommodate academic practices to student characteristics. These attributes of the community college are appreciated by students who transfer to universities. When surveyed, transfer students generally report that community colleges were more concerned about their welfare and provided more in the way of supportive services and assistance than the university to which they transferred. They also tend to report that the standards observed in university classes are more appropriate than those they experienced in the community college. University faculty, with few exceptions, express attitudes that are critical of the rigor of academic work in community college settings. These attitudes are not, however, supported by comparisons of performance, persistence, and degree achievement of community college transfers with those of native students.

5. There are several types of cooperation that would improve opportunities for baccalaureate achievement by urban students. The first of these, and prerequisite to all others, is a commitment from institutional leadership to improve the process of transfer. A second, and almost equally important, is improved communication between university and community college faculty. Given leadership and improved communication, the most promising strategies for enhancing transfer opportunities include program articulation and better information. Capstone programs, common course numbers, and standardized course descriptions could remove much current confusion. Exit competencies measured within community colleges might obviate university practices in terms of validation examinations and credit in escrow. Better information could prevent much wasted time and money.

In conclusion, it may be important to observe that the interface between the community college and research university is the most difficult type of articulation to achieve. We would have reported more positive results had we

examined any other set of institutions. Indeed, the relationships between the comprehensive university included in our study population but not described in this synthesis of findings and the community colleges serving as feeders was considerably more positive and complementary. We have chosen to focus on the research university/community college nexus here because the most sought after opportunities in higher education typically are offered within the research university setting. If the relationships between community colleges and research universities can be improved significantly, the results should have a powerful impact on other types of institutions that are by mission, less selective and more concerned about the teaching function. Equally important, opportunities for urban minorities will be improved in important ways.

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