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SWARTHMORE COLLEGE
SWARTHMORE, PENNSYLVANIA

OFFICE OF ADMISSIONS

Social Diversity

Among the issues that one could expect to be drawn in any discussion having to do with admissions criteria, there is one which requires immediate and considerable attention: to what extent and under what conditions should (and can) the goal of social diversity within the student body be a factor in the admissions process? More specifically, to what extent should socio-economic background on the one hand, and minority group membership (particularly, Negro and Puerto Rican) on the other hand, be operative factors in admissions?

I think it safe to say that the majority of colleges and universities in the country, certainly all of the prestigious ones, presently seek socially diverse student bodies. The particular way in which any college or university views the problem of social diversity will obviously depend on the make-up of their present student enrollment. In addition, colleges such as Swarthmore, with its emphasis on - and reputation for - social consciousness, may bring to the problem of social diversity a commitment which exceeds that of the simple desire to reinforce the educational process by bringing students of different backgrounds together. The desirability of social diversity from an educational viewpoint may be reinforced by an institutional feeling of social responsibility.

Although we presently do not have much data on social diversity at Swarthmore, I think there are indications that we may be facing some problems in this area, assuming (as I do) that we are committed to having a socially diverse student body.

Some of the problems on which we are collecting data have to do with the socio-economic backgrounds of our candidate groups. My impression is that we attract relatively few high-ability candidates from the lower end of the socio-economic scale. At present, we are attempting to determine the size of such a group in any given year in this country. We are also studying the research (e. g., that of National Merit) investigating the relationship between socio-economic status and academic achievement.

National Merit reports, for instance, that while 21% of all U.S. families fell below the \$3,000 poverty line in 1964, only 2% of the 1964 Merit Finalists came from such families.

They also suggest that if you assume that 2% of the top decile of high school graduates are from families in this low income category, that somewhere around 4,000 very poor and very talented students graduate from U. S. high schools every year. (National Merit Research Report: Vol. 2, No. 10 (1966): The Origin and Development of Talent by Robert C. Nichols).

In addition, we are interested in the problem of social diversity from the viewpoint of scholarship policy. As I have previously indicated to members of the administration and various members of the CEP, my impression is that we may be spending a sizeable amount of scholarship money each year simply to enable students from middle-income families to afford the costs of Swarthmore. While we do award a number of large scholarships each year, a substantial proportion of these go to foreign students. Most of the remainder are provided, through the Rockefeller grant, to Negro students, and through a substantial fund provided by an alumnus, to young men from a particular geographical region of the country. Such awards (i.e., in all three categories) accounted for nearly 40% of the \$130,000 in scholarships awarded to the freshmen in the Class of 1970. As contributory as such awards are to bringing social diversity to the student body, we are still lacking sufficient resources to recruit high-ability, poor students, regardless of race, across the country as a whole.

This problem is aggravated still further by the fact that with college costs rising there has been a great deal of pressure put on the College Scholarship Service to liberalize allowances made in estimating scholarship needs of students, particularly those from middle-income families. I expect that such liberalization will in fact occur before next year. One additional aspect of scholarship policy is the fact that there is a competitiveness to the use of scholarship funds. For instance, a middle-income student with an established need of \$500 per year, offered such funds in scholarship by one college and as a loan by another, will most likely go to the college offering the scholarship. I think it likely that we ourselves have benefitted in this manner in our competition with other colleges for good students.

Considering that we spent \$130,000 in scholarship aid on the present freshman class, the following analysis of that class, made by the American Council on Education through a questionnaire this past Fall, is revealing:

<u>Estimated Parental Income</u>	<u>Swarthmore College</u>			<u>4-yr colleges nat'l norms</u>		
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Less than \$4,000	2.9	1.8	2.4	6.8	7.7	7.2
\$4,000 - \$5,999	3.6	1.8	2.8	13.2	13.3	13.3
\$6,000 - \$7,999	8.6	4.4	6.7	17.5	16.8	17.1
\$8,000 - \$9,999	10.8	7.1	9.1	17.2	15.9	16.6
\$10,000 - \$14,999	21.6	27.4	24.2	24.6	24.4	24.5
\$15,000 - \$19,999	12.9	20.4	16.3	8.9	9.7	9.3
\$20,000 - \$24,999	14.4	16.8	15.5	4.3	5.0	4.7
\$25,000 - \$29,999	6.5	4.4	5.6	2.4	2.7	2.5
\$30,000 - or more	18.7	15.9	17.5	5.0	4.5	4.8

(Based on 252 respondents)

I do not know to what extent (with regard to family income) the freshman class is representative of the college as a whole, but I would guess that an analysis of the upper three classes would yield data not significantly different from the above.

Another perspective is gained by looking at the distribution of income by families for the entire country: (in percentage terms)

<u>Family Income</u>	<u>Percent of Families</u>	<u>Cumulative National %</u>	<u>Cumulative Swarthmore %</u>
Less than \$4,000	27.2	100.0	100.0
\$4,000 - \$5,999	20.1	72.7	97.7
\$6,000 - \$7,999	19.3	52.6	94.9
\$8,000 - \$9,999	13.4	33.3	88.2
\$10,000 - \$14,999	14.5	19.9	79.1
\$15,000 - \$24,999	4.4	5.4	54.9
\$25,000 and over	1.0	1.0	23.1

(Data is for 1963, from Statistical Abstract of the US: 1965 p.341, and from Richard Scammon and Ben Wattenberg, This U.S.A. (1965), p. 126. The Swarthmore data is from the ACE analysis of the Class of 1970).

It would appear that not only are our students from among the most highly academically qualified in the country, but they are also predominantly from families whose incomes are among the highest in the country.

Still another perspective on the problem of social diversity is provided by the following data, also from the present freshman class and gathered by the ACE.

	<u>Swarthmore College</u>			<u>4-yr colleges nat'l norms</u>		
<u>Father's Education</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Grammar school or less	2.1	1.7	1.9	9.8	8.7	9.3
Some high school	3.5	0.8	2.3	15.3	13.9	14.6
High school graduate	7.6	8.3	8.0	29.5	28.3	28.9
Some college	9.7	11.7	10.6	18.1	19.6	18.9
College graduate	29.2	30.0	29.5	16.7	17.8	17.3
Post-graduate degree	47.9	47.5	47.7	10.7	11.7	11.2
<u>Mother's Education</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Grammar school or less	0.0	0.8	0.4	6.0	5.3	5.7
Some high school	2.8	3.3	3.0	12.7	12.0	12.4
High school graduate	20.1	15.8	18.2	43.1	40.5	41.8
Some college	17.4	17.5	17.4	18.7	21.8	20.3
College graduate	41.0	45.8	43.2	16.5	17.3	16.9
Post-graduate degree	18.8	16.7	17.8	3.1	3.1	3.1

(Based on 264 respondents)

To what extent then do we have more than token social diversity at Swarthmore? To what extent do we desire it? To what extent is it possible to have it? To what extent can we afford it? The above data will give us at least a start in considering the whole question of social diversity - as well as scholarship policy - as factors to be considered in admissions. (See addendum.)

One problem presents itself more immediately: that of the recruitment and admission of Negro students. It is not necessary to review the College's expressed concern to admit and educate Negro students on a scale far greater than that which had obtained in the past. Such efforts have been generously underwritten by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation for the past three years. The recruitment and admission of Negro students has indeed become a primary concern of hundreds of colleges and universities across the country, and a highly academically qualified Negro student today receives as many good offers of admission and scholarship aid as athletes once did. The dilemma for Swarthmore derives from our strongly stated commitment in this area, our sizeable funds presently available for Negro students in particular, and educational standards which are presently too difficult to meet for all but an extremely few such students, who, in turn, are very competitively bid for. However we would decry the motivations behind, and the methods of, recruitment of Negro students by various colleges, the problem remains a serious one.

Being on the National Merit selection committee this year, I had the occasion to learn that of the 14,000 Merit finalists we dealt with, less than 20 were Negro students! This is perhaps shocking, but not surprising to those of us who have visited the secondary schools to search out Negro students academically qualified to do the work at Swarthmore. Obviously one need not be a National Merit finalist to do the work at Swarthmore, but the relative figures are suggestive. The HEW study, Equality of Educational Opportunity, does not give any basis for optimism that the situation is likely to change drastically in the near future. One estimate suggests that it will be a full three-quarters of a century before the Negro "catches up" educationally. (See, The Negro American, ed. by Talcott Parsons and Kenneth Clark, 1966, p. 298)

The recruitment and admission of such students is only one aspect of a larger problem still: what is the institutional press on even the most highly qualified Negro students once they begin college at institutions such as Swarthmore? Assuredly there are status considerations involved in the determination of 6 of the 12 Negro males we admitted last year to attend Harvard, and 1 to attend Princeton, and 1 to attend M.I.T., but are there other factors, e. g., size of the institution, less academic homogeneity, or even location? The newly formed Black Student group on campus might well give us some insights here. Certainly, the nature and strength of Swarthmore's commitment to admitting and educating Negro students should receive high priority in any discussion of admissions policy.

Fred Hargadon
Dean of Admissions
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Addendum

Although I have emphasized the lower end of the socio-economic scale in discussing social diversity at Swarthmore, it is probably also the case that we educate very few students from the so-called "upper class". My impression is that we have few students from families of substantial wealth and semi-aristocratic, or patrician, backgrounds. If such an impression is correct, then this too is an aspect of the problem of attaining social diversity in the student body which should be discussed. An article by Humphrey Doermann, at Harvard, suggests that the national pool of candidates bright enough to do the work at "selective-admissions" colleges and prosperous enough to pay tuition and other costs is much smaller than imagined. A copy of that article is attached.

F. A. H.