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M E M O R A N D U M

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A THREE-PRONGED EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH  
TO THE PROBLEM OF UNDISCOVERED COLLEGE POTENTIAL AMONG  
THE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN OF NEW YORK CITY

I. The City University's Present Admissions Policies

In a draft of the 1964 Master Plan soon to be placed before the City University Committee of the Board of Higher Education, the University's present admissions policies are stated as follows:

a. Students' Ability

i. Senior Colleges. Graduates of academic high schools who have academic or commercial diplomas and who are in the top quarter of the entire body of graduates of all high schools, public and private, of every type, are considered, on the basis of our experience over the years, to have the ability to achieve a baccalaureate degree.

ii. Community Colleges. In the transfer programs, graduates of academic high schools who have academic or commercial diplomas and who are in the top half of the entire body of graduates of all high schools, public and private, of every type, are considered to have sufficient ability to justify their admission to a two-year curriculum such that, if they maintain a satisfactory grade average, they will be admitted to our senior colleges at the third year level. In the career ("two-year terminal") programs, the criterion of minimum ability consists in both the acquisition of a high school diploma and the attainment of a satisfactory score in an examination or examinations appropriate to the program for which the student is an applicant. In lieu of examination or examinations, there may be substituted the attainment of a satisfactory high school average in subjects appropriate to the program for which the student is an applicant.

b. Colleges' Spatial and Fiscal Limitations

The actual admission of all applicants with the qualifications defined in (a) depends upon the availability of space and fiscal support. Where these are not adequate, either in a particular college or colleges or in the University as a whole, the entrance requirements have to be adjusted upward in order to admit only that number for whom space and financial support are adequate. It shall be the policy of the Board of Higher Education and of the University authorities to maintain a strenuous and constant effort to secure sufficient financial support both for construction and for operating costs to permit the admission of all applicants who possess the requirements defined in (a).

### c. Special Programs

For the purpose of educational experimentation, or to encourage the growth of new programs, a policy of admitting students with well-defined qualifications which do not reach the standards set in (a) may be maintained for a limited period of time.

## II. Implications of Our Admissions Policies for the Problem of Disadvantaged Youth

Under the provisions of sections (a) and (b) set forth above, the University has no choice either legally or educationally but to start from the top of the list of applicants for admission and to go down as far in the list of those qualified as the available accommodations make possible. Here the list of students admitted must form an uninterrupted series from most to least qualified, without distinction of race, creed, color, or economic condition. This would make the special selection of disadvantaged youth impracticable.

Under section (c), however, the University, as an institution of higher education dedicated not only to teaching but to the investigation of educational theories and the development of sound educational practices, has reserved to itself, as every great university does, the right and duty of educational experimentation. It is in the framework of such experimentation that the present project is proposed.

## III. A Three-Pronged Experiment

It is in the nature of experimentation to control the results of one procedure by comparison with those of one or more parallel procedures embodying significant differences. The present experiment contemplates one main and two subsidiary approaches, each of which will be used to check upon the results of the others. The goal is to find out enough about the methods of selection and education of culturally and economically disadvantaged young persons of high native ability ("potential") to enable us to formulate policies which will place the admission to college of such students <sup>upon</sup> a firm non-discriminatory basis. This might be used as long as our society continues to have any considerable body of students to whom the term "culturally and economically disadvantaged" can properly be applied. We hope also to learn a great deal about the teaching of students in general. Our great hope is, of course, that with improved methods of education throughout the entire range of our schools--an improvement to which it is expected ~~the present~~ experiment will contribute substantially--the need for such special procedures will disappear. In the meantime, in addition to the progress in educational theory and practice which our experimentation is intended to foster, we shall have the practical gratification of having aided hundreds of young men and women to gain a college education who would otherwise not have done so. But the main purpose and justification of our project is its experimental value.

A. The Four-Year Special College

1. 1964-65 Phase

It is proposed as a beginning to select 400 to 500 young men and women from among those who have not been admitted to any college; these would be chosen from among the June 1964 graduates of all New York City high schools, public and private, who are to receive academic high school diplomas. They would be chosen in mid-May, after all colleges will have notified those whom they have decided to admit. A number equal to a fixed percentage of the total enrollment of each school would be selected in such a way as to provide a spectrum of the academic achievement-levels between the minimum grade required by the New York City Board of Education and the State Department of Education for graduation with an academic ("college entrance") diploma and the highest grade in the school among those who were not admitted to college. Students thus selected would be offered the opportunity of enrolling in this program.

The 400 or 500 students thus selected would be offered the following opportunity:

- a. An eight-week summer session in which basic skills of reading comprehension, simple expository writing, and the handling of number concepts would be brought to as high a level as possible, and study techniques would be improved. Students who persevered in this session and reached a level of competence to be determined by those in charge of the program would be admitted in the Fall to the special college on which this program is centered.
- b. Students admitted to the special college would be assured that, if they maintained a satisfactory level of achievement, they would receive, at the end of a four-year course, a baccalaureate degree from the "\_\_\_\_\_ College of the City University of New York." If, on the other hand, they reached at any point in the four-year course a standard of achievement such that, in the opinion of their professors and counsellors, and of a group of professors representing our four senior colleges\*, they merited transfer to one of the senior colleges, and if they so desired themselves, they might be transferred to one of the senior colleges where there was room for them to complete their course and receive a degree from that college.
- c. The special college would be staffed by able and experienced professors drawn from our own college staffs and from outside colleges, professors of such eminence that any thought that these students were being asked to attend a second-class "ghetto" college would be absurd. A number of professors meriting the description have already informally expressed their willingness to participate in the experiment.

\*Insert here: "and employing in each case those criteria of academic achievement and aptitude which shall have been authorized by the faculty of the senior college concerned"

## 2. 1965-66 Phase

Next spring and summer, the procedure outlined above would be followed for another 400-500 students, who would thus become the special college's second freshman class. In addition, a new procedure would be followed, this time among the sixth-term students (at end of third year of high school) in the "General Diploma" group of the public academic high schools and in a comparable group at the private schools. From among these, about 400 would be chosen according to the best available criteria for native ability ("potentiality"). These would be removed, if they accepted the invitation, from their home schools, and given a special "advanced placement" course covering the Summer of 1965, the academic year 1965-66, and the Summer of 1966. At this point, those who qualified would receive an academic high school diploma, and be invited to form part of the special college's third freshman class, to which of course the 1966 component of the Phase 1 procedure would also be admitted. This "General Diploma" operation, perhaps supplemented by a select group from the vocational high schools, would be repeated in succeeding years, as long as the program was deemed necessary.

### B. "Higher Education for the Many" at a Community College

This prong of the experiment is a continuation of President Meister's demonstration study at Bronx Community College in 1960-64 (reported to the Board of Higher Education on January 22, 1962; see brochure attached).

The study, made possible by a grant from the Fund for the Advancement of Education, led to a number of findings, of which the following are most pertinent to the present proposal:

1. For students in the second 25% of the spectrum of academic abilities, sometimes referred to as "the student in the middle," the established college admission tests are far from infallible measures of potential for success in college education.
2. The motivation possessed by a student pursuing certain careers is among the most potent factors leading to academic achievement and eventual success in life.
3. The judgment of high school guidance counsellors and teachers who are aware of these motivations is among the most valid bases for admission to college.
4. The "Operation Second Chance" succeeded in that all students enrolled in the program, who previously had failed to gain admission to the day session of any college, including community colleges, experienced personal growth; two out of three succeeded in being admitted to two-year or four-year colleges, including many different institutions in and out of New York City, some of them with scholarships. (A follow-up study is now in progress.)

5. A strong guidance program and a "speeded-down" curriculum can promote academic progress in higher education for "the student in the middle."
6. The results of "Operation Second Chance" would have been more dramatic if the students had attended day session rather than coming at night after employment, since the opportunity of mingling with other college students is of prime importance.

It is proposed that President Meister be authorized to continue the procedure outlined in his earlier study for about 200 students in 1964-65, and for as many years as the main project stands in need of a control group.

Specifically, the plan would include the following features:

1. The admission of a number of students from each interested secondary school equal to a fixed percentage of the total enrollment in the school's graduating class. These students would be classified as "Special Matriculants."
2. Admission would be based upon the nomination of admittees by the school principal and his faculty, after conference with representatives from the Faculty of Bronx Community College. No further admissions tests would be administered.
3. All the Bronx Community College curricula, transfer and career, would be open to the students admitted.
4. The admitted students would agree to come to the College sometime in June for a series of placement tests.
5. In cases where important academic weakness appeared, the student would agree to attend the Bronx Community College Summer Session in the summer of 1964 for remedial work.
6. As with all other Bronx Community College students, it would be understood that they might be given a so-called "limited program," in line with their demonstrated ability to progress in the curriculum selected.
7. No tuition fees would be charged, either in the regular or the summer session.
8. The admission of "Special Matriculants" would in no way affect the procedures for or the numbers of students admitted to the Bronx Community College in the regular way.
9. Basic to the proposal is the concept that the students admitted would have a full opportunity to climb the "ladder of opportunity" toward their educational and career goals; through full counselling service, they would be helped to reach the limits of their capabilities without compromising excellence of performance.

10. At the end of two, three, and four years after the admission of each group of "Special Matriculants," the College would have the opportunity of comparing their achievements with those of the regular matriculants of the College.

C. A "College Potentiality Search" at an Existing Senior College

The third prong of the experiment involves the use of the School of General Studies at a senior college. The School of General Studies at Brooklyn College, for instance, has historically provided an opportunity to enroll in baccalaureate programs of study to a limited number of those who give evidence of potential ability. In this effort, it has experimented with remedial courses, with varying entrance requirements, and with increased professional guidance. A Basic Skills Center for the improvement of reading, writing, and study skills is already in operation there. The basic skills program includes diagnostic evaluation, group lectures, personal instruction, and conferences, and furnishes special counselling and individualized help as dominant features of the program.

It is proposed to admit fifty students in September 1964 who meet the following specifications:

"Students who are socially, economically, and/or educationally disadvantaged; are residents of New York City; do not qualify for admission to the College under existing requirements for full matriculation; in the judgment of the high school principal, counselors and teachers, are able to profit from college education; are graduates with an academic diploma; give evidence of potentialities in leadership, citizenship, and creativity."

The process of identification would be the following:

1. Nominations to be made by high schools. There is to be no limit on the number recommended by an individual school.
2. Personal, social, and economic data would be required.
3. Qualitative and quantitative evaluation will relate to the number of entrance units presented, the high school average, and the entrance examination score.
4. An Advisory Board should be constituted, including representatives of the College and the Board of Education. This Board would identify applicants most worthy of consideration.
5. Final selection of candidates to be made by the College Director of Admissions.

The college program would involve the following features:

1. Students in this project group would be enrolled, after careful screening, in the School of General Studies as "Pre-Matriculants."
2. The program of studies would be conducted on a highly individualized and closely supervised basis. Students in need of remedial work would be referred to the Basic Skills Center and assigned such other courses as may be deemed necessary by the College authorities. In addition, they might be enrolled simultaneously in two or three selected courses involving baccalaureate credit. Not until the students clearly demonstrate a capacity to pursue college-level work, will they be permitted to carry a full schedule. Otherwise there is a danger that the "disadvantaged" will be overwhelmed by challenges with which they are, at least in the early stages, unable to cope. It may also be desirable to stipulate that the students will engage in no outside employment during the course of this experiment.
3. A group tutorial, composed of a number of dedicated and experienced instructors, would work with these students in an attempt to discover weaknesses and gaps in their educational backgrounds and would employ their joint professional competence in raising the performance of these students to an acceptable collegiate level. In addition, classroom teachers would provide special tutorial assistance, wherever necessary, to students of this group enrolled in their courses. Rather than considering them as a group, it will be the policy, wherever possible, to treat the students involved in this project as persons, to be judged on their individual records. While under the direct jurisdiction and control of the School of General Studies, the students in this group may nevertheless be permitted to schedule some classes in the daytime in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences depending upon their individual records of academic achievement. In order for these students to be integrated into the courses and life of College they must be brought up by hard work (both on the part of student and teacher) to a level where they will not suffer new agonies of falling "below par".
4. Special counseling and supportive services (guidance, psychological counseling, and social work) should be available. Two carefully selected faculty members (each assigned on a half-time basis) would be detailed as special counselors to the project group.
5. Every effort will be made to aid these students in fulfilling the qualitative requirements of the College. However, the retention policies of the School of General Studies will be strictly applied. It would be mistaken generosity to permit a student to continue taking courses if he shows himself incapable of completing college-level work satisfactorily.

This proposal is based upon the assumption that application of competence, energy and imagination on the part of a small group of instructors, working with a relatively small group of highly motivated, but disadvantaged students, will succeed in integrating them into the college community--not as the "poor relative" whose presence is tolerated, but rather with the full dignity of belonging. The hope is expressed that the project group, afforded the special incentives and facilities suggested here, might "make the grade" after a two-year intensive effort. While offering direct educational assistance for fifty "disadvantaged" candidates, the higher aim of this experiment is to provide the City University of New York with a demonstration of the manner in which the basic philosophy of the School of General Studies can be exploited to meet this immediate challenge.

This prong of the program would be continued in succeeding years if, in the judgment of those in charge, it was helping to fulfill the purposes set forth in the preceding paragraph.