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ABSTRACT

Conventional methods of recruiting and communicating with potential college students living in poor urban communities have proven ineffective. New procedures are necessary, particularly those which capitalize on the strengths that already exist within these communities, for the purpose of school-to-college articulation. This paper discusses two such techniques--the use of community information networks and of student articulation workers. (Author)

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Articulation in Urban Areas:
Community Information Networks
and Student Articulation Workers

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The wisdom of departing from standard recruiting practices for urban colleges and universities concerned with increasing the enrollment of minority group and poor/deprived students has been well established during the past decade. Gordon and Wilkerson (1966), Kendrick & Thomas (1970), Crossland (1971) and other investigators have firmly established the inappropriateness of standard techniques of college admission information and requirement for urban minorities. Even when urban four-year colleges and universities commit themselves to opening their doors to deprived minority groups, they find that adapting their admission requirements to render these students eligible is not nearly enough. For example, when the City University of New York did away with traditional selective admission requirements in 1969 in order to increase minority group enrollments, the result was mainly an increase in the percentage of "white ethnic" students rather than blacks and Puerto Ricans, who were the main target groups.

The ineffectiveness of college recruitment of minority students, even when the institutions are firmly committed to that goal is well-documented. After about five years of frenetic activity in that direction, these disappointing results were reported for 1970 by Crossland:

| | % of Population | % of College Enrollment |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Black Americans | 11.5 | 5.8 |
| Mexican Americans | 2.4 | 0.6 |
| Puerto Ricans | 0.7 | 0.3 |
| American Indians | 0.4 | 0.1 |
| All others | 85.0 | 93.2 |

Every major minority group remains under-represented in contrast to the over-representation of the non-minority population. These data confirm the need to

depart from standard methods of articulation (general information dissemination and recruitment techniques) that have proven successful for the majority of college students in favor of developing programs that are more effective for minority students. Two programs that have produced encouraging results for commuter universities in the Chicago area (Chicago State University and the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle) are the Community Information Network and Student Articulation Staffs.

Establishing a Community Information Network

The premise for utilization of community information networks in admission articulation has been stated to be as follows (Kadota and Menacker, 1971):

There are a variety of people (in poorer urban neighborhoods) who by virtue of their position in the community serve the function of communicators--receiving information from outside the community and disseminating that information within the community. These persons should be coopted for service...

These persons are not those who fill the traditional status roles, such as the high school college consultant or officials of the Neighborhood Youth Corps. Rather, they are persons who do not hold such professional roles and responsibilities, but who nevertheless have hitherto untapped potential to add a new dimension to articulation. They are the people who, ~~have~~ because of their personalities and ~~unrelated~~ occupational roles, occupy important informal communications positions in the neighborhood. They may be postmen, clerks in local stores, clergymen, or even leaders of youth groups.

In order to utilize them in articulation they must first be identified. This can only be done by college student personnel officials going into the

community to seek them out. They can be discovered by the "reputational" method, i.e., by college officers simply asking high school students, parents and other community people who they typically consult or hear from about almost any aspect of news and events. They will also be uncovered by the process of extended observation in the community, provided the college personnel have the sensitivity to make the necessary observations of informal communication processes.

After these "key communicators" have been identified there is another required process necessary before they can be effectively utilized. *These people must be convincingly show* the concrete benefits that accrue to young people because of their efforts and the advantages that accrue to themselves as a result of their efforts. This is extremely important in typical deprived urban communities since their residents have generally been accustomed to seeing the glowing promises of "establishment" programs ending with little of their promise being realized; and there is a general attitude of relying more on tangible, immediate reinforcement than the abstract, deferred gratification more typical to the middle class.

These requirements can be fulfilled in a variety of ways which are low on expense to the college, but high on personal effort. For example, the benefits to students can be demonstrated by a systematized feedback procedure, in the form of a periodic newsletter produced by the college for them. This would report on the progress of students from the community in a personalized manner, and deal with those college programs that would have general interest to the community or to particular "key communicators." The members of the community information network should also be brought to the campus for conferences and various activities that meet their interests and needs. Also, they should be given the opportunity to provide counsel and suggestions for the improvement of all aspects of university efforts that relate to the community and the education of community students.

Another way to improve the commitment of community people to the articulation program is by providing them with the status rewards and recognitions that will be of value to them in their community roles. This can take the form of a complimentary letter sent to the postman's supervisory or the manager of the store employing the retail clerk. Bestowing an award in recognition of exemplary service at an appropriate ceremonial function can also be useful, particularly if there is some financial recompense attached to it. This could be in the form of allowing the award recipient to designate his choice for a university scholarship, free passes to university athletic events, or even cash awards. Finally, the community information worker should be encouraged to make suggestions and react to how the university can be of greater service to the welfare of the community. As such programs are implemented, along with the other methods indicated, the kind of quid pro quo arrangements that will lead to energetic, productive institution-community relations will take shape.

The Uses of the Community Information Network

The main advantages that should result from the use of community information networks are the dissemination of college admission information in areas not easily penetrated by standard means, and the identification of students with college potential who have been ignored by the formal college identification process. In the case of information dissemination, this means getting the college's message into the poolroom's, the churches, the boy's clubs, the "corner store" hangouts, the taverns and other places where college-age youth or their parents may gather. The college's role should be preparing written information in consultation with the community personnel to insure that it will be concise, understandable and interesting for community people. Also, college personnel should conduct training sessions to inform community people of admission requirements, programs of study, and similar matters. This should not involve great

detail, but rather should concentrate on the few basic fundamentals, as minimum class rank requirements and tuition charges.

It would then be the responsibility of the members of the network to disseminate the information, orally and in writing, according to the knowledge and expertise that they alone possess by virtue of their experience and standing in the community. They should feel free to supplement these efforts by calling on college personnel as speakers when they judge that to be useful. This is the function that constitutes the heart of the community articulation effort, and the college should do whatever is possible to support this basic activity.

The main contribution of college articulation personnel to this effort and the student identification effort, is continual feedback and general communication. Community personnel who identify potential college candidates should receive feedback on the decisions made about these candidates as soon as the information is available. When these students are denied admission it is essential that the community people be given careful explanations as to why they were denied. This process should also afford the community person the opportunity to dispute the decision and gain another review, which might involve new college people in the decision. It will be critical that these decisions are understood and that there is a good meeting of the minds between college and community personnel on these decisions. Both groups must be prepared for some initial friction in the process, and the college people will have to extend themselves to the fullest in order to make it work.

It will not be unusual for a community person to nominate someone who defies almost every tenet of admission criteria. These situations can be the issues that destroy community-college cooperation or the cutting edges of closer, more pro-

ductive ties, depending on how they are handled. If college people approach these clashes with an open mind, they will find that they present opportunities for them to increase their knowledge and perspectives of community bred applicants. These are also the situations where college personnel can do their best instruction and improvement of community representative skills, for they take the rules and regulations from abstractions to concrete instances. Open, free dialogue will most often lead to improved understanding and ability for both groups.

Student Articulation Representatives

In the past few years there has been increased awareness of the value of using students as paraprofessionals in a variety of school guidance areas. Smith (1970) reported success in using inner-city junior college students as peer admission representatives who worked with prospective students at the schools from which they had graduated. Pyle and Snyder (1971) also found community college students to be useful paraprofessionals in student personnel work. Disadvantaged urban students have also been effectively used as peer counselors at the high school level (Vriend, 1969; Wrenn and Mencke, 1972) and there are numerous examples (McCarthy and Michaud, 1971) of student uses as peer counselors and in other paraprofessional roles at four-year institution of higher education.

One of the best student paraprofessional use, as Smith found, was in articulation work. In that area they exceed their adult professional counterparts in both the insight they have about student attitudes and personal circumstances, and their ability to establish rapport and meaningful dialogue with them about admission and related matters. They present the poorer, less advantaged urban student with a less threatening person who they feel can understand them better and whom they can better understand.

Students as Recruiters

As with community adults who operate informally as recruiters, students must be shown direct advantages that can accrue to them and their clients from the efforts they put forth. The latter matter can be handled in much the same way as for the adult communicators. The options available for providing benefits to student articulation helpers are much stronger and varied than for their adult counterparts. This is so, of course, because they participate directly in the life of the college and are consequently subject to its impact on them. Certificates and other status awards, student employment opportunities, choice of class schedules--starting and ending times, choice of teachers, meaningful role in policy development, and scholarships are among the variety of available reinforcements.

Students, like adults, will want control over how they function and the goals they are asked to pursue. They will be even more forceful about this than community people, since they will be better informed about the formal and informal processes of the college and ^{will} want to "tell it like it is." Their ardor need not be bridled; it is a positive feature of articulation. However, it is essential that they agree to confine their efforts to the area of their strength, which is the student perspective on social conditions, academic competition, the climate for professor-student interactions, and similar concerns. They should not deal with questions about admission requirements (and particularly exceptions to standard requirements), estimates of potential financial aid, and other matters over which they have no control and ^{little} expertise.

Student articulation representatives should be encouraged to raise such questions with the appropriate college officials to sensitize them to applicant problems.

Student representatives should also be used to develop liaison between applicants and admission officers on these matters. The important point is that they should be used in ways that capitalize on their contributory strengths and minimizes their potential for obstruction or misinformation.

These are just two brief examples of the unique approaches that can be used to improve urban school-college articulation. It is hoped that they suggest other unique local adaptations that colleges and universities can make to better serve aspiring college students who populate the inner cores of our largest cities.

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