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Southern Regional Education Board

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**A Unitary State System
of Higher Education**

A STAFF PAPER

INSTITUTE FOR
HIGHER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD

John Cross

2 set copies for Black Affairs
Committee, Baker, Fortney, Daniels,
Phay, and others

A Unitary State System of Higher Education

A STAFF PAPER

INSTITUTE FOR
HIGHER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL BOARD
130 SIXTH ST., N. W.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30313

1970

Foreword

In its 1967 report, the Southern Regional Education Board's Commission on Higher Educational Opportunity in the South urged that plans "be devised to complete the evolution of the South's dual system of higher education into a single system serving all students." The Commission recommended establishment of an Institute for Higher Educational Opportunity to serve as an "explicit acknowledgement by the South of its responsibilities and opportunities concerning the post-high school educational needs of its Negro population." The Institute was created in 1968 as an integral part of SREB, and with state and foundation funds has been conducting a variety of projects to expand postsecondary educational opportunities for black students.

Recently, the Executive Committee of SREB requested the Institute staff to clarify the concept of a "unitary system" in higher education. The request was timely in view of considerable confusion resulting from federal efforts to secure state plans for compliance in higher education to civil rights legislation.

This staff paper attempts to make clear that all types of post-high school educational resources must be utilized if higher educational opportunity for all citizens is to be realized. Coordinated planning for maximum utilization of institutional resources is essential. However, a movement in the direction of coordinated planning under a "unitary system" concept is a complex procedure which must recognize historic institutional strengths and goals and a wide spectrum of educational needs.

The Executive Committee of SREB asked that this staff paper be distributed to interested persons and agencies, in the hope that it may be helpful to those engaged in statewide planning for higher education.

Winfred L. Godwin, President
Southern Regional Education Board

A UNITARY STATE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The goal of providing equal opportunity for all students calls for a unified approach different from the dual system of higher education which evolved in the past in many states.

By 1975 there will be about two and a half million students in colleges in the South, with two million of these in public institutions. This is almost 700,000 more students than are enrolled today. Much of this increase will come because more black students will go to college. To accommodate this increase and to improve the college attendance rate in the South (now at about 38 percent as compared to approximately 50 percent nationally), existing public institutions will expand and new postsecondary units be created.

Also, states are being asked by federal courts and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to submit plans for "dismantling the traditional dual system" and establishing a single system of postsecondary education for whites and Negroes.

In light of these developments, it appears appropriate to define the concept of a unitary system of higher education and to identify its characteristics. Additionally, positive actions required to coordinate a state's resources for expanding opportunity in higher education are explored.

A Unitary System

A unitary system of higher education will use teaching, research, and service resources to the highest degree possible in providing student opportunity. A unified system provides maximum access to postsecondary programs to all, without racial discrimination in admission, staffing, institutional support, and all other facets of operating a higher education enterprise. The last vestiges of discrimination in policies in these areas will be eliminated. The achievement of these objectives requires that all institutions participate in a coordinated effort to implement state-level and institutional planning.

To create a unitary system, institutions which are predominantly white will increasingly share in the responsibility for providing higher education for larger numbers of black students. A number of

these colleges and universities have organized programs to deal with test-oriented admission requirements which have barred attendance to substantial numbers of Negroes. These efforts have included summer precollege institutes, student financial assistance, tutorial programs, and the addition of black counselors and faculty. Additional funds from federal, state, and other sources are required to support these efforts at the level necessary to increase student success. These efforts will contribute to the creation of a unitary system of higher education as more blacks enroll in predominantly white institutions and as additional black faculty and staff join these colleges and universities.

The traditionally Negro colleges and universities have important parts to play in the creation of a unitary system. These institutions have provided access to higher education for many black students in the past and will do so in the years ahead. The black colleges and universities have developed strengths relevant to contemporary needs and constitute assets to a state's resources. Special funding, above the regular allocations for educational costs, must be provided to overcome cumulative deficiencies and to support the institutional goals of greater student retention and production of graduates oriented toward new career opportunities. The need for an identity on the part of traditionally Negro institutions which includes pride in their past and dignity in new roles must be met as an integral part of their potential contributions within the total system of higher education. In a pluralistic society their institutional identities can no longer be defined on the old "separate but equal" basis, but neither does their movement into joint planning and partnership with other institutions require a repudiation of cultural and educational values which were meaningful in the past and which may be adapted to contemporary social patterns and learning needs. The traditionally Negro institution must expand its efforts to admit greater numbers of white students, and faculty and staff appointments must be open to whites.

If the goal of equal opportunity for higher education is to be reached, new planning must occur within a framework of criteria which are educationally oriented and operationally sound. The basic test is the degree to which institutional resources are coordinated through careful planning,

thereby supporting programs which meet the needs of students. Within such a framework, a unitary system will be characterized by:

A planning process which provides for majority and minority group opinion and expression. Persons of both races will be involved in this statewide planning process and be representative of the policy and operational levels: trustees, presidents, academic deans, student personnel staff, faculty, and others.

Cooperative planning among institutions within the context of the needs of all the people in the state. The people who are served by institutions of higher education comprise diverse groups with particular needs, yet share many common concerns. The institutions are obliged to respond to the legitimate interest of these groups. Within the total system, access to various postsecondary educational experiences will be provided.

Maximum use of all available and projected higher educational facilities. Space available on any campus will be considered in terms of interinstitutional use, and—where possible—joint research and/or service operations will be located in existing facilities. Institutions in the same locale serving student bodies which have traditionally been nearly all-white or all-black will coordinate their academic programs in a manner which utilizes space where it exists rather than seeking new space.

Extensive use of faculty across institutional lines. Academic specialists will be considered as resources within the total system of higher education in the state. This consideration includes the identification of faculty in highly specialized disciplines, the inclusion of appropriate and qualified faculty in joint research projects, and the availability of specialized courses through systematic programs of student and faculty exchange.

A delineation of institutional roles based on the unique characteristics of each institution in the total system. Many institutions offer majors in the same academic fields—teacher education at the undergraduate level, for example. However, specialties can be based on the institution's ability to assemble instructional, research, and service capabilities because of its uniqueness. The traditionally Negro institutions, as an example, could forge learning programs aimed at alleviating the problems of the economically and educationally disadvantaged at all educational levels through teacher-training and special techniques.

Consideration of the location of institutions and their proximity to each other in determining role and scope responsibilities. The dimensions of these locales—ranging from rural settings to the inner city—will serve as indices of student needs and program potentials. Advantage will be taken of the proximity of public senior institutions to junior colleges or vocational/technical institutes in designing programs. Where traditionally Negro and predominantly white institutions are in proximity, extensive cooperative efforts will be implemented.

Recognition of the resources in existing institutions when expanding—either by creating new institutions or branch campuses—the state's system of higher education. If the existing institution is public and traditionally Negro, expansion into that locale will be accomplished in such a way that dualism will not be perpetuated or restored.

The observance of these characteristics does not mean that the traditions and heritage of those institutions which have long attempted to meet the needs of the majority of black college students have been abrogated. Rather it recognizes the interdependence of institutions—traditionally Negro and predominantly white—attempting together to serve all the people of the state.

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State Planning

States differ in their patterns of governance for public higher education. The mechanisms for effective role and scope planning on a statewide basis are difficult to establish, whatever the form of board governance. A unitary system may not necessarily be achieved or fail to be achieved only because of its pattern of board governance. A centralized governing board structure in itself is not a basic criterion. This concept of a unitary system includes all the postsecondary institutions supported by the state, regardless of how the state elects to provide for the governance of these institutions.

Another criterion too often used as an index of expanded opportunity for students is the percentage of racial mixture in each of the institutions. For example, exchange of faculty and exchange of students *merely for this purpose* may have little significance and may even have negative effects. The movement of faculty and students between campuses should be for educational reasons. Abundant opportunities of this nature exist, and they can be identified and implemented to the benefit of institutions, faculty, and students.

A necessary component in planning a unitary system is participation by those legally and morally responsible for governing policies and the design of the state's structure of higher education. The governing boards have the responsibility of taking affirmative action in initiating systematic planning between institutions. The state's higher education coordinating agency will be involved in this effort. Extensive use will also be made of resource personnel from the serving institutions during the planning process. The support and understanding of officials in the executive and legislative branches of state government are essential.

Each state in the South has an agency for providing—in varying degrees of comprehensiveness—coordination for the continuing, long-range development of higher education. Planning for a unitary system could center on this agency or a special task force or representative commission organized for this purpose. Whatever approach is used, a central impetus for planning, organizing, and implementing the desired changes needs to be provided. If this effort is to significantly alter the

opportunities available at both traditionally Negro and predominantly white institutions, the unique characteristics of each will be identified, and then strengthened through cooperative action. Incentives must be provided for the development of new programs or the alteration of existing ones designed to provide regenerated opportunity for students of both races.

Cooperation Among Institutions

A unitary system of higher education can be established through effective state-level coordination of cooperative planning involving every institution. Creation of a unitary system requires interinstitutional cooperation and statewide planning of the highest order. The possibilities for expanded interinstitutional cooperation between black and white institutions are extensive. Many of these institutions are in close proximity, some share similar roles in instructional programs (teacher education, instruction in agriculture), and some are responsible to the same governing boards. All share a common concern for the quality of higher education available in the state and for the improvement of services for all citizens. As components of a unitary system, the traditionally Negro institutions should have a mission that is not racially specific but that has integrity within the state's total system of higher education.

A recent development in interinstitutional cooperation is emerging in the South. It is a form of cooperation between traditionally Negro and predominantly white institutions—often in proximity—through which educational opportunity for students of both races is significantly enhanced. The characteristics of these programs are that:

- the benefits flow in both directions, based on an equal partnership
- the emerging patterns identify new role and scope opportunities for traditionally Negro institutions while expanding opportunities for black students at predominantly white colleges and universities through combined use of institutional resources
- they lead to permanent rather than temporary relationships in which the traditionally Negro institution, without loss of its traditional

identity, becomes a part of a "total system" approach in higher education

- the goals are educationally significant and not limited to exchange of faculty and students solely for accomplishing racial mixtures
- they provide for integrative experiences rather than for mere desegregating experience as students and faculty of both institutions work together for the accomplishment of identified educational objectives.

There are numerous examples of cooperative programs of this type being initiated in the South. The following examples show the variety of planning and action:

- the cooperative program between Old Dominion University and Norfolk State College in training teachers for preparation to teach in integrated school systems
- the action by the Board of Regents in Florida defining relationships between Florida State University and Florida A. and M. University. Students and faculty are being exchanged and departmental chairmen meet together periodically for interinstitutional planning. Bus service is operational between the campuses and cultural events are open to students of both institutions
- at Armstrong State College and Savannah State College, cross registration is accomplished without additional fees, regular faculty exchange is facilitated and two programs—Criminal Justice and Finance—are being developed jointly to maximize existing resources. The two institutions also cooperate in the Coastal Area Teacher Educational Service and the Model Cities Center in Savannah
- the joint Department of Sociology developed by Catawba College and Livingstone College
- the long-range planning being done jointly by Greensboro College, Guilford College, and Bennett College resulting in student and faculty exchange and a joint summer school for the three institutions in 1969

- the discussions now occurring in many states between the faculties of the traditionally Negro and the predominantly white land-grant institutions to identify patterns and methods of cooperation in the teaching of agriculture
- the arrangement between Atlanta University Center colleges and Georgia Institute of Technology under which students may enter engineering by way of jointly planned courses in these colleges
- the University of Alabama's planned cooperation with other colleges—public and private—throughout the state (includes cooperative planning with Stillman College, Miles College, and Alabama A. and M. University)
- "The Frankfort Semester" administered by Kentucky State College in cooperation with Eastern Kentucky University, Morehead State University, Murray State University, and Western Kentucky University, and funded by the Kentucky General Assembly to provide student experiences relevant to the administration of state government
- the coordinated transition of North Carolina State University's degree-granting branch at Fort Bragg to the administrative responsibility of Fayetteville State University

More marked progress has taken place in the development of cooperative programs between institutions which were historically oriented to students of different races when there has been active faculty participation in the planning. Administrative and governing boards may take action to set the stage for these developments, but the implementation seems to require faculty activity—and in many cases student involvement—in the formation of specific programs.

As exciting and promising as these initial cooperative programs are, the possibilities for additional programs offer a fertile field for innovations: joint degree programs in teacher-education, in the social sciences, in graduate work, in joint research projects, in joint professorships, in pre-

*w hat about joint teaching program
concentrating on b/a/c/d*

professional and professional training, and in urban and rural planning. In these and many other areas, the traditionally Negro colleges and universities may contribute significantly to cooperative educational programs of the highest importance to the states, the region, and the nation. In the process of working together to achieve educational objectives, the experiences provide the setting for more than desegregation as a mutual respect for cultural heritage develops.

The task immediately ahead is the difficult one of meeting the educational requirements of a rapidly changing society by the imaginative and coordinated use of all institutional resources in a manner which serves citizens regardless of race and also recognizes the dignity and worth of all components in a pluralistic culture. The identity of a college or university, derived over decades of experience, need not be sacrificed in this process of change. But neither can it remain the same.

There are many obstacles to overcome before state planning will be successful. Statewide planning requires funding, leadership, and broad representation in the groups which design and implement decisions for change. Institutional loyalties may deflect attention from the benefits which might accrue both to institutions and to individuals. Federal agencies concerned with compliance may be more oriented toward evidence of measured racial mixture than toward planning which utilizes in a positive manner the particular expertise and assets of the traditionally Negro colleges. Some advocates of desegregation will minimize the significance of pluralism in our culture.

At the same time, statewide planning offers many benefits. Although the planning process will require funding, the results should improve the productivity of state funds in higher education. The traditionally Negro colleges and universities will find a new identity emanating from their past experiences and appropriate to their capabilities. The outcome is more likely to be characterized by "integration" in the sense of cultural understanding than by mere "desegregation." Most important of all, this approach has the potential of increasing the relevance of higher education to problems of critical importance.