

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE
Swarthmore, Pennsylvania 19081

December 30, 1968

TO: Students, Faculty, Administration and Board of
Managers of Swarthmore College

FROM: Fred A. Hargadon, Chairman of the Admissions Policy
Committee

The Admissions Policy Committee, at its meeting of December 18, proposed to forward the attached policy recommendations on Negro student recruitment and enrollment to the Faculty for their preliminary consideration at the earliest possible date in January. Comments and suggestions regarding these policy recommendations may be forwarded to members of the Committee.

Negro Student Recruitment and Enrollment

I.

Since the beginning of the Fall Semester, the Admissions Policy Committee has been studying the various aspects of the problem of recruitment and enrollment of Negro students at Swarthmore. The College's efforts in recruiting Negro students over the past five years were reviewed in a report, drawn up over the summer, by the Dean of Admissions. The report discussed the problems and prospects to be faced by the College in its efforts to recruit Negro students in the future, and suggested various policy alternatives to be considered. The Committee adopted the report as its working paper and proceeded immediately to seek additional information on the problem from a variety of sources. Those Negro students presently enrolled at Swarthmore were asked by the Committee to present, either in person or by letter, their views of the problem. Specifically, we requested from them the following: (1) their critique of the working paper, (2) their thoughts on the matter of policy alternatives for the College, (3) their thoughts on various programs and/or supportive measures by which students of lesser preparation could be incorporated into, and pursue successfully, Swarthmore's academic program, and (4) those comments on their own experience at Swarthmore which they believe to be relevant to the discussion of recruitment and enrollment of Negro students, either "risk" or "non-risk," for Swarthmore. Other colleges and universities were solicited for information concerning their respective accomplishments in this area, and the Committee familiarized itself with special programs (e.g., Transitional Year Programs and A Better Chance Programs) aimed at increasing the pool of Negro high school graduates qualified to go on to College.

Were the pool of such qualified candidates sufficiently large, the recruitment of Negro students would present less of a problem. In order to enroll any

significant number of Negro students, many institutions have accepted students who do not meet their entrance requirements and who, in many cases, require remedial work. Few of these institutions have as yet fully evaluated their experiences with such programs. The large majority of them are still in the formative or beginning stages, and little in the way of comparative data (especially from institutions similar in nature to Swarthmore) can be expected before two or three more years have passed. Our inquiries have revealed only that as of yet there are no patents pending on either the means by which it is possible to accurately determine in which cases a student's performance on standardized tests reflects considerably less than his true academic abilities (while we know this happens, we discover it more by accident than by design), or the means by which colleges can successfully provide ways through which they can absorb students of inadequate preparation into their regular academic programs. To the extent that the Committee anticipated acquiring the necessary hard data by which it could chart a future course based on acknowledged wisdom, it was disappointed. One thing does seem clear, however: the definition of "risk" remains a relative one, and whatever progress is achieved in the area of "risk student" education, it is unlikely that any one device or method will work equally well for all institutions, given the great differences which characterize the curricula of colleges and universities in this country.

In trying to arrive at policy recommendations on this matter, it was necessary for the Committee to seek answers to questions, many of which could be phrased only in the abstract and none of which seemed to have absolutely "right" or "wrong" answers. Some of these questions are suggested below. We caution that we do not feel completely enlightened regarding all of the complexities of the problem of increasing the number of Negro students enrolled at Swarthmore or at similar institutions, nor are we pretending to dispense wisdom on that subject. Our thinking on the subject has been an admixture of experience,

intuition, social consciousness, and hope. Our policy recommendations are meant to be suggested approaches for the immediate future, subject to periodic review, rather than tightly reasoned dicta handed down for the decade ahead.

II.

Despite the fact that Swarthmore has in recent years been relatively successful in enrolling more Negro students, the conditions under which such recruitment took place have changed tremendously in the past two years. Whereas our recruiting of Negro students to date has been essentially "non-risk" in nature, and whereas the last two years have seen perhaps a two-hundred-fold increase in the number of colleges and universities actively seeking to enroll greater numbers of Negro students, and whereas the size of the pool of qualified Negro secondary school graduates remains relatively very small, we have found it increasingly difficult to maintain the success which characterized our earlier efforts in this area. The prospect of continually declining numbers of Negro students enrolled at Swarthmore has forced us to ask ourselves some hard questions. Why do we want more Negro students enrolled here? Is it simply because we want to be able to say that we have x-number in the student body? Is it because they represent the kind (or a kind) of well-qualified student whom we seek anyway? Or, is it because we feel a social obligation to meet a particularly pressing need of contemporary society? Is it because we believe that we have something special in the way of an educational program to offer them? And, if in order to enroll more Negro students, we find it necessary to admit students with inadequate preparation, would the necessary modifications in the educational program be such that we would thereby lose some of those qualities which distinguish our program from those of many other colleges? Is it because of the educational benefits which are normally thought to occur as the result of bringing together students of varied socio-economic backgrounds and life experiences? And do these benefits persist if a large number of Negro or other students adopt a largely separatist life-style within the community?

Questions of a slightly different sort also presented themselves to us, mostly having to do with the possibility of enrolling students with less than the normally required level of academic preparation. How adaptable is the Swarthmore educational program (in terms of its size, the quality and nature of its students, its other commitments, etc.) when it comes to considering the enrollment of "risk" students? Even if we could accurately measure the gap between the level of preparation of "risk" students and that required to pursue our curriculum successfully, how reasonable or valid is it to expect that Swarthmore's present faculty and other personnel are qualified to help such students overcome that gap, and in what amount of time? What are the non-academic conditions of student life within the College which would require development should such students be enrolled? What number of "risk" students is it feasible to talk about when discussing their possible enrollment?

When we asked ourselves and each other questions such as these, it was not because we expected to arrive at definitive answers upon which all would agree. Rather, the mulling over of a variety of answers to each of the questions provided us with a kind of backdrop against which we could highlight and contrast one possible course of action or another, seeking to determine the implications or shadowy areas of each. What may be said to have emerged from our collective thinking can be summarized as follows:

Neither by its size, the nature of its academic program, or the quality of its faculty and student body is Swarthmore representative of institutions of higher education in this country. It has deliberately chosen to remain small, to offer a rigorous curriculum, and to seek in both its faculty and its students the very highest quality. Believing in the desirability of pluralism among our colleges and universities, it has opted for offering a particular kind and quality of educational experience. It has neither the desire - nor, if it had, the resources - to be all things to all men. Among those things it might do well, it has set certain priorities and chosen to do well what it best knows how to do.

However, once having agreed upon the type and quality of education to be offered, the College has sought within those limits to gain as much variety within its student body - in terms of socio-economic background, life experiences, career interests - as the standards necessary to assure

reasonable success with our academic program would allow. We have, therefore, never sought to educate only those students whose academic credentials place them at the very top of their class. Rather we have established an acceptable range of academic achievement within which the College is able to enroll a sufficiently diverse student body which is capable of undertaking our academic program with reasonable success.

Whatever the benefits thereby derived from a diverse student body, however, the small size of the College dictates that they result more from the qualities of individuals and from the closeness of the community than from the representation of any one kind of student in large numbers. Only by emphasizing quality over numbers can a college of this size hope to maintain the considerable diversity which presently characterizes it.

With this in mind, the Committee sought to find those ways in which the College would be able to: (1) assure an increased enrollment of Negro students at Swarthmore; (2) use its resources to make whatever appropriate contributions it might toward increasing the number of Negro students able to go on to college in general throughout the country; and (3) more satisfactorily respond to those particular needs, both academic and social, deemed to be uniquely theirs by the Negro students already enrolled in the College. Our recommendations are then grouped under these three areas.

III.

1. Negro student recruitment and enrollment at Swarthmore.

- A. The College should continue to recruit vigorously the best qualified Negro secondary school graduates.

While it is recognized by the Committee that a number of factors (e.g., increasing competition from other colleges for qualified Negro students, and Swarthmore's rather forbidding academic reputation) preclude setting unreasonably high expectations of success in this area, it is suggested nevertheless that the Admissions Office be provided with the necessary additional resources to enable it to make initial contacts with greater numbers of Negro high school students. More available travel time to visit secondary schools, the necessary funds to enable more visits by Negro students to the Swarthmore campus, and more effective use of alumni and students and student organizations, such as the Swarthmore

Afro-American Student Society, would undoubtedly enhance the chances for making our recruitment efforts more effective in the future. The term "vigorous recruitment" implies making strenuous efforts to get as many of the best qualified Negro students as possible to look into the Swarthmore program, so that they may determine if Swarthmore offers the education they seek.

- B. The fact that an applicant for admission is a Negro will obviously be one consideration in the admissions process, but no applicant should be admitted without regard to his other qualifications and solely on the grounds that he is a Negro.

The admissions process for all applicants to Swarthmore includes appraisals of factors other than academic credentials. Judgments are made not only of factors such as intellectual achievement and curiosity, but also concerning a candidate's maturity, sense of purpose, capacity for growth, character and special abilities. Under no circumstances should the Admissions Office encourage unrealistic applications from students whose level of academic preparation places them clearly outside our acceptable range. Such applications would serve neither the College nor the individual applicant, and would too often result in creating expectations on the part of the applicant which could not reasonably be expected to be fulfilled. The Committee realizes that the Admissions Office must then walk a thin line in seeking those students who have not had the opportunity to achieve to their potential while at the same time avoiding the encouragement of unrealistic applications, and it suggests that no student who has not applied on his own should be encouraged by the Admissions Office to make application without some evidence of his academic record to date.

- C. The College should not adopt a quota system for enrolling Negro students. Given the fact that the Swarthmore student body is not itself representative of college students throughout the country, no particular enrollment figure for Negro students thereby suggests itself as the most appropriate or just one. Rather, the College is urged to strive for a minimum of twenty Negro students in each freshman class, with a slight margin of men over women.

The suggestion of a minimum number is not meant to imply any notion that such a number is either ideal or satisfactory. It simply reflects that number which the Committee believes represents a challenging but realistic target for the College to aim at in the immediate future. The Committee is not, however, optimistic concerning the chances of achieving that number for next year's freshman class. Recruiting efforts tend to pay off, if at all, in the years following that in which they were undertaken. Reinforced efforts to recruit both qualified Negro students and a small number of academically less well qualified students (described below) should make it possible to enroll a greater number of Negro students in the freshman class entering in the Fall of 1970. The Committee suggests that the situation of Negro student enrollment be reviewed every two years, thereby incorporating new information and new developments to that time.

- D. The College should, as an experiment, undertake to enroll a small number of students (somewhere between five and ten, and including some students who are not Negro) who, while they fall just below our normal admissions standards, are believed to possess other qualities which will enable them to "close the gap" in their academic preparation through individually tailored programs during their freshman year, or longer if necessary.

In looking at other colleges and universities which have enrolled students who had not met their normal admissions requirements, we found (not surprisingly) that most of them have only just recently inaugurated remedial programs of various types, largely innovative and experimental in nature. If Swarthmore itself embarks on such a program, it seems both desirable and appropriate that it develop an approach which is best suited to its own purposes, and one which takes into consideration the particular strengths and limitations of a college of our size and particular academic ethos. The Committee therefore recommends that we seek to enroll a given number of students who, while not meeting our general admissions requirements across the board, nevertheless reveal certain academic strengths and achievements. A freshman academic program would be

devised for each such student which would do two things: first, it would be built largely around his demonstrated academic strengths; and secondly, an appropriate course offering (probably introductory in nature) would be designated as the one through which he would work to reduce past deficiencies in his academic preparation. The faculty member teaching that course and a senior major in that department would have the responsibility of working with the student and devising a particular variation of the course which would satisfy the standards of that department and at the same time enable the student to use the course as an instrument by which he can improve his academic capabilities. For instance, for a student weak in the ability to think abstractly, a beginning course in Philosophy might serve the dual purpose of learning a new field at the same time as using the course to improve his ability to reason abstractly. Or the introductory Economics course might adopt slightly different readings and course problems to teach the same principles to a student who might otherwise find it impossible to understand the course as it is presently taught. The specific examples given here are meant only to illustrate the principle of using our regular course offerings in a manner which, while not reducing the level of information and understanding of the field necessary to achieve a passing grade, nevertheless is adapted to suit a particular student's need to use that course for improving certain academic skills in general. The Committee suggests that interested faculty and students in their departments meet to flesh out this proposal. The Committee further suggests that in those departments which find themselves able and willing to work with one or two students in this fashion that some method of keeping track of what works and what does not work be established. It is hoped that some students could be admitted under the conditions described above in the freshman class to enter the College in the Fall of 1969. Implicit in this recommendation, of course, is the need to establish the necessary counselling support (both social and academic) for those students who would desire and/or require it.

2. Enhancing opportunities for all Negro students to attend college.

- A. The College should continue to support and maintain an Upward Bound Program.
- B. The College should, in considering the use of its facilities during the summer, consider the establishment of a program similar in nature to the ABC Program.
- C. The College should establish a committee of interested faculty and students to explore the possibility of establishing a one-evening-a-week seminar program on campus for able, socio-economically deprived 11th and/or 12th grade students from local secondary schools.
- D. The College should continue its participation in programs, e.g., the College Bound Corporation of Philadelphia, whose efforts are expended on behalf of increasing the number of secondary school graduates in the area who go on to college.

In discussing the entire matter of Negro student recruitment and enrollment throughout the past semester, it occurred to many of us that Swarthmore may not be well suited to deal directly, as an institution, with those problems in society which our education makes us best suited to recognize. In all probability, the greatest impact which Swarthmore may have on social problems, such as the education of Negro students, will be the result of the individual efforts and achievements of our graduates, in contrast to those efforts which the College can hope to undertake on its own campus and in addition to its academic program. While our small projects (Upward Bound, the experimental program, Chester tutorial, etc.) may produce only quantitatively small results, when compared with the dimensions of the problem as a whole, the experiences thereby gained by those students of the College who participate in such programs are likely to have an enduring quality which will ultimately result in much greater benefit when those same students graduate and enter into responsible positions in society. It was with such thoughts as these that the Committee recommended that the College continue its old commitments in such programs as Upward Bound and consider seriously initiating new ones with programs such as ABC.

3. Negro student life at Swarthmore.

While it is not within the province of the Admissions Policy Committee to deal with issues covering aspects of student life on campus, the Committee recognizes that the quality of Negro student life here is and will continue to be inter-related with efforts to recruit and enroll more Negro students. Therefore, without our having been able to gather any significant data on the matter, we would nevertheless like to make some recommendations concerning Negro student life simply as encouragement to other parts of the College, in whose bailiwicks these matters ultimately rest, to bring their attention to bear on such problems. It is anticipated that both the Black Studies Committee and the Committee on Counselling will ultimately make relevant contributions touching on the recommendations listed below.

- A. Without specifying the position within the faculty or administration, the Committee believes the College ought to have Negro adults within the College community with whom the Negro students could consult on a wide variety of matters which usually come under the heading of "counselling." Whatever the position of such persons, however, they ought to stand in the same relation to all students as they do with Negro students, although the latter would undoubtedly find them useful in unique ways.

The Committee recognizes that the College is making efforts to seek qualified Negroes for available or expected future openings in both the faculty and administration, and it recognizes the difficulties involved. It hereby simply goes on record as recognizing this urgent need.

- B. The Committee recommends that some informal process be organized whereby those "felt needs" deemed by Negro students to be uniquely theirs can find expression and support within the College.

The Committee does not think itself particularly qualified to suggest the form such a link between the Negro students and the various component parts of the College community should take, but perhaps a group of Negro students and interested faculty, ultimately chaired by a Negro faculty or administration member, would be an appropriate starting point. It would be necessary to find ways to

relate both to individual Negro students and to organizations such as the Swarthmore Afro-American Society.

- C. The Committee urges the Student Council and other organizations, e.g., the Cooper Committee, to be constantly aware of the need to provide support for activities, which while "open to the entire student body," would be largely Negro in orientation.

IV.

It is much easier to recommend that new commitments be undertaken by the College than to divine exactly how the necessary funds for so doing can be acquired. Fortunately, the Committee's task is simply that of recommending policy and not that of raising funds. But it would be irresponsible on our part not to recognize that what may appear to be fairly limited extensions of our present commitments in Negro student recruitment and enrollment will nevertheless require hundreds of thousands of dollars to put into effect. The College's original grant from the Rockefeller Foundation is almost exhausted, and there is little prospect of renewing it, given their recent decision to distribute their funds in other kinds of projects. Foundation grants are normally of the "seed" or "starter" type anyway, followed by a withdrawal and accompanied by urgings to seek Federal support for continuation of such programs. Therefore, Swarthmore must begin anew, if the recommendations herein are adopted, to seek to establish the funds necessary to carry them out. It is well to remind ourselves that it requires \$15,000 to support one student without any financial resources through a four-year Swarthmore education. It is not difficult to figure out the additional cost in financial aid which thereby would be incurred by taking only ten such students (in addition to the average number of scholarship students we enroll) each year. And this does not take into consideration additional expenses for expanded counselling and other facilities. Nor does it include the additional expenses which would be incurred by the Admissions Office in stepping up its recruitment program for such students, or

the costs which the College would also have to meet if it were to undertake a summer program such as ABC. Therefore, the Committee urges the College immediately to undertake the search for the required financial support necessary to carry out those policy recommendations ultimately established as formal policy, and at the same time cautions that any optimism over the possibility of "instant success" with such policies must be tempered by our realistic concern over the anticipated difficulty in acquiring such funding.

Admissions Policy Committee

December 1968