

The Admissions Policy Committee's Study of Negro Student
Recruitment and Enrollment: A Chronology

April 19, and
June 6, 1968

At two faculty meetings, the Dean of Admissions reported to the faculty his concern over the changing context of Negro student recruitment throughout the country, the greatly increased competition among colleges to enroll qualified Negro students, and the resultant difficulty in maintaining even the present level of enrollment of such students at Swarthmore.

May 9, 1968

The President of the College requested the Admissions Policy Committee undertake a thorough review of the problem in order to bring to the Faculty and Board of Managers policy recommendations for the future. The President also met with Sam Shepherd, Chairman of SASS at the time, and Don Mizell, informing them that he was asking the Committee to study the problem. He asked the Chairman of SASS and the President of the Student Council to designate Negro students to work with the Committee on the problem.

August-
September,
1968

The Dean of Admissions prepared a 43-page report on the recruitment and enrollment of Negro students at Swarthmore. The report is a record of the efforts of the Admissions Office in the area of Negro student recruitment for the past five years and includes, in addition, the following: aggregate sociological and academic data on all of the Negro students enrolled at Swarthmore during this five-year period, an assessment of the national picture with regard to Negro students and access to higher education, an assessment of the complexities and problems and prospects of our own recruitment process, a discussion of the problem in maintaining socio-economic diversity within the student body of a small and highly selective college, and suggested policy alternatives which might be considered for the future.

September 23, Fall term ~~begin~~ began.
1968

October 1,
1968

Letter from Clinton Etheridge and Don Mizell critical of admissions in area of Negro student recruitment and enrollment published in Phoenix. Both students had prior knowledge that an Admissions Office report on the subject had been prepared and that the Admissions Policy Committee was to begin work on the problem within the week. Neither student sought data from the Admissions Office, and their letter was factually erroneous in a number of crucial instances.

October 7,
1968

Admissions Policy Committee met with two items on ~~the~~ ^{the} agenda: (1) to discuss the report of the Admissions Office (which had been sent to them previously), and (2) to discuss ways of building in student participation in the formulation of admissions policy. The report was discussed and the Committee decided to adopt it as a working paper and to give it community-wide distribution in order that all members of the administration, faculty and student body could familiarize themselves with the problem and subsequently aid the Committee in its deliberations. Since only a limited number of copies of the report had been reproduced, it was determined that the chairman of each department would receive a copy, that each Negro student on campus would receive a copy, and that ten copies

would be placed on General Reserve in the library. (The Committee decided to take an extra 24 hours to consider at length whether, since the report was to be given wider distribution, it was necessary to delete any of the data included in the report. The members of the Committee ultimately satisfied themselves that the data was both sufficiently anonymous in its presentation and also sufficiently integral to the nature of the problems discussed in the report to warrant its being kept intact.) The Committee then decided to seek an early meeting with all of the Negro students in the College both to obtain their initial views on the problem and to find ways to incorporate their thinking into our deliberations.

The Committee then briefly discussed the possibility of having general student representation on the Admissions Policy Committee. Given that the CEP had recommended that the Committee's primary function should be the discussion of the broad policy questions relating to admissions (and not the involvement in the actual decision-making process of the Admissions Office), and, given that the method for arriving at student appointments on other faculty committees had seemed to work well, there was generally favorable response to the possibility of seeking as many as four students to be appointed to the Committee at an early date. The Committee was asked to think further about the various combinations of backgrounds we would seek in such student appointments before taking any further action. (Subsequently, the manner of making student appointments to faculty committees became an unresolved issue between the Student Council and the President, and the Committee thereupon decided to further consider the possibility of student appointments only after that issue was resolved.)

October 9, 1968

Copies of the report were sent to individual Negro undergraduates together with a cover letter inviting them to meet with members of the Committee on Monday evening, October 14.

October 10, 1968

Copies of the report were sent to individual Negro post-baccalaureate students together with a cover letter inviting them to the meeting on Monday evening, October 14.

Copies were sent to the chairman of each department together with a cover letter asking him to see that all members of the department had an opportunity to read the report.

Ten copies of the report were placed on General Reserve in the library.

At the Dean of Admission's request, the Editor-in-Chief of the Phoenix agreed to place an announcement in the paper (due to be published the next day) to the effect that the report was on General Reserve and students should take the opportunity to read it. (The editor subsequently decided on his own to withhold the announcement for a later issue, wherein he could accompany it with a story on the report.)

October 10, 1968

At about 7:30 p.m., the Dean of Admissions received a call from Clinton Etheridge reporting that some members of SASS did not like the report and wanted it taken off General Reserve. His specific complaints were two: first, that the report included data it should not have; and, second, ^{that the} reference to SASS on page 23 "put them in a bad light." ^{The Dean} he replied that the Committee had thought long about the content and distribution of the report, but that ^{he} would unilaterally remove it from the library until ^{he} he could contact the members of the Committee, report ^{his} complaints, and seek further advice. The members were contacted later that evening and ~~the report should remain~~ on General Reserve.
reaffirmed their decision to place

October 11, 1968

The Dean of Admissions sent Clinton Etheridge a lengthy letter setting out the reasoning of the Committee in its decision to place the report on General Reserve as well as its reasoning for not changing that decision based on the complaints registered the previous evening.

After allowing due time for receipt of that letter by Clinton Etheridge, the reports were placed back on General Reserve in the afternoon.

The Phoenix appeared, without the announcement to students that the report was on General Reserve. (This minor incident was significant only because the expected appearance of the announcement constituted one element in the Committee's decision not to remove the report from reserve at that time; this was pointed out in the letter to Clinton Etheridge as follows: "An irretrievable announcement to the entire student body that the reports are now available in the library will appear in today's Phoenix. For interested students to be told that the report was withdrawn, temporarily or permanently, (either at the request of the Admissions Committee or at the request of SASS) runs the danger of creating an aura of suspicion about the motives behind such requests which would detract from the objectivity which we all hope will be brought to it by the readers.")

October 13, 1968

A letter was submitted by the Dean of Admissions to the Phoenix at the Sunday ~~evening~~ deadline for publication on Tuesday, the 15th. It requested that the College community take an interest in the problem of Negro student recruitment and enrollment, read the report for background information, and forward to the Committee its thoughts and recommendations. ~~It also mentioned that certain data in the Etheridge/Admissions letter of Oct. 1 were in error (as were the conclusions drawn from them) and the data was corrected.~~

October 14, 1968

critical of

The Admissions Policy Committee gathered in Bond at 7:30 for the scheduled meeting with all Negro students. At about 7:40 all of the Negro students walked in and sat down. As the Dean of Admissions called the meeting to order, Clinton Etheridge stood, read a statement ~~during~~ the report and its author and then he and about 35 of 45 students stood and walked out. The Dean of Admissions proceeded to read some opening remarks which touched on why the report had been prepared in the way it was and why the data in the report was especially relevant and significant. The floor was opened for discussion and an

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exchange of views took place between the remaining Negro students and the members of the Committee which touched on the report as well as on the substantive problems of Negro student recruitment and enrollment. The meeting lasted about two hours. After the meeting was over, the Committee remained and deliberated on the events of the evening. They then decided that as an act of faith in those students who had remained in order to keep the dialogue open, ~~they~~ ^{we} would remove the report from General Reserve and attempt to try again to ^{get} ~~all~~ of the Negro students to join ~~us~~ in a discussion of the substantive problems of recruiting Negro students.

October 15, 1968

The Phoenix appeared with the Dean of Admission's open letter requesting the community read the report (which had by now been removed) and consider the problems. (Some of the limitations of using a newspaper which has a deadline two days prior to its publication as a vehicle of communication were vividly illustrated throughout this entire controversy.)

October 16, 1968

An open letter to the Swarthmore Community was written and distributed by Patrick Henry, Assistant Professor of Religion, and a member of the Committee. In it he explained the motives and actions of the Committee to date and ~~requested~~ ^{he} requested that the Negro students sit down with the Committee to talk about the problems.

October 18, 1968

Each member of the Committee received an unsigned list of demands from SASS (published in the Phoenix the same day).

An article written by Clinton Etheridge and criticizing the Report (which the student body would subsequently not have the opportunity to read) appeared in the Phoenix.

October 19, 1968

The Dean of Admissions sought out Clinton Etheridge on this Saturday afternoon and proposed that the two of them sit down and go over the report page by page in order to determine more specifically SASS's disagreements with it in hopes of getting the Negro students and the Committee together again on the substantive problem at hand. Clinton Etheridge declined to do this. The Dean then pointed out that while the College did not accept or reject demands qua demands, the substance of the demands could certainly be discussed, and the Committee would be glad to discuss the substance of the first and fourth demands accordingly; he also pointed out that the substance of the second and third demands did not fall within the province of the Committee and should be directed elsewhere, possibly to the President and/or Student Affairs Committee. After a long one-sided discussion in which Clinton Etheridge berated the white man and "Uncle Tom" Negroes, he agreed to refer ~~the~~ ^{his} to SASS. Nothing came of this meeting.

the Dean's views and suggestions

October 21, 1968

The Admissions Policy Committee ^{met} to discuss a draft letter to all Negro students explaining that disagreements in judgment over matters such as the distribution of the report were just that - disagreements in judgment - and not matters of racism. Further, that since the Committee hoped to make policy recommendations to the community at the earliest possible time before the next admissions process, it was willing to withhold any further distribution of the report and to sit down with the Negro students to discuss the substantive problem of recruiting and enrolling more Negro students. It asked them to respond either as individuals or as members of SASS - or both - to four specific questions relating to the substance of the report, their own experiences at Swarthmore, the question of "risk" students, and recruitment and enrollment policy alternatives.

October 22, 1968

The letter written the evening before by the Committee was sent to all Negro students in the College. To date no individual acknowledgements of or replies to this letter have been received.

October 29, 1968

The Dean of Admissions received a letter from the College Relations Committee of SASS requesting that the Committee meet with them and "individual black students" on the evening of November 3. On behalf of the Committee, the Dean informed SASS that they would be glad to meet with them and requested of both Pat Connell (Chairman of the College Relations Committee) and Clinton Etheridge in person if "individual black students" meant Negro non-members of SASS and if so, who was responsible for inviting them - SASS or the Committee? They each responded that they did mean the "independents" and would themselves see that they were invited. SASS arranged for a meeting room in a lodge.

November 3, 1968

At 7:30 the Committee gathered ~~in the designated lodge~~ with about five or six members of SASS. ~~When Clinton Etheridge decided that he did not like the meeting idea and suggested we move to the auditorium for no apparent purpose, but which the Committee reluctantly agreed to do. The meeting thus began about 8 p.m.~~ One member of the Committee asked who the group of students represented and Clinton Etheridge replied that they represented SASS and that while they had invited independent Negro students to attend, apparently none had wished to do so. (That this latter was in fact not the case resulted in considerable consternation on the part of the independent Negro students who, when later reading about the meeting, asked the Committee why they had not been included in such a meeting.)

The meeting began by various SASS members reading from a list of "complaints" (later submitted in writing to the Committee) mostly centering on the report and its originally intended distribution. The members of the Committee pointed out that the students had no "right" to rewrite the report of the Dean of Admissions, although they were free to criticize it (such criticism had in fact been invited from the first), but that if it were okay with them, ~~the~~ ^{Committee} simply would not distribute the report any further within the community and ~~get~~ ^{would} on with the problems of recruitment and enrollment. This they agreed to. (Thus was the substance of their first "demand" resolved; the substance of their fourth "demand," that of

involving SASS in the Committee's formulation of recruitment policies was what the Committee had striven for from the calling of the very first open meeting through to the actual meeting in progress on November 2. ~~All of this making the "endorsement" of such demands by the Student Council on November 6 rather curious.~~ The SASS students then suggested the College enroll "high-risk" students and recruit in different areas of the country, etc., all of which was pertinent and duly noted and interestingly, all of which was parallel to suggestions in the original report as well as those put forth by the Negro students who had remained to talk with the Committee at the first open meeting. The Committee concluded that, while the meeting of Nov. 3rd had its rough spots, ~~that~~ it had been a good one and we were back on the track. When asked by a member of the Committee, at the end of the meeting, whether ~~the Committee~~ ^{they} could feel free to call upon SASS for further deliberations, Clinton Etheridge replied that they would think about it and let ~~them~~ know.

~~(It should be pointed out that)~~ During October and November, the Dean of Admissions ~~collected~~ ^{collected} information on programs at other colleges, as well as information on programs such as ABC and Transitional Year, and passed it along to the Committee for their consideration.)

November 6, 1968

Student Council met with SASS members, who gave Council "15 minutes" to endorse ^{policy} the demands which had previously been sent to the Admissions ^{policy} Committee. Council, taking longer than the designated time, endorsed the demands. The Admissions Policy Committee was to learn of this action only via the Phoenix of Nov. 8.

November 7, 1968

Four members of Student Council came to see the Dean of Admissions and informed him that SASS had requested endorsement of their demands and also requested Council to endorse SASS's proposal that if four students were to be appointed to the Admissions Policy Committee ~~that~~ two of them would be Negroes and SASS would have the power to nominate those two. ^{The Dean} ~~discussed~~ ^{discussed} the background of the entire matter to date with these four Council members, expressed hope that they would eventually be able to read the Report, and expressed ^{his} views on the matters SASS had brought to Council. None of these students indicated to the Dean that Council had already taken action the previous evening.

Later this same day the Dean learned of Council's action the previous evening and of the possibility that SASS's demands for power over appointment of students to the Committee would come before the Council for action on Sunday, Nov. 10.

November 8, 1968

The Phoenix carried the story of Council's endorsement of SASS demands.

November 9, 1968

The Dean of Admissions wrote a strongly-worded letter criticizing the action of Student Council both for its precipitousness and its substance. The letter questioned the precedent of endorsing "demands," the lack of judicious inquiry in responding to their substance, and doubts concerning the maturity and independence of judgment of student representatives who would act so quickly, and under such conditions, on complex and sensitive matters.

November 13, 1968

The Admissions Policy Committee met to continue their discussions of remedial programs, special programs such as ABC, and the various policy alternatives open to the College. It was decided to proceed with a draft of policy recommendations which the Committee would then review and revise sometime early in December.

November 13, 1968

Michael Fields, a Negro student, distributed an open letter to the College community in which he stated his support of the SASS demands as an "independent."

The Dean of Admissions talked in person with Michael Fields and explains that he believed the Fields letter to be seriously distorting and uninformed in its presentation of facts, to wit: no one, either in the administration or on the Admissions Policy Committee, had ever referred to SASS as an "illegitimate" organization; that the Dean had personally advised Clinton Etheridge over two weeks before that two of the demands of SASS should be directed elsewhere, and that the other two had in fact been substantively resolved; that the claim, then, that the administration had been "silent" was false (in fact, the demands had never been presented to anyone but members of the Admissions Policy Committee); and that the Committee had yet to hear from the Negro students (including Michael Fields himself) any response to ~~the~~ the Committee's request for their views on all of the problems before ~~them~~.

and Student
Council

Committee's

November 15, 1968

President Smith requested that Michael Fields come to discuss his open letter. He urged Michael Fields to do whatever he could to get details that would clarify SASS's second and third demands. Fields agreed to talk with the Negro students in an effort to produce such clarification.

November 17, 1968

President Smith made the same request of Ellen Schall, President of Student Council.

November 26, 1968

Michael Fields returned to talk with President Smith and expressed what he thought the clarifications were, based on his survey of Negro students. President Smith asked him to develop the proposals in as much detail as possible in a memorandum.

December 10, 1968

The Dean of Admissions wrote a letter to the Assistant Dean of Admissions of the University of Pennsylvania, William Adams, a Negro whose name was submitted to the Dean by Clinton Etheridge as a possible resource person. The letter requested of Mr. Adams whatever information he could provide on the recruitment of Negro students at Penn, especially "risk" students, together with data on their academic background as well as their programs and progress at Penn. Mr. Adams' views on the problem, as well as any information which could be reproduced for the Committee, were solicited. To date there has been no acknowledgment of or reply to the letter.

December 11, 1968

Dean of Admissions talked with Harriet Michel, an employee of NSSFNS, who called to see of what help she might be on this matter of Negro student recruitment and enrollment. The Dean informed her that, given the locating and referral function of NSSFNS, ~~that~~ she might be of great help once the College had decided its future course of action (e.g. what level of academic preparation and achievement would be required henceforth in Negro students the College would seek to enroll.) She agreed to be "on tap" for us.

December 13, 1968

Draft of policy recommendations distributed among Admissions Policy Committee members, and meeting called for rewriting and revision on December 18.

December , 1968

President Smith sent a note to Michael Fields reminding him of his wish to have a memorandum on SASS's proposals.

December 13, 1968

Ellen Schall, President of Student Council, sent a letter to Dean of Admissions inquiring about status of Committee policy recommendations on Negro student recruitment and enrollment.

Reply sent by Dean same day indicating tentative time-table, and areas report of policy recommendations would cover, and plans to distribute it for comment to the Negro students.

December 16, 1968

Michael Fields sends President Smith a letter clarifying the demand for an appointment of a black administrator, suggesting possible positions, the type of appointment, and indicating that black students ^{must} have at least an implicit veto over such an appointment.

December 16, 1968

Letter sent by some SASS members to select faculty members condemning the Dean of Admissions.

December 17, 1968

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Ellen Schall, President of Student Council, sent a letter to Admissions Policy Committee members requesting that they release their policy recommendations to the student body prior to any planned meeting of the faculty to discuss the recommendations. (In a conversation with Miss Schall on the 15th, the Dean of Admissions suggested to her that the Committee would in all likelihood be *glad* to do this. At this same meeting, Miss Schall expressed serious reservations over the time-table the Dean had suggested for discussion of the recommendations at an early faculty meeting in January, since she felt this would delay faculty discussions of the Student Life Report, which she believed ought to come first.)

December 18, 1968

Admissions Policy Committee met and after a lengthy session completed its statement of policy recommendations. It then decided to release the statement to all members of the College community as soon as they return from vacation, to ask them to review it and comment upon it, to have the faculty discuss it (and any critiques of it by students or others), and then to present a final set of policy recommendations to the faculty and Board for their approval.

December 23, 1968

declared to be

President of the College received a "clarified" set of demands, ~~declared to be~~ "non-negotiable" and accompanied by an ultimatum by the sender, Clinton Etheridge, as Chairman of SASS.