

Consistent with the mission and philosophy of The Southern Illinois University System, what is the appropriate role and direction for student remedial efforts?

I suggest that a starting position in addressing the problem of 1984 is to reexamine the problem of 1964. The high school graduating class of 1964 had the highest ACT and SAT scores of any class in history. When I went to Champaign in the fall of 1964, remediation in basic skills was not a significant issue on any of the campuses of the major public universities in the State of Illinois. The major question centered on the inability of public higher education to attract and retain "qualified" minority students. U of I had approximately 235 black students of a total enrollment in excess of 30,000. ISU had approximately 170 black students out of an enrollment of about 16,000-17,000. At both institutions only 2% of the black students graduated. I can only recall three black students who finished with me in 1968 and there were no black graduate students enrolled at all. Few, if any, of the students comprising the 98% attrition rate were in need of remediation in the basic skills area. All were in the top half of their graduating class from high school. Most were in the upper 25%. The question that you, I, and others faced was why appropriately prepared students didn't come to the university; and why those that did, didn't survive. Without repeating a lot that you already know, we concluded that the lack of enrollment was a function of the absence of a positive institutional presence in the black community. The lack of retention was a function of non-intellectual factors which were significant for minorities but less critical for other students. Therefore, the original objectives of the HPS program were as follows:

1. To establish a positive name recognition within the minority communities of the state--a fancy name for recruiting.

2. To identify students that possess the intellectual sufficiency to have a successful academic experience at the university.
3. To identify students that were sufficiently strong in the non-intellectual areas so as to be successful at the university.
4. To provide those minimal remediation requirements for students having the intellectual and personality strengths, though some basic skills help might be necessary.
5. To identify those factors within the institutional environment that required special strengths on the part of minority students that were not factors for the rest of the student body. This last issue suggests a remediation component for the institution and not the students. At no time did we suggest or intend that the "basic quality" of the students or the student body should be compromised. It was not the intent nor the purpose of the program to lower the university standards. The question, rather, focused on the validity of the standards and how to accomplish the same objectives but through different means.

The HPS program, unlike some of its counterparts, became more of an examination of educational policy issues with social policy implications than a program where the social policy outcomes were the principle objectives in and of themselves. In the intervening years, what has driven access programs at universities has been a notion of the university as a social change agent. The basic academic issues have become muddled and confused. The principal problem has been the retention of a thoughtful analysis within an atmosphere of ideologically and politically weighted

concerns. The original assumptions of the HPS program represents the appropriate focus of the current access agenda.

A Word About Standards

During its first three years HPS students attained an academic achievement profile that was very close to that of the general student body. We improved the retention rate, we improved the numbers, and we improved the graduation rate. We also contributed to a modest decline in the average ACT score of the ISU student body. I would submit that our production of more successful students should be interpreted as an increase in the quality of the student body. Others who would note the decline in ACT scores would argue that we lowered standards. Standards are a means to an end, not an end unto themselves. The objective of the university should be to raise quality--not raise standards. Much of the debate on standards ignores the fundamental question of the standard's relationship to the quality it's attempting to measure. I believe in testing. ACT scores provide valuable and useful data from which to make judgments about students' preparation and probability for success. The problem with the ACT score is that it does not differentiate between those students who lack the intellectual sufficiency to do university work and those students who are smart enough but lack basic skills. An institution can successfully remediate basic skills. It cannot remediate substantive intellectual deficiencies. A university's admissions and access posture must take into account this dichotomy in its assessment and remediation design. Having said all of this, what do I recommend? Former Defense Secretary Schlesinger said that two tests must be met before this country should ever commit its armed forces to a mission: clarity of purpose and

sufficiency of forces. The Secretary's advice applies to these issues as well. While, obviously, the social policy concerns and social justice implications represent the fundamental motivation for the institution's efforts, the focus of the institution's analysis must be the educational issues first, and the social policy consequences later. I would suggest as to the "clarity of purpose" the following set of guiding principles:

- I. The objective of the university admissions apparatus should be to estimate the student's ability to have a successful academic experience at SIU. This judgment should not be a question of competition. The essential judgment is whether Student A can reasonably expect to be successful, not whether Student A will do better than Student B or has better grades than Student B or has higher test scores than Student B. The only competitive factor that is legitimate for consideration is if enrollment caps do not allow you to accept both Students A and B and you have to choose one over another. If you are faced with such an environment, then the affirmative action/social policy issue ought to be invoked to safeguard the enrollment of the protected classes.
- II. The university ought to use alternatives and more intensive assessment techniques for evaluating the student potential of applicants that do not meet the desirable profiles of the general student body as measured by traditional means. The objective of this alternative assessment approach should be to differentiate between those students who are smart enough but need skills help versus those students whose deficiencies are much more fundamental.
- III. Define the reasonable limitations of remediation which is realistic and achievable within the context of the university resources and

academic programs. To accomplish this definition one must document, through appropriate research, the skills threshold below which success at the university becomes improbable. Example: If you determine that 90% of the graduates entered the university as freshmen with a reading level of at least the 11th grade, then the 11th grade level ought be established as the threshold for entering freshmen. Under this model the next question becomes what can reasonably be expected by the university and the students to secure remediation in reading to at least the 11th grade level. You will find that research has established pretty well how much remediation can be expected per unit of work. You may find that this special program in a pre-college enrollment can raise the reading level of a student by two grades. You would, therefore, need to limit your admissions to students having 9th grade reading levels or above. The numbers and percentages I have used are totally hypothetical and I merely used them to illustrate an approach. Putting all of this together, a student applying to the university would receive one of the following responses:

- a. Your previous grade point average and test scores qualify you for unconditional admission. Welcome to the university. You are on your own.
- b. Because of your test scores and/or grades we need more information about you and you must, therefore, take the following examinations (probably reading, writing, and math). Interviews are useful, although they may prove expensive.
- c. You will be conditionally admitted to a summer intensive remediation program to meet the basic skills threshold

previously established by the university. Upon successfully completing the program you will begin classes as a regular student, unconditionally, and will be on your own. (The students not doing well during the remediation period will be offered admittance to the university but will be advised to take advantage of post-enrollment academic support services, although one would expect these students to be at risk.)

- d. You are denied admission to the university. We suggest that you investigate a community college. (The student that is deficient in the intellectual requirements would be denied admission and referred to other institutions, hopefully, for some sort of counseling.)

The sum total of all of this logically follows from a very simple set of assumptions: admit students who can make it but make sure the standards and the process for assessing those standards are valid. Admit students that can make it if they get help if you can reasonably provide the help. Don't admit students where success is highly improbable or if the amount of help they need is substantially beyond what you can reasonably provide. While I know this approach sounds frightfully obvious, there are few institutions in the country that have built their own admissions and remediation efforts around this or any other coherent and consistent set of tested assumptions.

There are insufficient faculty and staff role models, due in part to fewer job openings in higher education and widening opportunities in other areas. Consistent with the mission, philosophy, and aspirations of each campus, we need a forward-looking plan which increases the number of role models and eventually our pool of applicants for faculty/staff positions.

Increasing Minority Faculty and Professional Staff

Unfortunately, graduate schools are providing declining numbers of appropriately trained minorities with terminal degrees. It is, therefore, unlikely that SIU will satisfy its requirements in this area through traditional means. Nor is it likely for legal and political reasons that this institution will be able to provide any extraordinary incentives to attract minorities to an area that has little intrinsic appeal for minorities in a competitive market. Therefore, the most productive and plausible approach is to "grow your own." Traditionally, this approach has not met with success, either because institutions have not really been committed to the idea, or their resources have been limited, or both.

A third realistic inhibition for minority hiring is that faculties do not like to hire students trained at their own institutions. I view this reluctance as legitimate. It is difficult for home-grown faculty members to achieve peerage with their former professors and inbreeding of the sort is generally unhealthy for a university.

The State of Illinois and its institutions are ideally positioned to overcome all of these obstacles because there are a number of doctoral degree-granting universities within the State. What I am suggesting is the formation of a consortium arrangement between SIU, the U of I, Northern, ISU and any other public doctoral degree-granting universities within the State.

The purpose of the consortium would be the creation of a minority student fellowship program which would admit students and assist in the placement

of these students upon the completion of the terminal degree at one of the universities other than the one from which the degree was received. SIU would be hiring the graduates of other universities and the other universities would be hiring SIU graduates. In spite of the declining numbers of minorities entering graduate school from undergraduate institutions, there is a considerable pool of potential doctoral students, especially when those individuals who stopped at the master's level are included. I should caution you that this program to be effective will be costly.

Rutgers and the nine state colleges in New Jersey have an arrangement built on this concept which, if done properly, could be successful. The limitation of the New Jersey model is that only minority faculty members at the state colleges may participate in training to complete their doctoral work. The pool, therefore, is limited by the number of minority faculty at the state colleges. If the pool were expanded to include all minority individuals in the state who wish to undertake doctoral studies and who were appropriately qualified, the volume of takers would be increased considerably. These persons would then be offered employment by one of the public institutions in the state. The financial incentives include a fellowship grant and loan package which allow employed individuals to return to full-time graduate study without any substantial loss of earning power. One important aspect of this or any similar program is that there should be a significant loan component. If a person completing this program accepts appointment as a faculty member at a state college, a percentage of the loan is forgiven if the person is employed in the state. If someone leaves the state or goes to a private institution, then the remaining loan portion must be repaid. There are also provisions for

waiving part of the loan repayment if, for appropriate reasons, the student cannot finish the program. This eventuality usually occurs when the student's participation in his doctoral program is terminated at the university's request (fails the program). I am not sure how this program is funded in New Jersey nor what the size of the budget is, but I believe it is financed through direct legislative appropriation. The problem with this model in New Jersey, aside from the comments I have already mentioned, is that while it benefits the state colleges it does little to help Rutgers. SIU more resembles Rutgers than it resembles the New Jersey state colleges. However, by approaching this problem consortially, utilizing the graduate programs of the other state universities, the incest problem would be avoided. Frankly, without this kind of farm system it is unlikely that you will increase the numbers of minority faculty and staff within The SIU System.

As a footnote to this issue, I have observed that many institutions concentrated on experienced senior faculty when they attempt to recruit minorities. This emphasis is generally unreasonable and unrealistic. There is also an implicit, if innocent, racism in the approach. While it is unlikely that any institution will attract the star candidate, i.e., a black Hispanic female Nobel prize winner from the University of Chicago, there can still be found recently graduating black Ph.D.'s from many urban doctoral degree-granting institutions such as Wayne State, the University of Pittsburgh, and a few others.

I should, however, restate the fundamental recommendation: success in this area will require you and your colleagues to grow your own. You are

aware, of course, of numerous precedents where universities have done this very thing in redressing manpower deficiencies where there has been, clearly, societal needs (teachers in the late 50s, scientists and engineers post-Sputnik).

A word about affirmative action. Don't take comfort in the detailed and comprehensive affirmative action plans you have for your office and the two campuses. In my opinion, in many cases complex and detailed affirmative action procedures often have the effect of inhibiting the very results they are designed to achieve. This result appears in a variety of forms. First, at most universities process replaces substance. Affirmative action procedures can actually function as guidelines for avoiding the process. Simply stated, "you don't have to achieve results as long as you follow the procedures and fill out the forms correctly." The other problem is that extensive documentation of competing candidates rarely identifies several individuals "equally qualified." The dean or department head wanting to hire a minority in the face of competing non-minorities may very well be inhibited from doing so for fear of being subjected to reverse discrimination charges if the minority candidate is not clearly superior. It is probably unwise to require extensive documentation of training experience, publications, etc., beyond that necessary to establish the minimum necessary qualifications of individuals within the applicant pool. This approach allows the appointing official to consider a broad range of relevant variables and protects those who appropriately and legally wish to exercise "affirmative action" in hiring legitimate, qualified minorities. Experience is a particularly difficult barrier for minorities to overcome when the obstacles to obtaining that

experience are built into the chronology of the access question for minorities.

At Southern Illinois University we are concerned about the possible danger of creating a permanent underclass of people in the United States whose racial and ethnic background may be less relevant than is the fact that they may not have the social, academic, and economic tools with which to operate successfully in tomorrow's economy. Suggest an appropriate role of the University in response to this concern.

In my view you are accurate in your statement of the problem. The factors responsible for this dilemma are enormously complex and will not lend themselves to easy or simplistic solutions. About one thing I am convinced, however: the problem is systemic and, therefore, the solutions must be systemic. The stated commitment and symbolic presence by the University in the East St. Louis area is commendable, positive, and should be continued. While the form of the current involvement is useful, it has and will continue to have limited if not negligible impact on the deeper fundamental problems of the area and affected populations. The principle resource of the University is intellectual. Therefore, the principle asset that the University has to contribute to the solution of these issues is also intellectual. The solutions to the East St. Louis/"permanent underclass" problems are easier to identify than to effectuate.

I am sure that local public officials will tell you that the area needs to increase and diversify employers in the area. This move would reduce unemployment and substantially increase the tax base. The increased revenues would then be able to support improved public education at the elementary and secondary levels. This development, in turn, would strengthen not only the educational assets of the community, but would go

a long way towards rebuilding the community value system and an improved collective self-concept and economic potential which are probably the root of the entire dilemma. The problem, however, is how do you do all of that. How does an area put together a political consensus and the identification of concrete steps to carry out such an agenda and what is the appropriate division of labor between various government agencies, the private sector, and academia in carrying out all of this? The answer is: I don't know! The problem is neither does anyone else. I remain convinced, however, that these problems have solutions and these questions have answers.

While the University could not, and should not, commit its resources as an ivy-covered social service agency, it is uniquely qualified to assemble and coordinate the intellectual talent within academia, federal, state, and local governments and the community itself in illuminating the issues and suggesting well-informed strategies for addressing the solutions. It seems to me that in the Center for Urban and Environmental Research and Services you have a seminal structure in place which if expanded and properly supported could well serve as an important academic resource and intellectual "think tank" to be used to focus the "mind power" of the area on these problems.

You may recall that the original intent of the Center for Urban Affairs at Morgan was very similar to what I am suggesting here. That Center was to be a non-partisan, apolitical, research, resource, and training center on urban issues for the City of Baltimore and the State of Maryland. It was to do basic research on urban problems, provide interdisciplinary graduate

training for practitioners from a variety of fields that worked in the urban setting, provide sophisticated and high-powered consultants to urban leaders, and be used as a forum for highlighting significant urban issues. While the promise of this center was never realized, the fundamental concept of its creation was and is sound. I believe that SIU is ideally suited to implement this approach, and thus, to contribute in positive ways to the region's enhancement. I believe that area and state governments, educational systems, and current and future businesses in the area would welcome and actively participate in the development of such a resource which has obvious benefits for the region and which only the University can provide. I am suggesting the same governing principles in the Universities' efforts as mentioned elsewhere in this paper, namely, to do that which you can reasonably do and do well. Do not attempt those things which are external to your fundamental mission and resources and which probably could and should be done better by other types of organizations. I would expect that many community leaders see in the University a big pot of money and resources which they feel could be used to provide direct services for the relief of the problems of individual citizens or groups. There are not many models where our universities have served successfully as social service agencies. The pressures to do so should be resisted.

There is a great deal more to be said on this topic which I would rather discuss in my exit interview than to commit to writing in this paper.

Afterthoughts and Postscripts

I. Remediation

The State of New Jersey has one of the best approaches to the remediation issue in the country. There is an organization called the New Jersey Basic Skills Council. This Council has a governing board and executive director and a modest staff. The Council, as an organization, is responsible to the New Jersey Department of Higher Education. Its principal functions are to gather information and to do research on preparation in the basic skills in New Jersey; to develop, maintain, and administer the New Jersey basic skills test; and to monitor and evaluate the success of various remediation efforts at the institutions. Each entering freshman at a public college in New Jersey is required to take a New Jersey Basic Skills Examination. This requirement is mandatory for everyone without regard to the test scores or high school grades of the entering student. The subject matter includes reading, writing, and math. Students who successfully pass the examination matriculate unencumbered. Students who score poorly on the exam are required to enroll in remediation programs either at the home institution or a community college. Their enrollment is restricted until such time as they pass a post-test which verifies that remediation has taken place. The New Jersey approach is objective analytical and well documented. One of the major outcomes of this effort has been the clear demonstration that remediation works. The documentation of success is persuasive and convincing. I would highly recommend that you bring in Dr. Edward Morante to consult as you deal with the specifics and mechanics of a remediation approach. I don't think there is anyone

in the country who is better informed about assessment issues and instructional approaches to remediation than Dr. Morante. In one of your memoranda to the campus presidents you referred to a California statement of basic competencies expected of entering students.

Dr. Morante was used as a consultant in the development of that statement. Frankly, I think that New Jersey is far ahead of the rest of the country in dealing with the higher education side of the basic skills and remediation issue.

- II. There is major and basic reform needed throughout the entire arena of elementary education, secondary education, and teacher preparation. While it is important to note that neither the remediation problem nor the public schools problem is exclusively a minority issue, for reasons you well understand, the impact and consequences for minorities of these problems are far more severe than for the general population. The remediation issues and even the more fundamental problems of the "underclass" will be most effectively addressed and contested within the elementary and secondary schools of the state, and long before higher education enters the picture. However, the University is part of a continuum that begins in pre-school and goes right through graduate and professional schools and through continuing education programs on to the grave. Therefore, higher education cannot continue to do what it has traditionally done--that is, stand back and bemoan the conditions it inherits and blaming the public schools while washing its hands of the problem.

Horace Mann and others suggested two functions for public schools:

1. The imparting of knowledge and understanding about one's condition; and,
2. The transmission of the society's values from one generation to another.

In the late 60s and early 70s an unintended outcome for those of us who were objecting to what we perceived as the imposition of a "white middle class value system" on culturally diverse populations was the erosion of the concept that the transmission of values was a legitimate function of public education. It is appropriate within a pluralistic society for shared and common values to exist between and among culturally different groups. The Constitution of the United States, the Declaration of Independence, the Bible and the Koran all share a common set of fundamental ethics and values. The sociologist's definition of a nation is: a political unit with shared values and common interests.

Coming down off my soapbox--the point I am trying to make is that the restoration of a very fundamental value system within the teaching of public education is fundamentally crucial and essential if our more basic institutions, such as family, church, community and school, are to survive and function. For certain communities of our nation, the school must provide a fundamental value orientation that used to take place in the home and with the family. Sixty-two percent of black youth today live in single parent households and many, if not the majority, of these youths, have never been exposed

to the traditional values of a family. The long-term prospects for avoiding the creation of the "permanent underclass" must begin by confronting these tragic circumstances. The role of public education in this regard is critical. The call for action must be pervasive from educational leadership at all levels, including the university.

The quality of teaching and learning which take place in the public schools must be an issue for higher education. Much can be done in this area without the requirement of increased resources. Requiring college-bound high school students to take four years of English, three years of math, and three years of science does not require public schools to spend any more money--just make reasonable use of the time that students spend in the classroom. During the formation of the HPS program you visited inter-city schools on the south side of Chicago. As you may recall, few if any of these institutions, would qualify as models of excellence in secondary education. They were overcrowded, the physical plants were dilapidated, and most of the teachers were uncertified, but the graduates were all required to have four years of English, three years of math, and three years of science. They also contributed to ACT scores that were far above what they are now from the same schools. The irony is that on my last visit to my high school the overcrowding had been diminished, all of the teachers were certified, but the test score performance was not as high as before. I know all of this will make me appear as a closet Reaganite but the fact of the matter is the President is correct in his position on this issue.

Teacher Preparation

Teaching is a profession. It is appropriate, therefore, that the graduates of a teacher preparation program demonstrate in unambiguous ways that they are qualified to practice that profession. It is the responsibility of the institution, as well as the licensing authority of the state, to insure that anyone leaving a campus and entering a classroom as a teacher be well prepared and competent. I fundamentally reject the argument that there is, or should be, any relationship between the "low public esteem" accorded teachers and any willingness on the part of institutions to compromise legitimate standards of quality for the graduates of teacher education programs. At one public Florida university a majority of the graduates from the School of Education could not pass the national teacher's test. My advice to that institution was to either achieve a satisfactory passing rate or to close the program. It serves no one's purpose to produce unqualified professionals of any race.

It occurs to me that I have not been successful in resisting the temptation to sermonize on these points. I am also aware that you are just as acquainted with these issues as I; however, the fundamental problems that you have asked me to address will never satisfactorily be resolved without a strong, competent, public education system freely available to minority children. You may not be able to control it, but, hopefully, you and your colleagues can positively influence and raise the issues.