

Critique

“The Retention of Undergraduate Minority Students in Institutions of Higher Education” presents an informative discussion on the retention of minority students. The article comprehensively addresses the problems relevant to retaining minority students in institutions of higher learning. In addition, it represents a clear and fairly precise discussion of what elements a retention effort geared toward black students should contain in order to achieve success.

One problem with the article is its assumption that blacks constitute the only minority group and makes only a token attempt to determine if the strategies presented are applicable to other minority people. For those of us responsible for serving large segments of indigenous minorities in addition to blacks, an expanded discussion would have been helpful. For example: statistics predict that by the 1985 academic school year minority student enrollment will increase manifold and that no fewer than fifty-two percent of those will be Mexican Americans. Therefore, our concerns must involve retention strategies which are effective across the various cultural, economic, and social lines.

The strategies and techniques discussed in this article can produce positive results. However, the strategies presented, though well intended, are short-sighted and merely the application of “band-aids” where major surgery is necessary. Even though the article discusses remedies for the immediate problem of minority retention, it does not address preventative measures. The strategies presented are faulty in that the assumptions seem to be that the problem peculiar to minority retention can be addressed and resolved only at the college level.

In California we are now convinced that many of the variables that prevent minority students from matriculating and completing a bachelor’s degree can be effectively addressed before starting college. Towards that end, concerned administrators, counselors, et al. need to give considerable thought to an early outreach/recruitment effort designed for students in grades six through twelve. The University of California system has implemented an Early Outreach Program and the California State University System is soon to do likewise. The intent of these efforts is preventive in nature and might prove effective in addressing academic preparation, study habits, academic, occupational and other aspirations at an earlier time.

Success in these endeavors should also diminish many of the adjust-

ment problems minority students face in college. In addition to the strategies presented, innovative and preventative strategies should be developed. Because we are cognizant of the problems minority students must face in college our minimal obligation is to prepare them as early as possible for the rigors they will face.

Willie Wright
California State Polytechnic University
Pomona