APPENDIX II
Excerpts From

A DIFFERENCE OF DEGREES:
STATE INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE
MINORITY STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Report and Recommendations of the
State Higher Education Executive Officers
Task Force on Minority Student Achievement

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a transfer option. Set-aside admissions places, articulated information systems, and special bridging programs to provide both pre- and post-transfer counseling to targeted groups are among the various strategies to be considered.

8. SHEEOs should support institutional programming that meets two equally important ends: to better equip minority students to function well in the institutional environment, and to adapt that environment to better accommodate the needs and interests of minority students. A wide array of programs can and should be assembled on campus to assist minority students to deal with both the academic demands and social pressures of what is, for many, a new and intimidating environment. These range from summer orientation and "head-start" programs to year-round counseling and academic support services, including special instruction for those for whom English is a second language. While we believe that such efforts must be based primarily on institutional commitment, we would also urge that some measure of state-level financial support be provided, either through targeted grant monies or through coordinated state-level equal opportunity programs (as cited elsewhere in this paper). The University Student Retention Program in Florida, the Minority Advising Program in Georgia and the Mentor Program in Mississippi are all examples of state-supported programs of this type.

We must caution, however, that while such supportive programming is a critical transition device, it constitutes only part of the answer to the problem. Many of the difficulties faced by minority students are embedded in the nature of the college environment itself, and it too must be subject to change. As Jacqueline Fleming (1984, 156) has noted in her study of black college students, "the problem involves an interaction between the factors that ... students bring to white colleges and the conditions that they find within these institutions." It is the lack of a supportive community--defined by Fleming as one which provides opportunities for friendships with both peers and role models, for full participation in campus life, and for a sense of progress and success in
academic pursuits—that leads minorities to fare less than well at predominantly white institutions. By the same token, the success of predominantly black institutions in seeing their students achieve degrees is due in large measure to their ability to meet these kinds of needs.

Establishing such a supportive environment where minorities can feel a part of the mainstream must, therefore, be one of the first orders of business for most colleges. Faculty "cross-cultural literacy" (Ross 1986) must be increased and their instructional skills developed to serve a wider variety of learning styles. Advising procedures in general should be strengthened, and early academic warning systems put in place. Curricula need to be revised and enhanced to incorporate a multi-cultural perspective and to increase the emphasis given to international affairs and language education. A general campus atmosphere must be established—through values seminars, cultural activities, and creative and responsible residential programming—which promotes civic responsibility and respect for cultural pluralism. All these strategies for institutional change are legitimate candidates for state-level support.

9. SHEEOs should institute broad-based programs to promote racial and ethnic diversity among higher education's professional ranks. One of the most important aspects of the institutional environment needing change is the severe under-representation of minorities among collegiate faculties and administrations. At a minimum, states should establish appropriate recruitment and hiring guidelines and actively monitor their results. More extensive programming—either to support graduate study by minorities in exchange for a commitment to teach at an in-state college, or to provide development opportunities for minorities already employed on campus—can be found in such states as Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Tennessee. Massachusetts has proposed a special reserve fund to support minority faculty appointments; similar subsidies are already provided in Mississippi. We endorse such initiatives and recommend their replication. Special programs to orient new minority faculty and to support their professional development
through a mentoring approach are to be encouraged as well. Faculty exchange programs between predominantly white and predominantly minority institutions also serve a valuable purpose for all parties involved.

Certain of the difficulties encountered in diversifying college faculties spring from shortages in qualified minority candidates. For this reason, we would like to make special mention of the efforts of a concurrent study group sponsored by the Education Commission of the States which is focusing on encouraging full participation by minorities in graduate and professional education. We ask all SHEEOs to give serious consideration to recommendations emerging from that study as well.

It should be noted further that SHEEOs have a responsibility to recommend (and, if possible, appoint) minorities for service on both institutional and state-level boards, and to pursue affirmative action strategies vigorously when filling staff positions in their own agencies. Also, SHEEOs should regularly solicit minority candidates to serve on state-level higher education planning and policy committees.

One short-sighted tendency that states must avoid is hiring minorities predominantly for positions that specifically involve minority affairs. Though minority-oriented programming is both necessary and desirable given current realities, ultimately such functions should be integrated into mainstream collegiate offices and structures. The only way to ensure that this can be done constructively, without loss of priority or momentum, is by having minorities employed in positions of responsibility throughout the institution (or agency). Then all parties can be reasonably assured that such efforts will continue to receive the dedicated attention and strong support they deserve.

10. SHEEOs should regularly disseminate information, both to the public and the higher education community, about higher educational opportunities for minority students and progress in meeting their needs. We believe that SHEEOs and their boards should take the lead in providing comprehensive information to minority students and their parents