A combination of events has moved private American colleges and universities to grant admissions to minority group students. Along with independent recognition, Federal and private monies have spurred many institutions to recruit minority students to broaden their "student base" with mutual benefits for all. It is usually expected that minority students will benefit from higher education, and that their presence and participation in such education can broaden the understandings and actions of other students regarding cooperative actions under cultural differences. Yet, it is usually the case that large disparities exist between the performance of minority students and those who have traditionally attended these institutions.

The problem is unique. Minority (specifically Black) students represent a population for whom institutions of higher learning lack standardized norms for admission, as well as effective educational programs for their motivation and instruction. A study by the American Council on Education noted that Black students continued to constitute 6 per cent of freshman enrollment for 1969. At the same time, in private non-sectarian colleges, enrollment jumped from 9 to 19 per cent and in private universities as a whole, rose from about 3 to 15 per cent.

The fact that this increase has not been without problems is noted in a recent issue of *Negro Digest* entitled, "Toward a Black University". Here we find a discussion of everything from its impact on black and white institutions, to its implications for an entirely "new" university. Additionally, there has been a tremendous rise in the number of conferences addressing the topic of "disadvantaged students," and even the idea of calling them disadvantaged has caused its share of problems. Let us look at some of the problems. There is an abundance of literature pointing to a cultural bias in standardized testing used for admissions, and upon cursory inspection it would appear that teacher recommendations, recruiter interview-ratings, grades, and other factors exhibit the same bias. Likewise, it is well known that the correlation between standardized test scores and academic achievement is not particularly impressive, and the same probably holds true for any alternate combinations of admissions criteria. There are social and moral complications which stem from the use of admissions mechanisms which reflect cultural bias and implicit racism. There are also technical problems that stem from the lack of specific relationships between the kinds of things measured by admissions test standards and kinds of things necessary for adequate performance within a particular program of education. There are those who, in the face of this dilemma, have suggested abandoning admissions criteria altogether.

Following the lead provided by the work of Astin and others, the trend is to move toward either random selection or an open door policy. Astin and his colleagues have recently found evidence to show that most colleges could greatly increase their enrollments of minority group students without affecting their dropout rates by simply admitting more of them. These findings suggest...
the replacement of high school grades and admissions tests with a lottery system.

Albert Logan, Jr., headlining an article in The Chronicle of Higher Education, writes that nationwide admissions tests appear to be losing importance: "A decline in the use of tests to evaluate students against large-group norms has been forecast by William W. Turnbull of the Educational Testing Service."

In line with the most contemporary thinking on admissions policy, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education has proposed the "softening" of admissions standards to help achieve "universal access" to schools of higher learning. The rationale behind these arguments is that expanding educational opportunities enables a wide range of students to benefit from higher education. It seems strange, however, that at this point in time some doubt the need to expand educational opportunities.

Since the early 1960's Blacks have raised questions about the validity of admissions criteria. James Brown, Black folk singer-philosopher, has profoundly stated: "Open up the door, and I'll get it myself." Black nationalist agitation has given impetus to events which have "opened up the door." Astute scholars (sociologists, commission researchers, etc.) are now supporting this policy. Another point also becomes clear; minority students who are admitted to colleges and universities with or without regard to admission standards, do truly have to "get it themselves. It is becoming increasingly clear that admissions criteria have never been highly significant in terms of predicting a student's performance at a particular institution. Rather they have functioned to exclude applicants from the "poorer areas". What should have been important in instances of admitting Black students was a student's ability to deal socially with the structures represented within particular educational institutions. While admissions criteria do in fact show racism in relief, a more subtle, insidious, and often debilitating form of it is represented in the very working of the educational system. Consequently, while abandonment of present admissions criteria is to be encouraged, such a move will do nothing more than give Black students an equal chance to be unequal unless more sweeping changes in the process of education actually occur.

No matter what the process of selection, those reflecting the social patterns of the dominant American culture are and will continue to be the most successful in existing systems of higher education. Black students differ (socially and culturally) from traditionally college-bound high school graduates. Until these differences are taken into consideration, Black students will continue to have difficulty in matching the performance levels of their white counterparts.

While the idea that institutions will have to change significantly to address the needs of Black students is implicit in the writings of most who advocate "open admissions" policies, they are still in some sense suggesting that it be in the direction of compensatory arrangements alone. It is evident to those who have moved in this direction that there are many problems involved. One of the more important problems is a lack of a well-defined program for administering supportive or compensatory assistance. There is the additional problem of suggesting inferiority, atypicality and dependency (and often open hostility) among those who are identified as needing compensatory assistance. Under compensatory arrangements, students either "suffer through" a devastating and depressing period of academic and social difficulties or they have such negative
experiences that they literally lose their desire to obtain a college education.

Experience would suggest that until legitimate recognition of cultural differences and concomitant adjustments or changes in the education systems have been effected, it will be necessary to be selective -- only here we are suggesting a selection process based on criteria that will best allow minority students to survive in the hostile system. On inspection, it appears that such characteristics as clear-thinking, social adeptness and the ability to communicate, to name a few, constitute general criteria on which one can measure a student's potential for success in the traditional higher education program. Such general criteria as these above should in no way be seen as attempts to establish culture-free evaluation. In fact, they are probably only measurable in terms of culture.

Few would deny that being Black in America is a unique experience. Logically, talent developed under such conditions will not take on the same character as that defined by society at large. If this is true, then new criteria for measuring are needed. At Oberlin College, we accepted this assumption and set about the task of developing new criteria. As a first approximation of talent (as expressed in the language of "black culture"), we asked that a student be "hip". Such skills and experiences as the "hip" student possesses have been developed in the keen competition over the scarce number of "goodies" available within the black community. While many students coming from these communities are often not enthusiastically engaged in "school work," they are highly motivated and self-reliant. It is assumed that their high drive for self-reliance and mastery of their environment will still permit them to survive academically in the absence of any significant changes in higher education. They will take it upon themselves to demand educational services when they find that their needs are not being met by existing arrangements. Additionally, it is assumed that they would be less inclined to feel the stigma usually attached to students needing supplemental and supportive assistance. In effect, it is felt that they bring with them a rich body of knowledge, skills, and experience which gives them a vantage point in the highly competitive setting of higher education.

To test these notions, in the Spring of 1969 we defined an operation which would measure "hipness" and admitted black students who were identified as talented by this measure into Oberlin College. (So as to be able to make comparisons, this was not done to the exclusion of regular admissions practices). In order to capitalize on the totality of cues in face-to-face communications between human beings, a fifty per cent random sample of all black applicants were invited to the campus for interviews. Additionally, since many of these "cues" are often purely ethnic, we used interviewers who had both first-hand experience with the Black community and the academic world. The interviewers were asked to rate each applicant on their "hipness" as manifested by the personal interview, plus personal written statements each had provided the Admissions office. It was impossible to precisely define "hipness," so an alternate mechanism was developed to give the decisions an objective base -- inter-rater reliability was used to provide the kind of objectivity that other criteria could not. Applicants invited to the campus were independently subjected to both the new rating scheme as well as the regular admissions procedure. As might be expected in the case of two different sets of criteria, the groups of students selected did not coincide. This presented the possibility of comparing the
performance of the groups. Out of thirty-nine black students admitted, eighteen were selected by the regular procedure but not by the new; fourteen by both. Seven students were selected by the new procedure but rejected by the regular.

At the end of the first semester, in terms of percents, there was no appreciable difference in the distribution of grade point averages between the three groups, even though the "new" group differed greatly in academic background.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Point Averages</th>
<th>Experimental</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Above 3.34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.34 to 3.33</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.34 to 2.33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.34</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 7</td>
<td>n = 14</td>
<td>n = 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For illustrative purposes, we have included the mean SAT scores for each of these groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean SAT Scores</th>
<th>Experimental</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While these reflect only summary impressions, they seem, in general, to accord with other research done on this subject. As we increase the number of students in each group, we plan a more systematic analysis of their total progression during their stay on campus. We are particularly interested in seeing whether the grade patterns noted among "hip" students in the first semester can be maintained or improved upon in future work. Other questions to be answered are: Do specific courses contribute to moving the grade point average upward or downward? Are the student counseling and academic advisory services adequate and if not, how can they be improved? Particularly in light of Humphreys' findings (that present probationary rules are incompatible with human qualities), is there "indeed ample basis for discontent with procedures concerned with placing students on probation and dropping students from college for academic deficiencies"?

In total, there are immense tasks and responsibilities facing private colleges and universities as they go about eliminating present racial and economic barriers to education. It is also clear that extreme care is required in establishing educational arrangements intended to achieve this goal. Sound analysis and research should invariably accompany the range of approaches used for this purpose. To this end, we believe that Oberlin's efforts to expand its level and quality of
educational opportunity is a worthy and creative endeavor.

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