

Pres. Records
Box 107
Black Students

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
ANN ARBOR

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

March 5, 1970

To the Members of the Black Action Movement:

The statement submitted by the Black Action Movement has been reviewed by the Executive Officers, and the attached proposal will be presented to the Regents for their consideration during the course of their meetings on March 18 and 19. I should like to add some comments about the proposal.

Black students have placed special emphasis on the point that there should be sufficient black students enrolled by the academic year 1973-74 to equal ten percent of the student population in Ann Arbor. In the preliminary conversations which have been held between administrators and black students, the administrators have suggested two reservations about the ten percent enrollment point. One has to do with obtaining the financial resources to support it. The other raises the question of whether a viable modified admission standard can be devised which will produce the required number of students by 1973-74.

Unfortunately, both the black students and the administrators seem to have difficulty in understanding one another on the ten percent issue. When the administrators indicate reservations, the black students interpret this as a foot-dragging or lack of commitment. When the black students insist on an unequivocal ten percent commitment, the administrators do not reject the figure as either undesirable or unattainable. On the contrary, they simply do not wish to promise something which present information would indicate may not be possible.

For all practical purposes, funds to be used in support of additional black students can be derived from general funds appropriated to the University by the State Legislature, tuition paid by students, income on investments, gifts (individual, corporate and foundation), and federal funds. If there is any single fact about universities today which is the subject of agreement, it is that all of them are very short of funds. Therefore, the only way in which funds can be put into the support of additional black students is to divert such funds from other purposes and give a very high priority to the recruitment and support of black students. Such flexible funds as there are, are now heavily committed to such things as laboratory renovations, land purchases, badly needed equipment, library books, and capital improvement projects.

Aside from the financial problem, there is a problem of admissions criteria. These criteria are administered more flexibly in the case of Opportunity Award students than for others, with less reliance on academic averages or test scores. We know from our present experience that the attrition rate on Opportunity Award students runs somewhat more than twice the average of all students, but it is still tolerable in terms of what is being accomplished. We do not know how much further deviation we can make in the criteria and still accomplish anything. At some point it is clear that the student is far better off to enter a college where the competition is less severe and where the course options are less academically oriented.

Our tradition, if one can speak of traditions in so short a period, is one of working together toward the achievement of mutually desired ends.

There are on our staff a number of individuals on whom we all rely for advice in these matters. Men like John Chavis, George Goodman, Richard Huston, Will Smith and others have now spent some time on the problems of black students, particularly as they relate to admission and financial aid. With their help, and with our joint efforts to advance, we can agree on how best to maximize our interests. Given the willingness of the University to give a very high priority to these problems, and the dedication of the black students to increased educational opportunities for blacks, it will be tragic if we expend our energies in disagreement.

I shall be glad to involve the above named individuals and others in conversations as to how we can best move forward. I have, in fact, asked Will Smith to deliver this statement to you and discuss it with you.

Sincerely,


R. W. Fleming

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Attachment