

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAMHistorical Background

In the 1960's the state of Oregon experienced a lesser degree of civil unrest than that which occurred in other places in the United States. However, there was widespread feeling that positive actions were needed to increase opportunities of all kinds for minority persons and the poor. In 1968 the Chancellor of the Oregon State System of Higher Education announced that institutions of higher education could admit a number of freshman students, up to 3 percent of the previous year's freshman class, who did not meet regular admission requirements. At Oregon State, this resulted in 1968 in the establishment of a Minority and Special Services Program (M&SSP). This program experienced numerous difficulties and in 1969 was completely restructured with new staff, at the direction of the OSU Faculty Senate through its Special Services Committee. The new M&SSP was designed "to provide special assistance to a selected number of Black Americans, Mexican Americans, American Indians, and certain White Americans who may or may not meet regular university admission requirements but are recognized as having the potential to complete successfully a college degree program." (OSU Bulletin 1971-72). In 1971 the name of the program became the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP). The general philosophy and organization of the program has remained constant from 1969 until the present, although the program now seeks to provide assistance "to those individuals who have traditionally been denied equal access to equal opportunities and who may or may not meet regular admission requirements..." (OSU Bulletin 1978-79).

Administrative Structure

The EOP staff consists of full time professional faculty, part time instructors, counselors and recruiters, and advisors (graduate students, GTA's). The program is state supported and administrative responsibility for the program rests with the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. The OSU Faculty Senate has guided and scrutinized the program from its inception until the present time through its Special Services Committee consisting of both regular OSU faculty members and OSU students. The EOP director is an ex-officio member of the Committee.

Funding Sources

The prime financial resource for the EOP is the State System of Higher Education. For special purposes funds have been provided by various OSU schools, private philanthropies such as the Danforth Foundation, and the OSU Foundation. Minor and varying amounts of money have been available to individual EOP students through the Oregon State University Foundation. These personal grants have been made to ease financial crises and to provide additional resources to enable individual students to take advantage of special educational opportunities. Examples of these include grants made so that students can enroll in study abroad programs and participate in cooperative projects such as the student intern program of the Oregon Legislature.

Program Philosophy

The philosophy and guidelines for the EOP were clearly set forth by the original Faculty Senate Committee which established the M&SSP/EOP. Its basic guideline has been the strong commitment to using a cross-cultural approach for all activities, services, staff assignments and benefits available to students. The EOP staff has always firmly supported this cross-cultural emphasis. A second major commitment has been to the achievement of academic success for all enrolled students. Although the program has continually offered encouragement and help whenever possible to ethnic student union cultural activities, the main focus continues to be academic assistance and encouragement to all EOP students. To this end, students are assigned to individual program counselors primarily on the basis of academic interest and need rather than the single factor of ethnic group membership. However, free choice of counselors is possible for any student upon request.

Description of Program Services

In order to provide a real opportunity for all EOP students, a full range of academic assistance and personal support is available. These support services are under continual review by the staff and have been expanded in response to increasing EOP enrollment and as student need has become apparent. With the cooperation of several academic departments, the program offers courses for credit in the areas of writing, vocabulary, reading, mathematics, study methods, English for bilingual students, and personal development. Classes are small and where appropriate the course material is adapted to the particular needs of the student. Individual tutoring is offered through the EOP Learning Center. Financial aid is available to all qualified students through the OSU Financial Aids Office.

The Learning Center provides an important service to EOP students. During a typical term the Learning Center processes approximately 75 requests for tutorial assistance and screens 50 would-be tutors. The heaviest demand for tutors is usually in mathematics courses but consistent need is also evident in the sciences, business, engineering and liberal arts courses. In addition to the benefit which EOP students obviously derive from being tutored, the OSU tutors also find the experience valuable. Most EOP tutors are drawn from the ranks of junior and senior students in the School of Education. Many of them have had little or no contact with persons from cultural backgrounds different from their own. This opportunity to "teach" in an informal, relaxed setting can be an important addition to the practical experience needed by prospective teachers.

Every EOP student is assigned an individual advisor. The advisor is the prime resource for any problem or question which the student may have. The advisor also helps the student assess academic progress and if necessary locate appropriate assistance. Advisors are also concerned with career counseling, job placement, for summer as well as permanent jobs, and graduate school entrance for EOP students.

Recruiting Efforts

Since the beginning of the program in 1969, recruitment of students has been a basic activity of the EOP. Historically, Oregon State University attracted only a small fraction of the ethnic minority students who entered higher education in the state. Through steady, repeated activities and through ever increasing contact with ethnic community representatives, the number of minority students entering Oregon State University through the EOP has shown steady growth over the years.

The basic effort takes the form of repeated visits to those Oregon high schools which enroll significant numbers of minority students and are located in areas of minority population concentration. Periodically the Oregon Department of Education publishes a Racial and Ethnic Survey broken down by county and grade level. Using this data as a guide, EOP recruiters visit high school counselors to speak to groups of students as well as individuals. While in the local community, recruiters visit parents of prospective students to assist them with filling out forms, allay fears and suspicions about the effect of higher education on a minority youngster, calm fears about the life and treatment which a minority student is likely to encounter in a predominantly white school such as OSU and in the local community of Corvallis.

Evidence of the success of these efforts can be seen in the fact that our program enrolls numerous sibling combinations, married couples, and students who come from tightly knit and cohesive ethnic communities, e.g., the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. One of the most effective ways in which information about the Educational Opportunities Program is disseminated is through presently enrolled students. High school counselors and community members routinely "quiz" students home on vacation about the EOP, the university and their life and experiences here. Evidence that all of these efforts are having some success is seen through the growing number of students.

Special recruiting activities and programs are created as the need arises. Some examples of these are the following:

- **The Spanish Language Newsletter. This Newsletter was put together with the cooperation of the OSU Extension Service through the EFNEP program. This Newsletter is published in both Spanish and English and is directed at low income minority families. A special page about EOP containing a tear-off sheet with return request for information was sent out to the entire mailing list. Follow-up meetings were held with ethnic community aides and extension specialists.
- **The Director and other staff members frequently are guests on TV and radio interview programs as well as speaking before interested community organizations.
- **EOP recruiters meet often with recognized ethnic community organizations such as Oregon Rural Opportunities (formerly Valley Migrant League),

Urban Indian Association, Urban League, BOOST, Albina Ministerial Association, etc. These meetings are in addition to regularly scheduled routine high school contacts.

**Prospective students and their parents are encouraged to visit the OSU campus and the Program. During the visit staff members meet with students and parents to explain the benefits of the Program and details about attending Oregon State University. Reports from both parents and students indicate that these visits are extremely helpful in allaying the kind of fears alluded to above.

Benefits of the Educational Opportunities Program

Ethnic minority students, particularly those who have achieved average or somewhat below average grades during high school, are most unlikely to be recommended for special activities or projects which may arise at the university. In the same way that high school counselors do not view ethnic minority students as "college material", college professors often overlook ethnic minority students as candidates for special opportunities that routinely occur at the university. A growing activity of the program has been to seek out these special opportunities which are available, to urge EOP students with the proper qualifications to apply for them and to accept the challenges offered when the opportunity arises. Results of this effort, although small numerically, have been most encouraging, and there is evidence that other students in the program, upon hearing about these opportunities, are beginning to think of themselves as proper candidates for them.

EOP students have, for example, participated in the following sorts of activities:

- **Crew members and research assistants on the OSU oceanographic vessels. Several students, both men and women, have made lengthy cruises.
- **Legislative interns at the Oregon State Legislature. Two students were assistants in the Legislative Research Office.
- **Tutors in the EOP Learning Center and teachers' aides in EOP classes.
- **Producers of television and radio promotions relating to EOP for KBVR.

Administrative Background for Special Programs at OSU

Any university which actively recruits non-traditional students who do not have an academic background which would enable them to compete successfully with the rest of the students must be especially careful that the students receive a real opportunity for success. The open door must not be allowed to become a revolving door. Oregon State University recognized this need in 1969 when EOP was first established and made a series of adjustments to allow for the special

needs of the students expected to enter the university. The major administrative adjustments are in admission and retention requirements. In 1969 an experimental modification of admission requirements (EMAR) was begun. Under this policy any prospective EOP student who did not meet university admission standards for entering freshmen was individually evaluated before admission. The evaluation included personal recommendations by teachers, employers or counselors, high school or GED record, personal interviews with EOP recruiters and other staff members. In November, 1974, results of the EMAR program were reviewed by the OSU Faculty Senate. At that time 25% of the EMAR (Chancellor's 3 percent category) students from 1969-71 had graduated and 32% of those admitted from 1969-74 were making satisfactory progress. The attrition rate for EMAR students had been no greater than for regularly admitted students. The Faculty Senate voted to remove the EMAR program from the experimental category and establish it as a regular admission procedure for the EOP. Those students who do not meet OSU admission requirements now matriculate as "special admit students" under the program Modification of Admission Requirements (MAR).

The academic retention standards applied to regularly admitted students have been adjusted downwards for special admit students. Special admit students are required to complete 30 credit hours satisfactorily during the freshman year rather than 36 credit hours required of regular students. After the freshman year all students must complete 36 hours satisfactorily in order to continue to qualify for financial aid and retention in the university.

Information on Graduates

Historically, ethnic minorities have been greatly underrepresented in scientific, technical and professional occupations. Oregon State University, as a school primarily educating students in those fields, has had an exceptionally small number of students from ethnic minority groups coming to the university. Considerable effort has been expended on recruiting students into these academic areas and on ensuring their eventual graduation from the university. Although progress has been slow, it has been steady, and students in the EOP are now represented quite widely across the academic spectrum. EOP graduates are presently enrolled in many graduate schools across the country, including the University of Oregon Medical and Dental Schools, Harvard Law School, University of California at Davis Medical School, University of Michigan and others. Many graduates are teaching in Oregon elementary and secondary schools and numerous others have responsible positions with a variety of firms. Although it is difficult to say with any certainty what effect university graduates have upon their home ethnic communities, it is probably reasonable to assume that those who enter teaching positions or those who work in community agencies serve not only as models of academic achievement, but are in sensitive positions where their influence is widely and deeply felt in their home communities.