Are We Social Engineers?

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Editor's note: The following is a compilation of three speeches, given at the 51st National Conference in Boston, Massachusetts. Mary Lee Hoganson's preface serves to bind the three speeches together under the cohesive question, "Are we social engineers?" The speeches are not meant to be read as one article, rather they serve to offer separate views that address the same question.

Introduction by Mary Lee Hoganson

The idea for a national conference session on the topic of the admission professional as social engineer was sparked by an encounter at the Midwest Regional College Board meeting in February of 1994. I was participating in the discussion following a "debate" between my friends Steve Syverson of Lawrence University (WI) and Paul Thiboutot of Carleton College (MN), which argued the relative merits and ethics of need-blind vs. need-aware admission strategies. Another colleague in the audience that day, in an exasperated defense of the consideration of need in admission decisions, expostulated that "after all, we are not social engineers." My response was an immediate and emphatic, "Don't be absurd, of course we are social engineers."
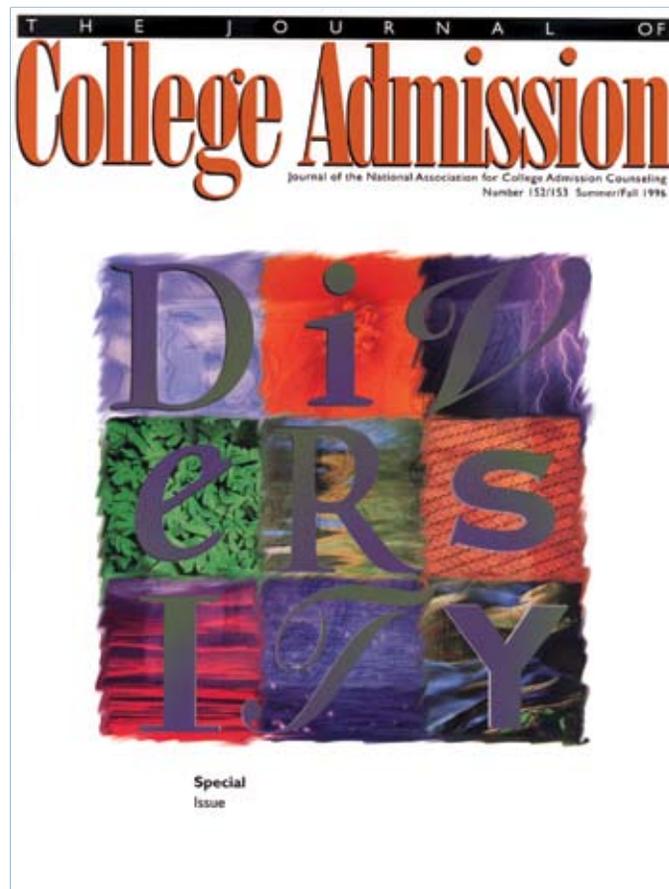
It is my firm belief that both secondary school counselors and college admission officers have, indeed, been some of the primary social engineers of the past five decades. Their leadership when advocating equal access to education for students of all ethnicities, religions, incomes, genders, socioeconomic circumstances and educational fortunes has had a profound and, one might hope, lasting effect upon opportunities in this nation and society. I believe that colleges and universities have served an unparalleled role as social engineers in the United States and that some of the primary draftspersons of

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My awareness of this was sharpened when I visited the Smithsonian Museum of American History last year. I was deeply moved by an exhibit on the Japanese Internment Camps of the Second World War. My eyes were drawn to a shabby artifact that was undoubtedly overlooked by a majority of visitors to the exhibit—a yellowed letter, written by an Ivy League University to a Japanese-American high school student of that shameful time, denying him admission and stating that as the reason, without equivocation or reference to his academic and personal qualifications, that the institution simply and by policy did not admit Asians. We have come a very long way in a very short time and I wonder how equally short the road back could be.

Obviously, I am not the first involved in college admission work to worry about this. As early as 1985 The College Board warned that gains made by African Americans students in the 1960's and 1970's had eroded in the previous 10 years and were endangered by politics that threatened to "reverse the movement towards equality." "One-Third of a Nation," the landmark report of the American Council of Education, warned in 1988 that the future prosperity of the United States is at risk unless there is a renewed commitment to the advancement of underrepresented groups through education.

NACAC has long made the advancement of social agendas a highest priority, including, recently, the work of the Commission on Minority Participation in Higher Education, which culminated in the publication of the impressive collection of papers in *Achieving Diversity: Strategies for the recruitment and Retention of Traditionally Underrepresented Students*. But at this moment, even in the life of NACAC, I sense some ambivalence about our social agenda. Our Assembly delegates have clearly reaffirmed an unwavering support for affirmative action. But at the same time they have altered the association's stance on need-blind admission—defining it now as desirable, rather than required practice.

And so, I set about putting together a distinguished panel of widely-respected and highly "seasoned" admission professionals who came together in Boston in September of 1995 to address the question posed. At the end of the session, it was clear from comments of those who attended that this panel had done an exemplary job of creating the background for further discussion within the profession. Jean Fetter, Ted Spencer and Bill Fitzsimmons challenged us to consider how we came to be social engineers, why we must continue to accept and act upon that responsibility and, finally, how the greater social good is well-served by our efforts and our angst over these issues.

What made this panel so compelling was the investment of deep feeling which these role models within our profession maintain for the importance of their work. They speak from the heart as much as the intellect. For that reason, and although they did not originally think that their words would be put into print, I have left their remarks relatively unedited, In that way, readers can hear the clear voice of each presenter. Theirs is a wealth of experience that brings diverse perspectives. Jean, Ted and Bill share the passion and vision of those who have elected to devote their careers to opening doors to all young people of potential in our nation.

By Jean H. Fetter

A Stanford colleague recently called my attention to a new book by Thomas Sowell with the memorable title, *The Vision of the Anointed: Self-Congratulation as a Basis for Social Policy*. The introductory text is disarming: "This book is a devastating critique of the mindset behind the failed social policies of the past 30 years. The author sees what has happened not as a series of isolated mistakes but as a logical consequence of a vision whose defects lead to disasters in education, crime, family disintegration and social pathology. It is an empirical study in which 'politically correct' theory is repeatedly confronted by facts-and the sharp contradiction between the two explained in terms of a whole set of self-congratulatory elites." Immodestly assuming that we are among the latter, I nervously turned to the index of Dr. Sowell's book to look for "social engineering" or a close relative. In spite of a whole chapter devoted to the "Vocabulary of the Anointed," there is nothing to be found; we ("the anointed") were not targets for the wrath ("self-congratulation") of Dr. Sowell, although "social engineering" ("the vision") might well be.

Thomas Sowell does offer what he calls some engineering analogies (p. 111) in discussing what he calls the "redesign" of the external world and the associated idea of creating the kind of people needed for a new society, an idea he dates to the late 18th Century. He concludes, "Two centuries later, the task appears less simple and such expressions as 'brain-washing' and 'reeducation' camps have chilling overtones in the light of history, though that has not stopped indoctrination efforts in Ameri-

can schools and colleges, led by those who still have the vision of the anointed today."

This disconcerting rhetoric should, but won't, deter me from the task at hand, and I'll begin with the obvious: what do we mean by social engineering? The unabridged *Random House Dictionary* (1979) helpfully offers as its third definition of "engineering:" "Skillful or artful contrivance; maneuvering." In turn, "maneuver" is "an adroit move, especially as characterized by craftiness." As for the adjective "social," *Random House's* sixth option appears most apt to our discussion today: "pertaining to the life, welfare and relations of human beings in a community." So I will translate the question before us at NACAC to "Do we craftily maneuver the admission of undergraduates in our colleges?"

Having decided what we are talking about, *do* we socially engineer? Simply, I could leave it as "Yes. Next question," but Dr. Sowell continues to be useful in goading me on with his barb that the buzzwords of the anointed "preempt issues rather than debate them." It seems clear to me the U.S. colleges have always engaged in social engineering, and continue to do so albeit in different forms over the years. Some efforts at social engineering have been plain wrong and misguided; other attempts have been well-intentioned, but lacking in foresight. Social engineers need constantly to review their purposes and reassess their goals. A condensed history of college admission provides some ready examples of social engineering, and (to defend any charges of mischievous discrimination) I'll start with reference to this year's top three institutions according to a very recent *U.S. News and World Report* (my historical facts come from a fascinating book, published by Harpers in 1895, titled *Four American Universities*).

Harvard College's beginning dates to 1636; Yale (CT) appeared about 60 years later and Princeton's (NJ) founding followed in 1746. By 1894, Harvard University (MA) was home to 1656 undergraduates "from 40 states and territories of the Union, and a few from foreign countries. They represent every grade of society, every variety of creed; every shade of political opinion; and they meet and mingle on terms of even more complete equality than those which commonly exist in society… The rich student undoubtedly has some advantages over the poor, but they are for the most part either strictly personal… or they enable him to belong to the more expensive and exclusive, but otherwise in general less desirable clubs."

In 1894, in contrast to Harvard, Yale had a national character, drawing its students from all parts of the country to a far greater degree than Harvard. "Another characteristic of Yale which has brought her closer to national life than Harvard has

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been her relative poverty. Professors and students have both had to work for a living. There has been, unfortunately, no opportunity to cultivate, as Harvard has done, the literary tastes and graces.

At this same period at the end of the 19th Century, Princeton enrolled a total of 1,300 students from 42 states and 11 foreign lands; "80 of these students were given scholarships to cover full tuition." "the poor are not debarred by the costly machinery of life from meeting the richer…" "A circle with a radius of six or seven miles drawn around the village would include 450 more boys and young men preparing for college, including, as it would, the Lawrenceville School, the Pennington Academy, and the Princeton School… The onset of such a battalion of academic forces, men and officers is comparable to that great educational center…" proudly wrote the Princeton author.

I'll leave you to determine your own examples of engineering from these few brief historical excerpts, but I will focus on the most notable. While these institutions (like ships and historical hurricanes) are ironically referred to by female pronouns; they and many other colleges were founded exclusively for the education of young men, in some cases the limitation was to *unmarried* men. In 1972, Dartmouth (NH) became the last Ivy League school to become coeducational and the majority of Dartmouth students in the class of 1999 are women. There were, of course, in another form of social engineering, colleges founded around the 1870s exclusively for the education of young women: Wellesley (MA), Smith (MA), Vassar (NY) and Bryn Mawr (PA) to name a distinguished few in the east, but women were barred from the older, more established institutions until about 25 years ago (to provide some national consolation, my alma mater Oxford University (UK) took about 600 years to grant women the same privileges as men!).

The preceding examples provide evidence of social engineering beyond the most obvious, that of gender; there is note of geographic representation, both national and international; socioeconomic class and a hint of political and religious attentions. Ten years ago, Yale graduate Dan Oren wrote a revealing 440-page book, titled, *Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale*. Here you can read the full account of the limitations on the

enrollment of Jews in an institution long proud of its Protestant tradition. The 40-page chapter on undergraduate admissions is particularly relevant. It cites the response from President Charles Seymour (p.175), when challenged about discrimination against Jews in the 1940s, as denying that Yale excluded any racial or religious group. However, he insisted that it was "a definite policy to maintain a balanced undergraduate population..." if necessary, the policy might "involve some temporary restriction on the numbers selected from one or another of the nation's population groups in order to prevent distortion of the balanced character of the student body." This seems to me to fit perfectly with the definition of social engineering as suggested earlier. I doubt that Yale stood alone in limiting the number of Jewish students. (One of the more unusual of the many charges leveled against me as dean of undergraduate admission at Stanford (CA) was that Stanford discriminated against Muslims.)

We also practice social engineering, perhaps in the least controversial way, in the selection of students by discipline. Colleges specialize in subjects ranging from engineering and technology, to art and music. I think all admission officers take into account special talents outside the classroom, infusing our campuses with artists and athletes, actors and musicians. We have followed the drama at the Military College of South Carolina, The Citadel (SC), a state institution were a young woman filed suit to gain admission this all-male college with some unfortunate consequences. A very different kind of controversy has been the consideration of a student's ability to pay college costs and its consequences both for the individuals and institutions. Stanford has a need-blind admission policy for all but international students, for whom we have limited financial aid—a matter that has generated criticism from affected students, and introduced another kind of social engineering consequence for our undergraduates.

Most college selection processes pay attention to the personal qualities of its applicants, raising yet *another* array of social engineering dilemmas: what price, for example, in admitting an eccentric and/or egocentric genius (i.e., the social maladjust)? In principle, admission officers could craftily maneuver a class of nice and beautiful people (at least in states where it is not illegal to request a photograph). Needless to say, this exercise would not rank high with our faculties.

But to return to, and conclude with, more serious substance. It took until the late 1960s for colleges and universities to pay attention to the question of race and ethnicity in undergraduate admission. In writing my book *Questions and Admissions*, though I won't attempt to summarize here, the most difficult and longest chapter was that on affirmative action. In 1995, in contrast to 25 years ago, every college in the country can describe its affirmative action efforts and every dean of admission can provide some evidence of painful backlash. I did not

anticipate, when I was writing my book, the coincidence of its publication with the furor that would erupt about affirmative action, particularly in California. In their very questionable wisdom, the Regents of the University of California last summer voted to eliminate "race, religion, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin as criteria for admission..." Instead, criteria are to be developed to give consideration "to individuals who, despite having suffered disadvantage economically or in terms of their social environment (such as an abusive or otherwise dysfunctional home or a neighborhood of unwholesome or antisocial influences)..." Even if we would concede that this action were not misguided, putting such criteria into practice is going to be a tough order, to say the least, but I won't deny it qualifies as social engineering.

Underlying the answers to the panel's original question are two others of importance. (1) Why do we socially engineer? The short answer is that colleges and universities have acknowledged their social responsibilities—but Harvard President Emeritus Derek Bok has written a whole book on that subject. (2) Is social engineering a good thing? I have already alluded to a mixed report card and, perhaps for once, it's a good time to listen to Dr. Thomas Sowell: "Utter certainty has long been the hallmark of the anointed."

By Ted Spencer

As I wrestled with how to address the question, "Are we social engineers?" my initial response was a qualified yes. But, as I began to think more about the question, I realized that there are truly good reasons why I feel admission officers are indeed, in many cases, the standard bearers of social change at our institutions.

Unfortunately, the reasons why we are social change agents has to do more with the failures of many of our country's social, political and economic programs than with the goals of providing educational access opportunities to all Americans regardless of income, race or gender.

I am concerned that the hope and idealism that surrounded federal programs in the 1960s, such as the Great Society, legislation to increase student aid as well as programs on civil rights and affirmative action, have all undergone change. This has been largely due to federal and state budget cuts, a shift in public thinking and a general change in the face of America.

So, what does all this mean in terms of being social engineers? To help find the answer, one need only look at some of the major trends in higher education in America. For example, of the almost 226 million people in America, only about 10 percent are between 18–24 years old. And although the future population projections do show an increase to 25 percent by the year 2,000, it will never return to the almost 35 percent of the population under 18, as it was in the 1970s.

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But there are also other major demographic shifts that will affect how we do business. By 2010 California, Florida, New York, and Texas will contain one-third of the nation's youth, and minorities will comprise 50 percent or more of the youth populations of these states. While at the same time, the population of Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, Missouri and Pennsylvania will decrease, and New York and Illinois will have virtually no population growth between 1990 and 2010. Consequently, the marketing, social and political skills of admission officers and other university officials will truly be put to the test in those states. This trend will also have a ripple effect throughout the nation. As admission and financial aid officers are struggling today to continue to support preferences in admission and in awarding financial aid; as social engineers they must also find ways to encourage college administrators, the public and politicians to re-examine their decisions to restrict access in light of these projected demographic shifts. The affirmative action issue will continue to need our leadership. We must be willing to address the critics of affirmative action by simply stating the obvious. That affirmative action programs in education are designed to move people of color, women and others who are disadvantaged into productive leadership roles in our capitalist society. But even with the affirmative action efforts of the past, when the present percentage of African Americans in certain professions is taken into account, the improvement in recent years has not significantly challenged the majority. Again, the data indicate that of medical school faculties, only about 20 percent is black. Generally, on universities' faculties, just four percent are African American. For lawyers and judges, the figure is 2.3 percent. For physicians 3.3 percent; financial managers, 4.3 percent and authors, 0.4 percent, an average of about one out of 250. As social engineers, admission officers must be armed with these data to combat those who would argue that professional standards have been lowered, and that minorities are replacing non-minorities in the work place. This is just not true.

Admission professionals must be prepared to answer the age-old question of fairness—"Do you really want to be treated by a doctor who got into medical school because of gender or the color of their skin?" with the response, "the patient doesn't particularly care how the doctor got into school; what matters is how the doctor got out." Indeed, as social engineers, admission officers must be ready and willing to concede that affirmative action programs have beneficiaries, and having said that, must be ready with a list of what these students have made of the opportunity that preference provided.

There are other issues that require leadership in advocating for equal access to education for all students. As America changes, so must its universities. The 1990s, though less radical than the 1960s, bring their own brand of social issues to our campuses. In addition to affirmative action issues, there are other related issues concerning the changing patterns in immigration, the family and the children of the 1990s.

For example, the following immigration data help illustrate some of these changes:

- One in 25 U.S. Citizens was born in another country
- In 1940, 70 percent of immigrants came from Europe. In 1992, that number was 15 percent
- In 1976 there were 67 Spanish-language radio stations in the U.S. In 1994, there were some 320 Spanish-language radio stations, three Spanish-language television networks and 380 Spanish-language newspapers.

There have also been drastic shifts in the American family. For example, in 1950, 60 percent of American households had a father working and a mother at home with two children. In 1993, the number had dropped to five percent.

Part of the reason for that change is that during that same period (in 1950), about seven percent of American families were single-parent families; in 1993, that number was almost 30 percent. This prompts the question, directed toward politicians, "What truly are the family values of the 1990s and is it reasonable to assume that society can, or even should, return to the family values of the 1950s?"

That brings me to my next area of concern: the children of the 1990s. Children today are much different than those of the nation's past, not so much because some may belong to the "X" generation, but because too many live in almost unheard of living conditions. For example:

- On any given night, some 100,000 children have no home
- Forty percent of shelter users are families with children
- A child under six is six times more likely to be poor than a person over the age of 65

- Almost half the poor in the U.S. are children
- Twenty-two percent of boys and four percent of girls say they have carried a weapon to school
- Twenty-three percent of high school students say they have been the victims of violence in or very near their schools.

When today's problems in high schools are compared with those of yesterday, it is very easy to become concerned about how much campuses will have to adjust to meet the needs of students.

I can remember when I was in school the discipline issues were: (1) talking; (2) chewing gum; (3) making noise; (4) running in the halls; (5) getting out of line; (6) wearing improper clothing; (7) not putting paper in the trash can.

But the children of the 1990s face such issues such as: (1) drug abuse; (2) alcoholism; (3) pregnancy; (4) suicide; (5) rape; (6) robbery/assault; (7) HIV/AIDS; (8) Incest. In many ways the nation and its children are desperately at risk.

I agree with those who say that one of the roles of admission officers is that of balancing the ethical, moral and social issues of the day with the stated and unstated goals of our universities. Cuts in federal aid and state appropriations have changed the way many of our colleges and universities must deal with need-blind vs. need-conscious admission. In my opinion, one of the sure answers to this problem is a re-prioritizing of governments—both state and federal—to reinvest in the children of the 1990s. Too often even students who are able to go to college are more dependent on financial aid; graduate with more debt; are more likely to work part-time or full-time off campus; are less likely to be residential and to be involved in campus life; and far too many are much less likely to persist to graduation.

All these issues will affect admission officers' ability to convince parents and the children of the 1990s that a college education is worth the sacrifice and investment.

Certainly many in the profession have become social engineers because it's in the admission officer's and the institution's best interest to do so. But I hope for most of us, we still feel the satisfaction of working for, with and around young people who need our help, advice and, sometimes, mentorship to succeed. Yes, I do consider myself a social engineer for all those reasons and more. And I think that part of our challenge is to continue or begin to convince alumni and others in our communities who represent many walks of life—politicians, lawyers, educators, doctors, philanthropists, and others—to work with us to help to persuade whoever we must, to provide their leadership and influence to help establish a future social system that includes people from all backgrounds. Educators are social engineers by the very nature of the work we do. What we do matters, and although some of the trends mentioned indicate that there are tough times ahead for education, I am confident that as professional educators and social change agents, we are both willing and capable of meeting these challenges.

By Bill Fitzsimmons

Now that everything possible has been said on the subject, I thought I would try to broaden things a bit. I hope any educator, at any level, thinks of him or herself as a social engineer in this respect: that our primary task is to help individuals develop their talents to the fullest—not just academic talents, but personal qualities, musical abilities—the full range of talents that Howard Gardner of Harvard's Graduate School of Education and others describe. This is what educators try to do in the secondary school world and it is exactly what we try to do in college.

> Diversity in each group of students we admit is a critical means to various ends. For one thing, students learn more from each other. For another, an important goal of ours is to produce leaders for a complex society.

For us, diversity—of background, experience, points of view—is a key element in educational excellence. Diversity in each group of students we admit is a critical means to various ends. For one thing, students learn more from each other. For another, an important goal of ours is to produce leaders for a complex society. We try to develop diverse talents to the "nth" degree, so that our graduates will be equipped to make major contributions to the full range of society's needs.

It is certainly true, as Jean Fetter points out, that our institutions have a rather checkered history when it comes to reaching out to people of talent from all backgrounds. When you take a look at the history, it is very clear that anti-Semitism, anti-Catholic sentiments—all kinds of ugly practices—were very much alive in the institutions we represent well into this century. This is undeniable and it is documented.

By the time of Harvard's 300th birthday party in 1936, Harvard had begun taking a good, hard look at itself to see what it had really accomplished over those 300 years. It was clear that Harvard had put together a fine set of facilities and an excellent

faculty, but it hadn't done much to attract a truly excellent group of students. That could be measured in many different ways. You can look at the numbers and see that there were plenty of years in the 1920s and into the early 1930s (and even beyond in some cases) when admission rates to Harvard were in the 70 to 80 percent range. In fact, it was unusual not to be admitted. And that wasn't really all that long ago. Harvard realized that "Gee, people aren't beating down our doors."

The major reason for this seeming lack of interest had to do with a lack of financial aid. From Harvard's 300th birthday party came the idea of going out and actually raising scholarship money. It was the first attempt at what was called the "National Scholars Program." This was a new idea. People, at Harvard at least, hadn't really thought very much about recruiting excellence or diversity.

Bishop William Lawrence, who was Harvard Class of '71—that is, 1871—commented on this new initiative in *Harvard Magazine* in July, 1936. "We must know that there are boys, here and there throughout the country of highest promise who, if they are discovered, transported, and housed at Harvard will go back throughout the country so enriched in intelligence, character and the elements of leadership, that they will more effectively serve the country. What prevents Harvard from making this richest gift to the nation? It is the lack of that sordid thing called money––where with to pay their fares from the farm, village or city and to pay for their food and bed while in Cambridge." So that was the beginning, not only of the major scholarship undertaking but also what Harvard calls the "Schools and Scholarship Committees" which have now developed into a network of 5,000 men and women around the country and the world who help us recruit at the local level and also help us raise the scholarship money that we need in order to continue this program. Things worked out well. The faculty got quite excited about the people who came as national scholars. I could offer you a long list of names —some of which you'd recognize—who came to Harvard as National Scholars as a result of that initiative. Another thing that captured Harvard's imagination was the flood of veterans at the end of World War II. These were people who came from backgrounds that were certainly not Harvard-like, or at least part of the Harvard mythology and stereotype. And they were exciting. They were bright. They were able. They were challenging. At that point, the faculty really became convinced. With much greater diversity in the student body, Harvard's excellence had been enhanced in immeasurable ways.

John Monroe, who became director of financial aid, then decided that these efforts were going well and that they really needed to be implemented more broadly in a national context. He wrote in his Annual Report in 1953, "For the past 25 years, most of us have moved from a laissez-faire program of college admissions where we took what came to a program of planned recruiting. We used scholarships actively in our new plans. We want students of particular abilities and backgrounds. And, we award scholarships to get them." People talk about today's enrollment management and all those marvelous planning initiatives. But that's exactly what John Monroe had in mind.

> If an institution is not attracting the very best students, male and female, from the widest variety of economic and ethnic back-grounds, it will be increasingly irrelevant to what goes on in the world.

John Monroe was one of the founders of the national effort that led to the establishment of the College Scholarship Service and to a more rational way of trying to offer financial aid, based on the ability to pay. With this came a realization that a diverse student body wasn't going to happen automatically, that people really did have to get off their duffs and get out and recruit. The bottom line today is that a talented student from North Dakota who 50 or 75 years ago might not have even thought about going to college, is now going to hear from about 500 colleges and universities from around the country. Today, that student is much more likely to go to college, even a regional or national institution. I believe that our nation is better for this: that there is a much greater possibility of having great students get together with great faculty in great facilities. Ultimately this means that our promising students will have a much greater chance of reaching their potential and contributing their talents to the betterment of society.

We have come along way, but we've got an awfully long way to go. Those who think that we can now sit back, relax and revert to some sort of laissez-faire admission and financial aid program are kidding themselves.

Right now if present trends continue, our country is in danger of ending up with more college-age African American males in prison than in universities. It is hard to imagine a greater tragedy or a greater waste of human potential.

At our institutions, we try hard to achieve the best educational mix. We can measure this in a variety of ways, but what is critical is the education and stimulation that students provide one another in classrooms, dormitories, dining halls, and extra-curricular activities. We're also trying to recruit the best faculty.

> A vital component of the kind of education American colleges provide is made possible by the diverse student bodies that we attract.

And the connection between having an outstanding, diverse and fascinating student body and recruiting the best faculty members is clear. When we ask faculty members why they chose to accept an offer of tenure, near the top of the reasons given is the chance to work with challenging and stimulating undergraduates.

No less important are the efforts colleges have made over the years to educate future leaders for our country. In the year 2030, non-Hispanic whites will be the minority in this country. If an institution is not attracting the very best students, male and female, from the widest variety of economic and ethnic backgrounds, it will be increasingly irrelevant to what goes on in the world. The institution will not be doing what it should be doing: educating the future leaders of society, or as we say in our admission literature: "Future leaders for every endeavor—from academia to the arts, from private industry to public service."

In addition, we need to draw on the talents of all members of our society if we are going to be competitive internationally. Recently I had the occasion to do some international recruiting in Singapore, along with some other admission colleagues. By coincidence, a week before our arrival, the founder and senior minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew (who is certainly not averse to criticizing the United States) made a speech to the young people of Singapore. He argued very forcefully that they ought to attend college in the United States—that the best universities in the world are here. He urged the young people of Singapore to get the best education they can get, and to get the kind of broad liberal arts education that is a primary characteristic of American higher education. The world's rapidly-changing economy—the emerging Europe, and the emerging Pacific Rim, including all the remarkable developments in China—engenders a whole new kind of competition that the United States is going to have to face over the next generation.

A vital component of the kind of education American colleges provide is made possible by the diverse student bodies that we attract. A piece in the March 11, 1995, issue of *The Economist* offers a strong set of reasons for doing in the private sector what we do in creating diverse student bodies:

"So far as many businesses are concerned, multiculturalism is not just a moral matter. White males already make up a minority of the workforce and 85 percent of the new recruits between now and 2,000 will be women or non-white men.

Firms with a good track record of producing non-white managers and managing people from different backgrounds will enjoy a growing advantage in recruiting and motivating workers. They may also be more attuned to an increasingly diverse population of customers. Equally, firms which continue to favor white men will find themselves in a shrinking pool of potential employees. Most intriguingly, ethnic diversity may help American firms outperform their rivals abroad. In particular, it is becoming an article of faith in American business schools that heterogeneous firms will be better placed to form global alliances and strike international deals than the Japanese, who tend to reserve real power for themselves or the Europeans with a history of colonial entanglements."

In other words, it is simply in everyone's best interest to continue the policies that college admission recruiters have been following for very long time.

Finally, I don't know of any universities that would like to step back, at all, in terms of their recruitment of outstanding students from diverse backgrounds. Harvard is in the midst of a $2 billion capital campaign. The largest single component of that campaign is $200 million for undergraduate financial aid. Harvard already awards approximately $40 million worth of scholarships each year and over $70 million in total financial aid to undergraduates. The price tag is high, but it's worth it. There's no question that if colleges are able to continue to offer adequate financial aid to young people—in a world in which the government is stepping back from scholarship aid—in the long run, we will all be better off. We may all have to scramble and we all have a lot of hard work in front of us. But I think we should not waiver in our commitment to seek to enroll promising students from every background. It would be a tragedy for all of us in the long run if this commitment is not given the highest possible priority in our national and international agenda.

Conclusion:

Perhaps at the heart of the question, "Are we social engineers?" lies another, more basic question: to whom are we, on both sides of the admission desk, ultimately accountable? The institution —which is likely inconsequentially small—or the greater social good, which is undoubtedly and overwhelmingly immense?

I believe that our professional dialogues have grown too full of discussions of marketing strategies, financial aid leveraging and way to maximize yield. They are too devoid of an uplifting sense that what we do matters because we serve those who will be our future. It seems to me that as we struggle with today's many critical challenges in our work, it is refreshing and important to take the words of Jean, Ted and Bill to heart. They encourage us to pause and look introspectively at the work we do as very important and to take pride in seeing our work as that of those who are capable of opening the doors of opportunity for every sector of this nation.