

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 9, 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR SYLVIA MATHEWS

FROM: PETER RUNDLET *PR*

SUBJECT: Proposals Related to Higher Education and the Race Initiative

cc: Judy Winston
Maria Echaveste
Elena Kagan
Mignon Moore
Karen Skelton
Dawn Chirwa
Eddie Corrae
Mike Cohen
Mike Wenger
Julie Fernandez

Scott Palmer
Chris Edley

What follows is a survey of the proposals that I was able to canvass from various individuals and offices that relate to higher education and race in general or the Race Initiative in particular. The only piece missing is an update from Mike Cohen of the DPC on the various proposals and projects he is pursuing in this regard. I was unable to make contact with him directly. I will update this once I speak with him.

As you know, Christopher and Maria have proposed of a four-part conceptual framework with which to approach our higher education agenda items for the Race Initiative:

- (1) Campus Dialogue: Activities and events designed to foster cross-racial dialogue and reconciliation on college campuses.
- (2) Validators: Identify people who can clearly articulate the value of diversity in higher education to the *broader general public*.
- (3) Higher Education Leadership: Encourage higher education leaders to work together and develop a comprehensive strategy to enhance inclusion and diversity *on their campuses*.
- (4) Policy Action: Vigorous Administration policy action that includes litigation, public education, race-neutral and race-conscious approaches to enhancing equal opportunity to higher education, inclusiveness, and diversity.

Although I will not attempt here to fit all of the following proposals into this framework, I believe it is helpful as a reference point, and will be useful once we sit down and determine which of the following we want to pursue, and how. The proposals identified thus far include:

Campus Week of Dialogue. Michael Wenger, in partnership with the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), the Urban League, and the Department of Education, is leading the effort to organize a week of dialogues on campuses around the country from April 6-9.

Goals: To more fully engage the higher education community in the Race Initiative and to build bridges between college campuses and the communities in which they are located.

Process: AAC&U anticipates receiving a grant from the Ford Foundation to assist it in working with approximately 35 core campuses. In addition, PIR will reach out to hundreds of colleges and universities, including HBCUs (historically black colleges and universities), HSIs (Hispanic serving institutions), and Tribal Colleges.

Specific Events Proposed

- One day designated as National Day of Dialogue on college campuses, including Town Hall meetings on campuses, and discussions on race in classrooms.
- Meetings between campus and community leaders to institutionalize campus-community dialogue.
- Meetings on campus between student leaders from all racial and ethnic groups to discuss how students can work together to address the challenges of race.
- Film showings, cultural festivals, joint community service projects on and around campuses.
- A national Town Hall meeting with either the President or Vice President on the National Day of Dialogue (April 7 or 8), with college students and telecast by C-SPAN or provided by satellite to participating campuses.
- A national meeting of scholars on racial issues to discuss an appropriate research agenda. (Note: this idea is raised separately below; see the concerns raised there.)
- As part of or just prior to this week, a meeting between the President and higher education leaders. (Note: this idea is discussed in great detail, below.)

Next Steps: *Pulling all of this off will require an enormous amount of immediate work and coordination. Mike Wenger should nail down what burdens the AAC&U and the Department of Education can bear. Then, a meeting with PIR and WH staff needs to take place to discuss priorities and allocate responsibilities. As noted below, if a meeting with the POTUS is to take place, a date needs to be set aside immediately (since he is scheduled to be out of the country for much of March).*

Presidential Meeting with Higher Education Leaders. The President would convene a meeting with higher education leaders both to hear their ideas on the Race Initiative, campus diversity and inclusion, and to issue a call to action to them, as outlined below.

Goals

- (1) To encourage the establishment of a formal, coordinated campaign (analogous to the formation of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights due to President Kennedy's call to

action) within the higher education community designed to promote, through words and actions, the values of inclusion and diversity in higher education and to recapture ownership of the public debate over affirmative action in higher education;

(2) To encourage leaders (and their campuses) to participate in the efforts of the PIR, especially the Week of Campus Dialogue;

(3) To solicit the leaders' ideas on creative, legal approaches toward enhancing inclusion and diversity on their campuses; and

(4) To initiate strategy discussions with leaders who will be affected by moves by Congress to curb affirmative action through the education reauthorization and appropriations processes.

Process

Scott Palmer has drafted a detailed proposal on the goals and expected outcomes of such a meeting, much of which is included here. He has been working with Hector Garza at the American Council on Education (ACE), as well as other higher education leaders and associations. Mike Cohen would work with Scott to immediately create a core working group of six to ten college and university presidents that will take responsibility for the overall effort and who will help define the mission and process, as well as identify other leaders who should be a part of the larger campaign. Christopher Edley has identified some likely candidates (the presidents of Harvard, Duke, Penn, and the President of the College Board, Dan Stewart) and we have already established contacts through the creation of the High Hopes Program. The ACE and the Leadership Alliance are also likely to be very helpful. A date for the meeting with the President would have to be reserved immediately, as the meeting should take place before the Campus Week of Dialogue (April 6). Christopher Edley suggested that he would meet with Bob Shrum to coordinate a professional communications strategy for the leaders group.

Potential Outcomes

- A coordinated and ongoing campaign to clearly articulate to the American people the values of inclusion and diversity in higher education and to positively address other tough questions of race in higher education, including the proper role of affirmative action.
- A coordinated research agenda on the educational value of diversity, as well as on methods to increase minority graduation rates and strategies to enhance the "pipeline."
- Creation of short- and long-term strategies to increase minority access to higher education, including both race-neutral and permissible race-conscious strategies.

- The development and promotion of on-campus programs designed to improve minority retention, promote positive racial climates, and create positive cross-racial interactions.
- Creation of partnerships between predominately white and minority-serving institutions.
- Greater participation by the whole higher education community -- college and university presidents, deans, faculty, students, and higher education associations and organizations -- in the President's Initiative on Race, including the Campus Week of Dialogue.

***Next Steps:** Convene a meeting to determine whether this is a Presidential priority relative to other Race Initiative demands for the President's time. If so, secure a date on the President's schedule for a meeting with higher education leaders. Scott Palmer and Mike Cohen should confer with Christopher Edley and others and call a meeting as soon as possible with the core group of higher education leaders who will agree to take responsibility for coordinating the larger effort. Scott and Mike should convene a meeting with White House and PIR staff to create a strategy to carry this out -- to identify key issues for the meeting and to assign responsibilities for necessary staff work. In addition, Eddie Correia should begin to conceptualize a strategy for engaging Congressional leaders on these issues, as we prepare for battles over the DoEd's reauthorization and appropriations.*

More Discrete Higher Education Events and Proposals:

Release of Affirmative Action in Higher Education Guidance Piece. Individuals from the Department of Education, Justice, the Counsel's office, and I have been working to finalize the Department of Education's Guide on Postsecondary Admissions and Financial Aid Affirmative Action programs. The final internal revisions are being made this week and we expect to solicit comments from outside friends before finally releasing it. The purpose of the guidance is to reinforce the continuing vitality of the *Bakke* opinion and to make clear what properly-constructed affirmative action requires in order to provide a greater comfort level to those institutions that may have become unduly cautious in their approaches to creating diversity.

***Next Steps:** Final drafts have been distributed internally. Comments are due by COB on Friday, February 13. A meeting should be held next week that includes relevant White House staff (Sylvia Mathews, Dawn Chirwa, Rob Weiner, Eddie Correia, Elena Kagan, Maria Echaveste, Judith Winston, Christopher Edley, Minyon Moore, and me), as well as Education and Justice officials, to discuss a roll-out strategy for the Guidance. Although the guidance will not be released in time for admissions offices to restructure their policies for this year, an earlier release may assist some institutions before all of their final admissions decisions are made this spring.*

Litigation Strategy. Eddie Correia will begin to meet with counsel representing colleges and universities being sued for their inclusive admissions policies. The purpose of the meetings is twofold: (1) to identify cases in which the United States would participate as *amicus* or intervenor, and (2) to identify creative yet permissible strategies to encourage greater diversity.

Next Steps: Eddie plans to meet with Jane Sherburne, who represents the University of Michigan, soon. Similarly, Maria Echaveste will coordinate with Political Affairs to determine the status of the various state ballot initiatives designed to end affirmative action.

Identification of Race-Neutral/Opportunity-Gap/"Pipeline" Solutions. The Domestic Policy Council, with the assistance of Eddie Correia, Christopher Edley and Scott Palmer, will take the lead on identifying programs designed to increase the percentage of students who attend and complete college. Included in this would be programs designed to prepare students for college and help them pay for it (such as the High Hopes Initiative and Head Start), as well as creative, race-neutral admissions programs (such as aggressive recruitment and outreach and programs like the Texas 10% plan) that will likely increase the number of minorities that attend college.

Next Steps: I understand that Mike Cohen has been working with the Department of Education on producing a document that surveys a variety of inclusive, but race-neutral admissions practices. Pushing this project to a conclusion, vetting the ideas, and then sharing them with the higher education community should be our short-term goal. In any case, the DPC, together with Counsel and PIR, should aim to present a list of potential solutions that the Administration can promote or share with the higher education community.

Research Conference on the Value of Diversity. Some have proposed an academic conference similar to one that the Harvard Civil Rights Project held last spring to discuss current research demonstrating the educational value of diversity. Scott Palmer and Michael Wenger have suggested that such a conference be part of the Campus Week of Dialogue. Others, however, including Christopher Edley, have noted two significant limitations to such a conference: (1) there is little serious social and behavioral science research on the question of the benefits of diversity; and (2) such an event is unlikely to generate much attention. A less ambitious, though useful, goal would be to encourage educational leaders to support serious research in this area.

Next Step: Determine whether such a conference is desirable. Mike Wenger, Chris Edley, Elena Kagan, and Scott Palmer should make a recommendation on this question. If it is not, add to the Leadership agenda, above, the promotion of serious academic research on these issues.

California Minority Scholarship Fund. In order to counter the effects of Prop 209 in California, the Consumer Attorneys of California, together with the San Francisco Bar Association, have proposed to create a private scholarship fund to pay for outreach programs and minority scholarships. The details of the program are not completely clear (e.g., are the scholarships only for students residing in California? for UC schools only or private California schools? for law school only or for other graduate and undergraduate institutions?), but, if properly administered, would be a legal and effective means for increasing minority enrollment in higher education. Eddie Correia has determined that the program can pass Title VI muster, if the funds are completely privately administered. It has also been determined that the Vice President or a Cabinet Member could speak at a fundraising dinner, with some qualification.

Next Steps: Designate someone to work with the California organizers (Karen Skelton has been working with Ray Bourhis to date) to learn more details about the program and the timing. Then appropriate White House and PIR staff need to determine which Administration officials could attend fundraising dinners and to what extent we give White House or PIR imprimatur to the effort. There is no reason to delay with this effort. Finally, this should be recognized as a promising practice.

Meeting with the University of California President Richard Atkinson. We have received a request by Richard Atkinson for a meeting with the President this Friday, February 13. It has been determined that Maria Echaveste, Minyon Moore, Elena Kagan, Eddie Correia, and Karen Skelton should meet with him when he is here. If Chris Edley is in town, he should attend the meeting as well. Chris Edley says that even though Atkinson is in a difficult political situation with the Board of Regents' decision to end affirmative action, he is very much a supporter of the Administration's view on the issue. The purpose of the meeting is to learn more from him about the aggressive outreach program undertaken by UC as well as other insights learned from the recent changes in California.

Next Steps: The above-named individuals should meet with Richard Atkinson this Friday. I understand that Maria is taking the lead in organizing the meeting and coordinating with Atkinson.

The Leadership Alliance. The Leadership Alliance is an academic consortium of 24 colleges and universities, including the nation's most elite colleges and universities and historically black institutions, led by Brown University, that have come together to establish a professional development pipeline that gives minority students and professors access to advanced coursework and laboratories in order to encourage and support their efforts to become scientists, engineers and teachers. Essentially, this group is working to enhance inclusiveness and diversity in graduate school. The Alliance has indicated that it is interested in working with the Administration to jointly pursue this mission.

Next Steps: When we meet, we need to discuss ways in which we can collaborate with the Alliance and other higher education associations to make progress in enhancing inclusiveness and diversity in higher education. Mike Wenger and Scott Palmer should consider the Alliance's offer of help in fashioning outreach and leadership efforts.

Conclusion

We should convene a meeting with relevant White House and PIR staff to sort through the various proposals so that we may quickly act on the priorities. In particular, we will have to act quickly on the Campus Week of Dialogue and the Presidential meeting proposals, as they will require the most work.