

A statement from the Provost:

Blacks and the University

Racial relations at the University continue to be a cause of major concern to students, faculty, and administration. The University has, I believe, too few full-time black faculty, too few black students, and too few black staff and administration at the highest level. Many members of the black community find the general atmosphere either insensitive or inhospitable. We need changes in all these, and in some curricular areas, not only to meet the concerns of blacks but to improve the milieu for all of us. Fortunately there has been some modest progress, which I will review in this article.

Our actions this year are influenced strongly by the report, published in March 1983 under the sponsorship of Vice President Gifford, *Race Relations at the University of Rochester*. It described the principal areas of concern, and made several recommendations for action, many of which we are already working to implement.

This article is not written as a final statement; rather it is designed to provide some background facts and describe some of the efforts under way. These and future efforts must be vigorously pursued if we are to make significant changes for the better, which I hope to be able to report on in the future.

Student numbers

The percentage of the undergraduate student body that is black is too low in *all* but the primarily-black universities. It is a particular problem in the upstate New York area. According to the December 15, 1982, issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, which published data compiled by the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, 3.3% of the undergraduate students in our College of Arts and Science in the 1982-83 academic

year were black. Our percentage was average for institutions in this area. The number at St. John Fisher was 1.2%, at Hobart and William Smith was 3.1%, at Nazareth was 3.3% and at RIT was 3.7%. Schools of quality within the State with which the University competes for students also evidently had difficulties recruiting blacks. Hamilton's black enrollment was 2%, Union's 2.2%, RPI's 3.3%, Colgate's 4.5%, and Cornell's 5%. Rochester's record, while sadly low, is not atypical for private institutions in the region.

Nationally, there was greater variation. The Ivy League universities, which are particularly attractive to undergraduates, had a substantially higher black enrollment: at Harvard 5.2%, at Yale 6%, at Dartmouth 7.7%, at Columbia 6.2%, at Pennsylvania 5.4%. Other small universities like Rochester had fewer blacks. At Chicago there were 4.1% of blacks, at Johns Hopkins 4.3%, at Vanderbilt 2.9%, at California Institute of Technology 1.9%, at Carnegie-Mellon 4.8%, and Tulane 4.2%.

Now let us review recent changes. In recent years the numbers of black undergraduate freshmen at Rochester has been roughly stable. The numbers of River Campus freshmen reported by the Registrar for the four years 1980 through 1983 has been 30, 39, 40 and 30*. There has been some decline in the number of applicants in these years (191, 207, 186, 168), and the percentage of those offered admission has increased a little (60%, 57%, 69%, 65%). The change in the

number of black applicants has very roughly paralleled the change in the number of total applicants in those same years (5130, 5694, 5321, 4631). National black enrollments for 1983 have not yet been published; our informal enquiries have indicated a general trend downward. A recent report from the American Council on Education's Office of Minority Concerns says that "Minority participation in higher education, while dramatically improving in the past two decades, has declined in the 1980's."

What are we doing to recruit more blacks? The whole matter of recruitment of undergraduates is being tackled by a new Campaign for Admissions, designed to bring to recruitment the planning and Trustee and alumni actions usually reserved for fundraising campaigns.

Our commitment to black concerns is expressed in part through this campaign; an alumni Committee on Minority Enrollment is chaired by a distinguished black alumna, Patricia Thompson '58, a lawyer who is manager of Workmen's Compensation at Kodak. A major success has been to develop an activity (first locally, now nationally) with the Urban League to offer 20 special scholarships and (in the process) spark the interest of many more potential black applicants. Under the policy guidance of this committee we are recruiting at additional and more carefully selected predominantly-black high schools, and engaging our black alumni around the country in the campaign.

The Office of Special Student Services

We have recently increased the involvement of our talented black staff members in the search for black students and the support
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*Registered students who identified themselves as blacks and were confirmed on November 4th as having active files in Academic Advising.

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of them in certain areas. This change has been seen by some as a "dissolution" and "dismemberment" of the Office of Special Student Services. It is not intended to be any such thing. Dean Kountz, the driving force behind this reworking, describes the way in which he sought to respond to the *Race Relations* study:

"One specific response the University has made, as of September 1983, is to move professional staff of the Office of Special Student Services—the University's student service resource center for International, Handicapped and Minority students—into the University's centralized undergraduate offices of (1) Admissions and Financial Aid, (2) Academic Advising, and (3) Career Services and Placement. This Shared Resource Project, a six-month experiment, involves four professional staff members of the Department of Special Student Services, each of whom has specific skills in the planning and delivery of services to specialized student constituencies. A portion of each person's work week is spent in the centralized service office. The other portion is spent in the Department of Special Student Services.

"The experiment is intended to generate a team approach to the problems of the recruitment and retention of specialized student constituencies, particularly minority students. The Shared Resource Project is intended to bring a team of professionals together, from different student service offices, (1) to address the issue as forcefully as possible on the short-term basis by increasing the level of centralized student services and (2) to design a plan for the long-term solution which solution could include the creation of additional staff positions for specialized student constituencies and the reorganization of some of the student service offices.

"The Shared Resource Project will be evaluated in January 1984, by the Dean of the College of Arts and Science, the Dean of Students, the Directors of all the offices involved and students. If the evaluation is favorable and, in fact, the delivery of services has improved, the project will be continued for another six months."

Faculty numbers

In the last formal statement of University policy (Summer of 1982) Vice Provost Backscheider and I lamented the small number of black faculty—two in the whole University, as it had been for the last several years. Now the number (of full-time tenure-track professorial faculty) is eight; it is therefore improving but still extremely low. We shall continue to press for the search for added black faculty annually and expect to add some each year for the indefinite future. Every individual will have a solid base in a regular academic department and be selected and welcomed by his or her colleagues.

Curriculum

Of course our curriculum must include the history and the contributions of black Americans, to inform not only black students, but the whole student body. Paul Hunter, Dean of the College of Arts and Science, writes as follows:

"The undergraduate curriculum at the University is a legitimate area of concern. We do not presently offer the variety of courses on the African heritage that fully represents the intellectual needs of our students, both those of African descent and those whose heritage is in another part of the world. We have made some improvement in the past few years in these areas. A new assistant professor in the Department of History, Elias Mandala, appointed in the fall of 1983, is an African history specialist now offering courses in Colonial and Contemporary Africa and Slavery and Slave Trade in Africa. During the past three years the number of full-time black faculty members in the College of Arts and Science has increased from one to four. These figures suggest, not that we have done all that we ought, but that the University is making an honest and significant effort to rectify a situation that needs continuing, major attention.

"We do not presently have sufficient curricular offerings in areas of personal concern to black students and the black student initiative, and the formation of a task force of the College of Arts and Science, chaired by Professor Jesse Moore, represents an attempt to put into operation a means of addressing that need in a more formal, satisfactory, and permanent way. For such a Task

Force to work it must have not only the cooperation of key faculty members—and key faculty members are willing to serve—but also the full cooperation of representative members of the student body who can give guidance to the kinds of directions that students feel would be beneficial to them. The faculty of the College ultimately decides what curricular offerings are appropriate, but it badly needs the cooperation and advice of students as well, and these must be representative students, capable of considering objectively the various possible alternatives. The College is committed to improving its curricular range; the precise nature of that improvement will be determined by reasoned consideration of appropriate alternatives. We must build carefully so that what we build will represent a well thought out, permanent contribution to the University's offerings, not just a temporary response."

Conclusion

The administration of the University and colleges is aware of the many problems we have; we are not made complacent by the fact that very many comparable institutions share our problems. On the contrary, we have to compete with them for the ablest black faculty and students. Administrative groups actively working on black concerns, in addition to those already named, include the Provost's Minority Council, the Task Force on Minority Appointments, the Minority Premedical Committee, and the Planning Committee for Undergraduate Affairs. It is a major concern for primarily-student groups such as the Provost's Undergraduate Council, the Committee on the Quality of Student Life, and the Keidaeans.

There are several programs in action designed to help minorities, including the summer program SURF for undergraduate minority students who work in biological laboratories in the Medical School and Arts College; the PREP program designed to introduce minority high schoolers and undergraduates to the Medical School (with the help of the Urban League); a peer counseling program in which freshmen are counseled individually by upperclassmen; and the Frederick Douglass fund-raising activity which, with leadership from black community leaders, is raising funds to turn our present large library holdings about the black experience in America into a major national collection. I list these programs, not to imply that enough is being done, but to indicate that the underlying problems are indeed recognized and many people throughout the University and the community are working hard on them.

So far this work has produced a modest improvement in faculty numbers; no improvement in student numbers (but two extremely promising initiatives); a serious attempt to explore the curricular area; and now we want to get at the hardest problem of all, the quality of black student life.

The study on Race Relations reveals that the University as a community has shown an insufficient willingness to grapple with this set of problems which prevail in every part of American society. The University does not tolerate discriminating practices among its faculty, administration, or students. Universities, however, bear an unusually heavy responsibility because we should be able to think through and implement policies more readily than many sectors; because higher education has become the portal to personal success and is therefore particularly critical to aspiring individuals; and because we should be leaders of society in values and in actions.

I appeal to all members of the University to work together to our common goal of a community enriched by its pluralism and diversity. Let us develop together a plan of action to accelerate our slow progress to a unified community.

Richard D. O'Brien
Provost