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EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS
OF MINORITY STUDENTS

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Approved by
Executive Committee, October 1972

EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS OF MINORITY STUDENTS

A compelling need remains for higher education to be in the vanguard of needed social shifts, and to respond more effectively to changing educational needs, rather than perpetuating outmoded patterns.

It is critically important to intensify, rather than diminish, institutional commitment to the concept of equality of educational opportunity. Higher education must prepare to exercise the requisite capability to educate new and different student populations.

Evidence of sensitivity, awareness, and real commitment in higher education to equality of educational opportunity presently ranges from unconcern to sincere efforts directed toward instituting and maintaining meaningful and effective programs. However, too many situations still reflect a wide gap between faculty expectations for performance and the required understanding of the minority student's current level of academic development, with little consideration given to the point at which the student enters the traditional academic mainstream. It is in such situations that student affairs can provide the background information and necessary connecting links between student and faculty.

Some minority group students experience difficulty in performing satisfactorily in an alien social, cultural, and educational environment. It is incumbent for institutions oriented toward the development of human resources to provide the necessary leadership to help each individual achieve his fullest potential.

Within this context NASPA holds that all member institutions that have not already done so should endeavor to ascertain and address themselves to the special educational, personal, and social needs of minority students. Student affairs must assist in providing the framework for understanding problems, life styles, and attitudes of minorities, including Blacks, Orientals, Native Americans, Latins, Chicanos, and economically-deprived White students.

Student affairs staff and faculty have responsibility to identify, nurture, and encourage all minorities to strive for educational success, acquainting these students with the institutional resources designed to help them progress.

In order to develop a frame of reference and establish general guidelines for member institutions, NASPA recommends that each institution:

- (1) Initiate programs and strategies to encourage minority students to pursue the challenges and demands of higher education. Academic advisement, personal counseling, career guidance, study skills, tutorial assistance, and positive attitudes toward learning are suggestive of such programs.
- (2) Institute greater flexibility in time demands for meeting degree requirements, so that minority students as well as all others may adjust their pace of development, if necessary, to the academic expectations and demands of the institution.

- (3) Accord real attention to the culture and heritage of minorities, as this relates to each group and interfaces with other members within the larger academic community. Special attention through effective programs of social and cultural activities, designed and planned with full involvement of each group, should strengthen each participant's sense of identity.
- (4) Establish programs to address the particular educational and social needs of minorities, and to include support for essential personal and appropriate social needs, where this is clearly indicated, as well as financial assistance to meet the necessary fees and tuition costs.
- (5) Establish procedures to assess academic areas in which minority students need assistance. Present evaluative techniques, such as standardized tests, are often not designed to take into account the uniqueness of many minority students and should be used primarily for diagnostic purposes.
- (6) Establish an awareness program to acquaint other members of the college/university community with the special needs and problems of minority group members. Although the initial opportunity may already have been lost, an appropriate major task of student affairs is to more clearly-reflect and interpret these needs so as to lead to greater understandings by the larger institutional community.
- (7) Enable minority students to be involved equally with other members of the college or university community in campus decision-making. Special emphasis should be toward direct involvement in all decisions that uniquely affect their welfare and interest.
- (8) Develop sensitivity toward problems that develop when minorities are introduced into a previously segregated society. A basic effort of student affairs programming should be to ascertain ways to meet the diverse life styles of increasing numbers of students with differing educational backgrounds and expectations.
- (9) Recruit and train qualified minority and third-world faculty and staff, as well as improve the utilization of those who can be most effective in implementing newly emerging educational patterns and opportunities.