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Positive Action Encouraged in Race Relations

To the Editor:

Each student entering the University of Rochester arrives with the expectation that the opportunities for ones personal growth and intellectual development are practically limitless. All of us know, however, that this is not a conscious expectation held by most freshmen, but we take pride in helping to bring that hidden expectation to a known awareness. We also take pride in helping students to discover that the University of Rochester can indeed provide limitless learning opportunities for each student. A new study and a number of recent events, however, have raised some serious questions about the University's capacity to provide equity of opportunity for all of its students.

The University of Rochester's recently published Race Relation Study (RRS) clearly indicated several areas of challenges for students, staff and faculty. The RRS findings suggest that some students isolate themselves from each other along racial lines and that this kind of separation breeds feelings of distrust and uneasiness. The study states further that over 75 percent of student of all races have encountered, experienced or witnessed incidents of racial prejudice in the form of jokes, graffiti on campus or abusive comments. One other finding states that over 80 percent of the student body feels that the University of Rochester does not adequately acknowledge the contributions of minorities to American culture. Successful

solution of these challenges would certainly increase the learning opportunities for all students and help to develop a community that promotes and celebrates its diversity.

Even before the release of the Race Relation Study, students were sending similar signals of concern about equity of opportunity through the pages of the *Campus Times* and through a series of meetings with senior administrators. In addition to the above issues the BSU expressed concern about the lack of a Black Studies Program, the small number of tenured Black faculty, and the excessive I.D. check of Black male students by security.

Consideration of the issues and challenges stated above might suggest to some that the University has been ignorant and insensitive to their existence and is unprepared to develop strategies for solution alternatives. That is not the case at all. The Provost's Council on Minority Education was initiated over four years ago with a mission to work on the kind of problems stated above as well as other issues. Some important changes have occurred through the efforts of the Provost's Council, i.e., a new ECO Summer Program, a new Minority Peer Counselor Program, a new Role Model's Program and a new Minority Recruitment Brochure. In addition to the Provost Council's efforts two other initiatives have been under way and will continue next year. The first is the continuation of race relation training for the Security

Division and the second is the reestablishment of race relation training for RA's. I don't mean to suggest by the examples I have given that there isn't much more to be done. What I am concerned about is the despair that I detect in students' dialogue and rhetoric which seems to suggest that they feel nothing is going to be done. Well a lot has been done and I don't see this as a time to be despondent but as a time to take action. I believe the University has the capacity and the will to solve the challenges discussed in this letter. I believe also that the Provost's Council on Minority Education will provide the leadership. I am encouraged and enthusiastic about the several new thrusts currently afoot (Dean Hunter's Committee on Black Studies, and Rush Rhees Library Frederick Douglass Endowment Fund) and I intend to lend my full support to their successful completion. I invite the students, especially the student government and the *Campus Times* to take full active membership in supporting and creating efforts which are designed to enhance the quality of campus life for us all.

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