

warned that cuts in defense spending were pushing Russia toward a point "beyond which its missiles and nuclear systems become uncontrollable."

The Clinton administration is for the first time formally reviewing options for taking U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals off hair-trigger alert. The possibilities include: taking warheads off missiles and storing the warheads up to hundreds of miles away from the silos; removing missiles' guidance systems (reinstalling them would take expert technicians at least a few hours); and keeping ballistic-missile submarines either in port or at patrol locations well out of range of their targets. Compliance with these measures would be possible to verify through on-site inspections or satellite images.

Deliberately increasing the time needed

Deliberately increasing the time needed to fire weapons could lower the risk of a terrible error.

to launch nuclear weapons would have an added benefit: At a time when the START approach of shrinking the overall arsenal is under increasing attack in the Russian parliament, this would introduce a new approach to arms control. Bruce Blair, a nuclear-command-and-control expert at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., argues that a sensible first step for President Clinton is to immediately de-alert long-range missiles slated for retirement under the stalled START II agreement. If President Yeltsin responded in kind, the two presidents could engage in a virtual disarmament process that, over time, might eventually succeed in dismantling the nuclear balance of terror without going to the controversial extreme of completely eliminating nuclear weapons.

De-alerting missiles would not only make the world safer but could also provide President Clinton with the historic achievement he has long sought. The limited-test-ban treaty is still considered one of the great achievements of the Kennedy presidency. And in a survey conducted last September, reducing the risk of nuclear war ran second only to improving U.S. education as the most important legacy President Clinton could leave his country.

12 How to keep elite colleges diverse

An Army-style prep school for minorities

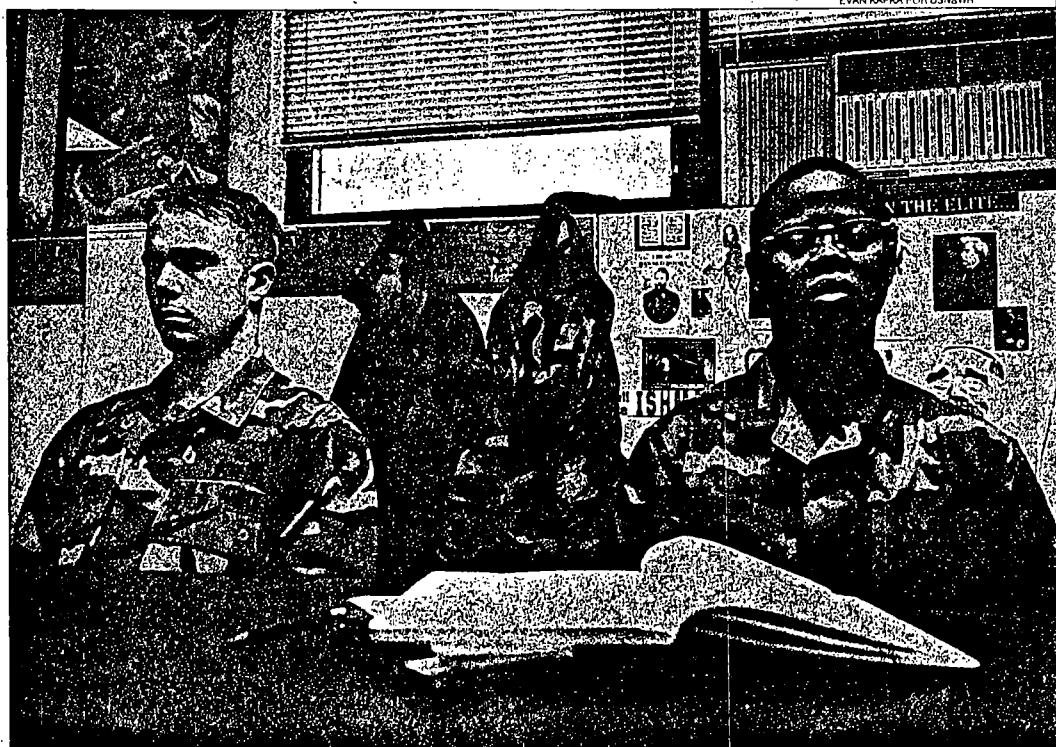
BY DEBRA DICKERSON

Eighteen-year-old Charles Woodruff says he wants a "quality education" so that he can get a "great job." It takes a cold heart not to wish him well. Woodruff grew up in a working-class African-American and Latino neighborhood in Lubbock, Texas, under the watchful eye of his divorced mother, Jackie Orams, who has worked variously as a bus driver, a nurse's aide, and a "cafeteria lady" in the Lubbock school system. Charles has never been in trouble, never gotten involved in the pockets of pathology around him. "The drugs and gangs are there, but you never really see that stuff," he says, "unless you're looking for it." His dream of getting into a top-notch college seemed within reach when he graduated last spring second in his class of 223 at Estacado High School—not to mention the

fact that he was also a power forward on the school basketball team. But then he took the math and verbal SAT and earned only a combined score of 890.

That lackluster score illustrates one of the more painful realities of race in America: African-Americans on average score 197 points lower on the SAT than whites. This gap has been shrinking in recent years; it was 22 percent wider 20 years ago. But it is still large enough that relatively few blacks would make it into the nation's top 100 colleges or universities—particularly those that rely heavily on SAT scores as admissions criteria—without the aid of race-conscious admissions policies.

Demoralizing, illegal. Because these policies let in some black students ahead of some whites or Asians with higher SAT scores, they are, to say the least, controversial. They anger many whites and Asians who feel harmed by them directly. They



West Point "prep" students think positive thoughts—and boost their SAT scores 110 points.

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demoralize many black students as well, by placing some of them in highly competitive academic environments for which they are insufficiently prepared (nation-wide, the college dropout rate for blacks recently has been 22 percentage points higher than for whites). And in several recent high-profile cases, courts have deemed these policies illegal.

Court challenges are leading more and more of the nation's top state universities (and a few private ones) to abandon race-based admissions policies. The result: plummeting black admissions at some of these schools, though not all (story, Page 34). At the University of Texas-Austin—the flagship school in Woodruff's state—

institution devoted to a single crucial task: preparing the promising but under-qualified applicant of any race for admission to West Point and success when he gets there. USMAPS represents on a small scale the approach that has made the Army's leadership more racially diverse without diluting its commitment to excellence. Minority groups are given special encouragement and preparation to compete—but then all candidates fight it out on merit alone. The success of this strategy makes USMAPS a useful example for civilian colleges and universities struggling to maintain diverse student bodies in the post-affirmative-action era.

Established in 1916 to help enlisted men

pass the West Point entrance exam, USMAPS now also prepares high school graduates who, like Woodruff, have no military background but possess what the Army considers to be hidden potential. Located at Fort Monmouth in Eatontown, N.J., the prep school bears little resemblance to Groton or Exeter. The architecture is not historically romantic but military realist (squat, cinder block buildings; no ivy). Classroom attire

is not chinos and loafers but fatigues and spit shined boots. Parade grounds for marching practice take the place of a tree-lined quad, and classes snap to attention when the instructor enters.

Scores up. What USMAPS lacks in atmosphere it more than makes up for in achievement. Black students who persevere (approximately 28 percent drop out, the same as the overall rate) through the tough 10-month USMAPS program wind up with SAT scores that on average are 95 points higher than when they started. (Overall, USMAPS graduates boost their SAT scores 110 points.) This gives the average black USMAPS grad a combined SAT score of 1085. That's still 125 points below the average score for all West Point freshmen, but West Point's experience shows that it is close enough to allow USMAPS graduates to succeed once they reach the academy. USMAPS grads leave West Point with somewhat lower than average GPAs (2.51 versus 2.90) but with better ratings on various of the other leadership measures that military academies prize. And 78 percent of USMAPS alumni



USMAPS pushes reading, math, and sports—cheering included.

the percentage of blacks enrolled in the law school plunged from 5.8 percent in 1996 to 0.9 percent this fall. UT-Austin's undergraduate program managed to keep approximately the same percentage of blacks in its freshman class this year by de-emphasizing the SAT. But de-emphasizing test scores does nothing to better prepare young African-Americans for the rigors of academic life. Nor will it necessarily protect schools like UT-Austin from future court challenges.

Yet Charles Woodruff, despite the handicap of his SAT scores, has gotten a second chance, through a program that illustrates a way around some of the worst dilemmas of affirmative action. He wanted to go to West Point, the Army's elite officer training academy. Rather than admitting him to the academy, where he would likely have floundered because of his inadequate preparation, or rejecting him outright, which would have ignored the strength of character he had shown in school and sports, the Army enrolled him in the United States Military Academy Prep School, or USMAPS. This is a unique

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graduated from West Point in four years, a half-percentage point higher than average. These accomplishments, according to USMAPS officials, illustrate the perseverance and general strength of character developed by the preparatory program. Says Col. Rickey Kolb, the USMAPS commandant, "My cadet candidates will always have to give close to 100 percent if they want to make it at West Point."

Far from being stigmatized as the presumed beneficiaries of relaxed affirmative-action admissions standards, the USMAPS grads are generally regarded as the "vanguard" of their classes. They seem well aware that more, not less, is expected of them because of their leg up. In many institutions, a "prep school" background might connote coddling; at West Point it means the reverse. Prep graduates arrive knowing how to salute, how to make hospital corners, and, more fundamentally, how to achieve long-range goals against tall odds. West Point alumni who didn't attend the prep school have a repertoire of stories about the USMAPS buddies who helped show them the ropes. "Preppers" are overrepresented among student leaders. It's a badge of honor, not shame.

The Army goes to such great lengths to

bring black recruits into West Point because the stability and smooth functioning of the entire service depend on it. During the 1960s and 1970s, the percentage of blacks in the enlisted ranks grew much faster than the percentage of black officers. That led to low morale and racial tension. Army leaders judged that some form of affirmative action was needed. But rather than selectively lower standards to achieve racial balance, the Army chose to raise the qualifications and preparedness of new officer recruits. USMAPS became the main vehicle for bringing such recruits into West Point, and from there into the officer corps. Today, about 30 percent of the Army's soldiers are black, as are 11 percent of its officers and 7 percent of its generals—a critical mass of black leadership approached in few other American institutions. "Thank God for the prep school," says Col. Patrick Toffler, director of West Point's Office of Policy, Planning, and Analysis. "Without it, [West Point] would go from 7 to 9 percent black to only about 4 percent."

USMAPS accomplishes this feat by focus-



The Army trains these West Point candidates to compete

ing on the basics. Except for a light dose of military studies, the prep school teaches only two academic subjects: math and English. "Those are what kept them out of West Point in the first place," says the commandant, Colonel Kolb. In addition to athletics, the only other focus at USMAPS is the "student success course."



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negative messages they've programmed themselves with (e.g., "This always happens to me") and then replace them with positive, responsible thinking techniques (e.g., "This happened because I didn't study enough," or "Am I thinking or doing the most effective thing I could be right now?"). "They scoff," says Ignoffo, "but eventually the reprogramming sets in, because we keep reinforcing it."

USMAPS is such a creature of the military that applying its logic to the civilian world may seem impossible. The price alone would seem prohibitive: The 10-month course of study at USMAPS costs the Army somewhere between \$40,000 and \$60,000 per student. Part of this expense involves the all-encompassing nature of any military school experience. USMAPS is more expensive than a more limited civilian counterpart might be. Moreover, civilian colleges and universities already incur significant (if lower) costs by requiring that their less prepared and lower-scoring freshmen take remedial education courses. Such courses do seem to work, to some extent. Elite schools with well-funded remedial programs have lower black dropout rates than other colleges and universities. Yet blacks still drop

out from these elite schools at higher rates than other students at these schools, which is not the case with black USMAPS alumni at West Point.

More dignity. The difference may be that remedial programs reek with the air of failure. Students may be humiliated to be placed in them; they start their college competition behind everyone else. By moving the preparation outside the normal curriculum, West Point and its prep school provide ambitious but unready students with a less belittling and distracting environment. In principle, there is no reason why civilian colleges and universities couldn't reap the same advantages by creating discrete prep-school-like institutions and splitting off to them the remedial functions they now provide on campus.

Certainly, some aspects of the USMAPS model—buzzed haircuts, 5:30 a.m. reveille—would be inappropriate in a civilian setting. Also, West Point guarantees admission to any student who successfully completes the 10-month USMAPS coursework. Doing so in a civilian equivalent might invite anti-affirmative-action lawsuits. Graduates of these civilian prep schools would probably have to join the pool of regular high school gradu-

pete academically. Civilian colleges could do the same.

There, students learn how to learn—how to study, take notes, set goals, manage their time efficiently, and, perhaps most important of all, how to spot and conquer self-defeating attitudes and behaviors. For example, Matthew Ignoffo, the course instructor, focuses on "meta-cognition," forcing students to "hear" and vocalize the



ates and compete for admission.

Still, their chances of gaining admission should be excellent. Their SAT scores would presumably have risen. And while their scores still might not meet the average, they would have something regular high school graduates would not: a diploma from the prep school. Colleges and universities should be well within their legal rights to give credit to such a diploma because, like a high SAT score or a diploma from a top magnet school, it would be a valid measure of that student's chances of making it successfully through the school's course work in four years.

The idea of creating USMAPS-style civilian prep schools has its critics. One objection is that the Army uses quota-like racial preferences in order to achieve an average 18 percent black enrollment at USMAPS; to reach comparable rates of black presence, civilian schools would probably have to do

Attire at the Army's prep school is not chinos and loafers but fatigues and spit shined boots.

so, too. "Moving the affirmative action back a year won't quiet the critics," predicts Christopher Edley Jr., a Harvard Law School professor and consultant to President Clinton's race initiative. Yet if entry into the prep school departed from the USMAPS model in not guaranteeing admission into a college or university, it should be no more subject to legal challenge than other programs that disproportionately help black young people, such as summer jobs programs in urban areas or federal grants to urban high schools.

Another criticism is that helping a small number of top black high school graduates get into top colleges and universities does nothing for the vast majority of African-Americans. "It dodges the question of training kids generally, not just the elite," complains Abigail Thernstrom, coauthor of *America in Black and White* and a leading critic of affirmative action. But such a program need not take the place of other efforts to improve, say, public schools. Moreover, the value to American society of having a significant number of blacks make it through elite schools and into leadership roles in corporations, law firms, government agencies, and other institutions is not all that different from the value the Army sees in having a sizable number of black colonels and generals. The smooth functioning of the country may depend on it. ■

13 How to reduce teens' road accidents 'Graduated' licenses

BY WARREN COHEN

Obtaining a driver's license is one of the most triumphant events in a teenager's life. It's also a day most parents should dread, because teenagers are the most unsafe drivers on the road, a threat to themselves and others.

Sixteen- and 17-year-olds represent only about 2 percent of all drivers, but they

cause more than 15 percent of all traffic deaths, where teens often need to drive to work and school and parents are eager to stop chauffeuring, raising the licensing age seems impractical and politically unlikely.

There is a practical alternative that is already saving lives in parts of the country: graduated licenses. This new approach (adopted in eight states) creates a three-tiered system of limited driving privileges



In some states teenagers need to prove they can drive safely to earn full driving privileges.

are involved in nearly 11 percent of crashes. Traffic accidents are the leading cause of death for teens, costing 5,805 lives in 1996. The obvious response to such gruesome statistics is to call for more driver-education classes. But a landmark 1982 government study found that teens who take driver's ed are just as likely to be involved in crashes as those who don't.

The problem lies not with driver's ed but with teenagers, who tend to be impulsive and fearless. They are much more apt to speed, tailgate, shun seat belts, and show off. Indeed, about 44 percent of 16-year-olds' accidents are single-car crashes, such as smashing into a tree, which basically indicates foolish driving.

A direct approach to the problem would be to raise the age at which teens can get their licenses. Beginning drivers who are over age 21 have fewer crashes and other problems than do beginners in their teens. In fact, many countries don't li-

that become more generous as a teen gains behind-the-wheel experience. The first stage requires a mandatory learner's permit ranging from three months to one year. With such a permit, a teen can drive only with a licensed adult in the passenger seat. A teenager who remains incident free during this period receives an intermediate license, which requires an adult in the car during evening hours, the most likely time for dangerous joy riding. A teenager who goes through a year without accidents or violations gets a full license.

There is evidence that the three-tiered system works. Studies in California, Oregon, and Maryland have found drops in teen crashes ranging from 5 to 16 percent after those states instituted components of graduated-licensing systems. These results have impressed legislators in other states. The faster more states move to adopt graduated licenses, the more lives will be saved. ■