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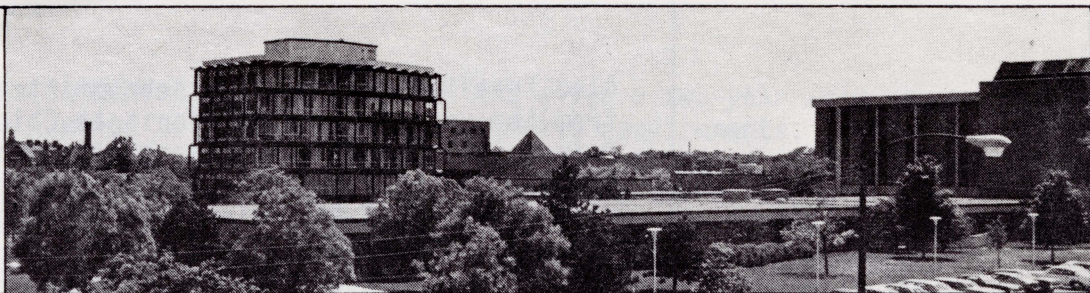
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**PRESIDENT TESTIFIES BEFORE
SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE**

On October 22, Northeastern President Ronald Williams testified before the Senate Subcommittee on Minority Concerns regarding the university's policies and programs for minority accessibility to higher education. The president and other witnesses also focussed their remarks on the credibility of the Orfield Report, a controversial study by University of Chicago professor Gary Orfield and his undergraduate students. The Orfield Report labeled Northeastern as one of the state's "least selective" universities.

"What is important is not...whether geography is an influence on the choices people make on where to go to school and where to work or teach," President Williams said. "Our observations say it is, and it probably will be. What is important is not whether ACT scores of entering freshmen are an indication of the quality of education at a university. We know they are not."

He continued, "What is of importance is whether the State of Illinois will allocate funds to the public colleges and universities in a manner which insures that, wherever minorities wish to go to school, they can acquire a quality education."

President Williams expressed his concerns regarding the Illinois Board of Higher Education recommendations that public universities adopt course-specific new admission requirements by 1990. He said, "...if minorities are to meet these new admission requirements, their high schools must receive consistent attention and adequate funding to enable them to do so. If we fail in this effort, we will tend toward excluding even larger numbers of Blacks and Hispanics from higher education than in the past."

Dr. Thomas Layzell, executive director of the Board of Governors of State Colleges and Universities, said in his testimony that "the three goals of all BOG schools are excellence, accountability and accessibility." Layzell said that statistical comparisons of the Fall 1973 and the Fall 1983 demonstrated that the recruitment efforts by BOG schools to attract minority students and faculty surpassed the efforts of all other public universities in Illinois.

Also testifying before the subcommittee were administrators from the University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago State University, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Illinois State Board of Education, the Chicago Board of Education, the Chicago Urban League, and the Latino Institute.

Responding to testimony critical of his research work, Dr. Gary Orfield said, "There have been fundamental misunderstandings of our study as reported in the news media. Our report is not an evaluation of the teaching at various universities. The one major flaw in our study is that we didn't say as often as we should have how much we appreciate the efforts of those few institutions who are doing something to address accessibility for minorities in higher education."

Following is President Williams' testimony.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMS'
TESTIMONY

I wish to thank Senator Newhouse for inviting me to address the Senate Subcommittee on Minority Participation in Higher Education. The subject the subcommittee addresses is of utmost importance for higher education and society.

Northeastern Illinois University, in keeping with its urban mission, is consciously committed to delivering education to underprivileged populations. For many years, Northeastern has actively recruited and admitted a variety of students in regular and special admissions programs. Our university has made higher education available to populations which have historically had limited access to it.

Northeastern supports two satellite centers in minority communities. The Center for Inner City Studies, at 700 East Oakwood Boulevard on the south side, was established in 1966 as an outgrowth of the university's commitment to urban affairs and to the predominantly Black population in the inner city. The University offers degree programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels at the Center to approximately 300 students per year, and maintains a library of texts and materials on the history and culture of Black, Native American, and Spanish-speaking peoples.

A few years later, the University created the Educational Resource Center, known as El Centro, now at 2524 West Altgeld in northwest Chicago, an area easily accessible to the residents of West Town, Humboldt Park and Logan Square. El Centro offers a variety of courses with special appeal to the Spanish-speaking community, and enables students to complete the first two years of a baccalaureate program before matriculating at the main campus.

Several on-campus programs are also designed to serve minorities. Three "Special Programs" in Student Affairs provide special admission opportunities for students who have potential for college success but who do not meet regular admission standards.

Students in these programs are given a two-year adjustment period to meet university academic requirements. Project Success primarily assists inner-city students with specific skill deficiencies; Proyecto Pa'Lante serves students for whom English is a second language; and the federally-funded Special Services Program recruits and assists low-income, handicapped, and first-generation college students. All three of these Special Programs orient students to the University and assist them through personal counseling, tutoring, and career advisement.

Also in existence on campus are numerous student organizations, such as the Black Heritage Club, Chimexla, the Union for Puerto Rican Students, and the International Club, in which minority students find companionship and support.

Minorities also benefit from programs which have been established to strengthen educational quality for all students. Like many institutions, Northeastern has recently revised its general education requirements, and has developed a thorough program of diagnostic testing in basic skills. We have implemented screening criteria for admission to upper-division major programs and professional sequences, and all students must pass a proficiency test in English language skills before they can be graduated.

Some of these programs and policies are recent developments; others have been in place for years. A few of the more notable efforts in our institution, such as Special Services and the Title III activities, have been supported by federal funds, secured by the University itself at the initiative of groups and individuals who saw the need to supplement state funding. I will be happy to provide additional detail about any of these programs should the committee wish to receive it.

At this time, however, I would prefer to shift to another perspective. I wish to commend Senator Newhouse for creating the Subcommittee on Minority Participation in Higher Education, and I wish him every success in his effort to study this subject thoroughly. I hope the work of this subcommittee will inspire the Illinois legislature toward action which will benefit minorities and the institutions which serve underprivileged populations. To that end, I wish to make the following observations.

An interesting division of labor exists in American higher education. Some universities labor against overwhelming odds to teach a significant number of students who have historically benefited the least from all levels of schooling. Other institutions, for a number of reasons, have elected a safer and more distant course, attracting attention by studying minority students and their schools. I suspect that time will determine which group makes the more lasting contribution.

The Orfield Report, a product of the safer approach, is at the moment attracting considerable attention. Some support it; a few damn it. Others think it is intuitively valid; and a number think its methodology is irreparably flawed. Some, including myself, have a mixed reaction to it, and regret that some of Orfield's constructive suggestions are overshadowed by the manner in which the report has been used to impugn the reputations of certain colleges and universities. What is important is not, for example, whether geography is an influence on the choices people make on where to go to school and where to work or teach. Our observations say it is, and it probably always will be. What is important is not whether ACT scores of entering freshmen are an indication of the quality of education at a university. We know they are not.

What is of importance is whether the State of Illinois will allocate funds to the public colleges and universities in a manner which insures that, wherever minorities wish to go to school, they can acquire a quality education. At issue is whether ISSC policies insure access and choice for minorities. At issue is who shall deliver remedial instruction to those who have been under-educated by the public schools. At issue is whether the State will create incentives for capable people to enter teacher preparation in science and mathematics. At issue are the public policies and practices which intersect with these questions, such as our passive tolerance of public school systems which consistently fail to provide a quality education for inner-city students, thus creating a bulging population of under-educated Hispanics and Blacks.

And to whom are these young people to turn? It is not clear. Recent developments give all too little about which to be hopeful. In its efforts to raise standards, which we all applaud, the IBHE is recommending that public universities adopt course-specific admission requirements by 1990. Six years would appear to be enough time for high schools throughout the state to develop college preparatory classes to meet these new requirements. Yet we know that high schools serving Black and Hispanic populations have in the main inadequately prepared them for college studies. Thus, if minorities are to meet these new admission requirements, their high schools must receive consistent attention and adequate funding to enable them to do so. If we fail in this effort, we will tend toward excluding even larger numbers of Blacks and Hispanics from higher education in the past.

In the midst of this recent swirl of scholarly interest in minority education, some public universities and colleges continue to educate underprivileged people without sacrificing standards. And some, including Northeastern, are struggling to do so with less funding than is needed, and surely with less than is equitable. I urge the Subcommittee to recommend to the Illinois legislature that funding should be increased for all institutions of higher education and especially for those which already provide access and choice for minorities in higher education.