

January 20, 1970

Equality of Educational Opportunity and the University of Colorado:

A Report to the Faculty Council\*

During the past several years, a bleak fact about higher education in American society has become more and more widely recognized. That fact is that access to colleges and universities has been open only in a token sense to youth who belong to America's main minority groups-- Black youth, Mexican-American youth, and Indian youth. A recent survey of the 80 predominantly white state universities and land-grant colleges in this country showed that less than 2% of their students, undergraduate or graduate, were Black; yet Black Americans constitute somewhat over 11% of the population of the United States. (That survey goes on to remind us that in 1968 there were more foreign students than American Negroes in our colleges and universities.) The situation has been much the same for Mexican-Americans and Indians of whom there has never been more than a handful on American campuses.

Efforts to expand opportunity for higher education for minority students have quickened across the country in the last year or two, and many institutions have devised special programs to recruit, admit, and support minority students some of whom, in relation to conventional criteria, were considered to be "high risk". At the University of Colorado, the first program began in the summer of 1968 with the admission, with financial support, of 78 students. The summer of 1969 saw approximately 250 Mexican-Americans, 150 Blacks, and 50 Indians in summer Educational Opportunity (EOP) programs. During the present academic year, approximately 640 undergraduate minority students are receiving some degree of financial support through the EOP programs on the Boulder campus. Minority student groups of 160 and 40, respectively, are attending the Denver and Colorado Springs Centers under similar program auspices.

As is evident from the brief time span involved, the minority student programs at C.U. have had to be developed rapidly and in response to urgent

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\*A brief summary of the major proposals made in this report appears in an Addendum at the end (see p. 26).

concerns and pressures. Responsibility for their development has rested largely with the University administration and the minority student groups themselves. Despite faculty participation in such programs as that at the Law School, or in certain innovative summer programs as those in physics and biology for minority high school students, faculty involvement in any systematic way has been minimal, and faculty understanding of the implications of these minority program developments has been limited.

It was awareness of this latter state of affairs that led to the establishment of this committee. Our charge was to examine the various aspects of the University's involvement in minority student education and to make policy recommendations to the Faculty Council as to the role the University should play in this area in the future. Since our appointment near the end of Spring semester, we have met frequently to talk with University administrators, with minority program staff, and with minority students. And we have met frequently to talk among ourselves in trying to arrive at policy recommendations that could serve to replace the current, short-term, University response with a longer-range perspective.

This report will focus primarily upon a series of recommendations which we feel to be essential to achieving the appropriate University position with regard to minority students. A preliminary draft of the report was circulated to some members of the faculty, the student body, and the administration; the present version has benefitted a great deal from the comments, criticisms, and suggestions received. In the discussion of our recommendations we will have the opportunity to describe the present state-of-affairs and to comment on problems which currently exist. While our attention will mainly be on the Boulder campus, we want to state emphatically that our concern is with the University as a whole, and our recommendations are meant to apply also to the Denver and Colorado Springs Centers. As a matter of fact, some of our recommendations may be more appropriately implemented at the Denver Center, given its location in a large urban setting with a large minority population, than at the Boulder campus. Before turning to the series of recommendations, several general comments should be made by way of preamble.

First, it should be clear that the issues involved in minority student education ramify throughout every facet of University activity; the simplest of proposals in this area is already complex. To talk simply of admitting more minority students, for example, is to have, at the same time, to deal

with the complexities of recruitment procedures, admission criteria, counseling services, locating additional minority faculty and staff, housing, racial or ethnic studies, revenue sources, budgetary priorities, and the like.

Second, the concern with minority education involves, and cannot avoid, the very definition of the nature and the purpose of a state university. The questions of "who shall be educated?" and "what are the responsibilities of a state university to the citizens of that state?" have been newly reopened by the demands of minority youth, and no amount of recourse to tradition or past practice can, in itself, provide an adequate answer.

Third, the entire discussion in this report is predicated on the maintenance of the standards of educational excellence traditionally associated with the University of Colorado. Concern does exist in the academic community that increased enrollment of minority students, especially "high risk" students, will inevitably mean a lowering of standards or the development of "second class" degrees. No one we have talked with has supported such a development, and it is clearly to the disadvantage of minority students themselves to obtain degrees the currency of which has been debased. The aim of minority student programs must be to provide youth who previously have been excluded from higher education with the benefits of that education. Concern with standards must be maintained; but such concern must focus on what the university does for its students and their benefits from it, rather than merely on the credentials the students present at the outset. Protection of the educational quality of a C.U. degree can be achieved by the sedulous monitoring of exit or graduation standards, irrespective of the length of time taken or the academic path which has been followed to that point. The committee wants to make clear its view that this is the only appropriate position for the University to assume; the recommendations in this report are meant to reflect that view.

Fourth, none of the recommendations to be made should in any way be taken to support separatism or segregation on the campus whether in the dormitories or in the classrooms. Although demands have been made for racially separate classes or housing accommodations at various universities in the past few years, such arrangements are not consonant with the objectives of higher education. Special classes may be necessary at particular times for particular groups of students or may be designed to be of primary

interest to particular students, but the general policy of the University should be to institutionalize an open and integrated educational experience.

Fifth, while the report discusses minority students in general, it must be kept in mind that the two main groups involved, the Blacks and the Mexican-Americans, are distinct groups with their own distinctive needs, aims, and problems. Thus, recommendations made in general about minority students may need to be tailored in quite distinctive ways when implemented for the two groups.

Finally, none of the recommendations to follow should be taken to imply criticism of past University actions or present arrangements with respect to minority programs. On the contrary, the University's effort thus far has been remarkable in many ways: the rapid recruitment and admission of a significant number of minority students, the innovation of support services, the gathering of financial resources, and the avoidance of fracture and confrontation in the academic community. Credit for these accomplishments belongs to the administration and to the minority student groups themselves. Our recommendations reflect only the view that it is time for explicit institutional policy to be formulated and that, in its formulation, it is time for the faculty's voice to be heard.

I. Our primary and fundamental recommendation is that the University should commit itself immediately and explicitly to a substantial increase in minority student enrollment at all levels and all campuses of the University. This commitment should include a definite timetable and a definite numerical goal. The commitment we recommend is that, by the 1974-75 academic year, the proportion of minority students among the in-state students enrolled at the University of Colorado should reflect the proportion of each minority group in the population of the state.

Several aspects of this recommendation need elaboration. The importance of an explicit commitment to a long-range enrollment objective cannot be overemphasized. No such commitment exists at present, and its absence is, in our view, responsible for a certain amount of distrust, suspicion, and hostility among minority students presently on campus. Despite the evident progress achieved thus far, there is uncertainty among the students about the University's capability and intention to sustain it, and about whether continued progress will require continued application of student pressure. The avowed commitment of the University to an explicit goal is perhaps the most stabilizing action the University can take at this point; it