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ABSTRACT

Until spring 1974, the Special Admissions Program had been making great strides vis-a-vis students' progress in an academic setting. Teddie Alton, a student intern in College Discovery, compiled a "Grade Distribution of Special Admissions Students (fall 1971 to spring 1974)" which is attached to this document. A careful study of this chart appears to indicate that the students were responding to certain positive aspects of the program which over a short period of time produced dramatic results. In spring 1974 the steady and impressive progress over the previous five terms appeared to collapse. It was during this period that Special Admissions was going through perhaps its most difficult period. The director was physically ill and unable to maintain her leadership at the previous level. The burden of responsibility fell on the shoulders of the assistant director, who was unable/unwilling to assume the leadership gap. During this period the students were in limbo, and the counseling which the assistant director did offer was in many situations erroneous. In the beginning of November, nine students were selected randomly and asked certain questions related to the program. A list of the questions is attached to this document. The program's greatest need appears to be in the area of counseling.
(Author/JM)

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To Ms. Zenobia Malino
From Arthur Schlansky & Teddie Alton, RA Date November 22, 1974
Subject Evaluative Report on Special Admissions

In the Spring of 1973 I was asked by Zenobia Malino to participate in the Special Admissions Program as a Counselor/Consultant. After a brief discussion with Dean Joseph Harris, Director, College Discovery Program for whom I am employed, it was agreed that my involvement with Special Admissions was acceptable.

During my almost two years of association with the Special Admissions Program I have seen changes which have had a positive and negative effect on the Program.

Up until the Spring of 1974 the Program had been making great strides vis-a-vis students' progress in an academic setting. Teddie Alton, a student intern in College Discovery, compiled a "Grade Distribution of Special Admissions Students (Fall 1971 to Spring 1974)" which is attached to this document. A careful study of this chart appears to indicate that the students were responding to certain positive aspects of the Program which over a short period of time produced dramatic results. For example, the percentage of A grades received steadily progressed from 19.6% in the Fall of 1971 to an impressive 37.2% in the Fall of 1973 (the Fall of 1973 is also based on a much larger number than the Fall of 1971). Although there are no comparable figures for the rest of the College (for the exact period under discussion) there is a "Five Year Study of Grades--Spring 1968 to Fall 1972" which was compiled by Dean Mildred Hagermann. (This table is also attached.) At no time did the Collegewide percentage for A grades exceed 19.2% (Spring 1972) as compared to the 37.2% reported above. Since the Special Admissions students take courses in the rest of the College, and do not have their own teachers like other special programs on campus, I think the comparison with the rest of the College is a fair one.

Continuing the comparison, the R grades (equivalent to Failure) also dropped from a high of 15.8%, which was more than three times greater than the rest of the College at its highest (5.0%- Spring 1968) to 1.7% which was below the rest of the College's low of 2.0% (Fall 1972).

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The J grade (dropped course without penalty) also showed a dramatic drop from a high of 17.1% (Spring 1973) to 8.3% in the Fall term. The decrease in the J grade may indicate the students' willingness to stick to the task at hand.

The final comparison, which from the point of view of a counselor is perhaps the most important is the X grade (failure because of excessive absences). If counseling is effective than one possible criteria for measuring this may be the X grade. Since the student can J out of a course without penalty then one may venture forth the hypothesis that a low percentage of X grades indicates that students were at least aware of the ramifications of their actions and that an alternative was presented by a counselor. Of course, hopefully the alternative was offered after the student exhausted all available resources to rectify the situation, i.e., tutoring, personal counseling, financial aid, etc. The X grades did decline from a high of 25.5% (Fall 1971) to 14.3% (Fall 1973). This figure is still unacceptable and does not fair well in comparison to the rest of the College. However, it appeared that important inroads were made in dealing with the problem.

In the Spring of 1974 the steady and impressive progress over the previous five terms appeared to collapse. The A grades fell to 16.0% (a drop of over 20%) and the X grades increased by over 20%. It was during this period that Special Admissions was going through perhaps its most difficult period. The Director was physically ill and unable to maintain her leadership at the previous level. The burden of responsibility fell on the shoulders of the Assistant Director. This was an unfortunate set of circumstances as I'm sure is documented elsewhere. Briefly, he was unable/unwilling to assume the leadership gap which had temporarily been created by Ms. Malino's illness. During this period the students were in limbo and the counseling which the Assistant Director did offer was in many situations erroneous. Unfortunately, my schedule did not allow for me to appreciably increase my participation in the Program. The students themselves (as discussed later in this paper) felt that the Assistant Director did not in any way assume his role. He was tardy, continually missed appointments, etc. As is already history, he was dismissed from the Program after the Spring 1974 term. I think time will bear witness to the fact that these two set of circumstances more than any other variables accounted for the dramatic negative turnabout in the Program's progress--vis-a-vis students' academic progress.

As mentioned above, the students expressed certain criticisms about the Program. About three weeks ago, nine students were selected randomly and I asked them certain questions related to the Program. (A list of the questions is attached to this document.)

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Before I go into the specifics of what they said, I would like to first share with you my overall impression of the students. The most rewarding aspect of my involvement with the Special Admissions Program has been to work with students who are highly motivated. I have worked in numerous settings--hospital, clinic, public school, college, and never before I seen a group of people so motivated to the task at hand. It is redundant to say that this population has more than its share of problems and handicaps to overcome. Perhaps it is this fact, that for many it is a last chance and/or a real chance for a new beginning that explains their motivational level.

Turning directly to the students' interest: of interest is the fact that there has evolved a stereotype of former addicts and convicts as people who will eventually end up in some area related to social work and/or work to rehabilitate addicts and convicts. Of the students interviewed only three were interested in Sociology. The rest varied from pre-med, computer science, CUNY/BA to Child Care, etc.

The question dealing with how they learned of the Program brought to light an area in which the Program can use a more systematic approach to helping ex-addicts and ex-convicts learn about the availability of such a program. Some students learned of the Program either through a friend or a student already in the Program. Others learned through their counselor at whatever facility they were in. A few had taken courses offered at their facility through S.I.C.C.

Concerning personal and/or financial problems--every student mentioned money as a major problem. There was some mention of personal or marital problems, and problems of adjusting to an extremely free environment compared to their previous setting, but the financial issue as the most pressing for most. As one student stated "Being poor you have to make sacrifices--you have to know how to survive." Another stated "Books is my first love--I can't be stopped because of bread." Still another said "I ask for handouts, loans and sympathy."

The students were quite definite vis-a-vis about how they felt toward the Program. Most felt that it is "A definite alternative--an alternative to crime." Some still found it difficult to believe that they were actually in College. "I thought I could only make it in the cool world. It's given me a chance to learn about myself--first my world--the whole world." One interesting remark about the students was "This program gives opportunity to those who have skills but not credentials." These remarks were also tempered with criticism. The major area of concern centered on the caliber of counseling offered through the Program. "Zoe can't handle all of us--past counselors have been ineffective." Others stated that "In-depth counseling has to be offered also." Others who have experienced group counseling felt that "group counseling should be offered." One student even suggested "a peer counseling program." Related to the

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issue of counselor was the need for "a better orientation process," and "follow-up on students so that we can help our people." Also the need for getting into the institutions to "reach more brothers and sisters."

What is most interesting is that the students were not just complaining but were suggesting realistic options to problems they have experienced.

Perhaps we too often take college for granted. The sense of commitment, the feeling of family, the investment to see this program succeed has mobilized these students to the point where they can articulate remedies. They will fail, be frustrated and some will fall back to "the life" and remain street people--because we will always need street people.

But for many it is a real introduction and hope to a new life style away from the old which clings to those it has had with tenacity. The pull back is incredible and when one is last there is more than that one. There is the constant fear which manifests itself with the nervous smile, that reminds each student that the fight for some is never over and indeed never won. How many are that confident that their "battles" are over and that the war will never be fought again?

What follows is a brief summary of some of the recommendations made and wherever possible the current status of these recommendations:

1. The greatest need of the Program appears to be in the area of counseling. The Program is in the process of hiring a counselor and it just remains for the usual bureaucratic machinery to play out its natural course before he is hired.
2. I have arranged to teach a freshman orientation class in the Spring of 1975. This course which will be modeled after the College Discovery's Orientation class will be conducted with the new counselor so that he will eventually take full responsibility for the course.
3. A grant has been received, the purpose of which is to introduce more courses into different facilities which house the particular population Special Admissions was designed to tap.

In conclusion, it appears at this point, the Program is small enough to benefit considerably from the points mentioned above. I see no reason, other than the financial, why the progress which had been so dramatic in the past cannot again continue in the near future.

AS:dz

TABLE I

A Five Year Study of Grade Distribution - Spring, 1968 to Fall, 1972

	A	B	C	D	F	J	H	M/N
Spring 1968	8.0%	24.0%	34.6%	12.6%	5.0%	7.6%	2.0%	2.0%
Fall 1968	9.0%	25.0%	33.0%	11.6%	4.0%	14.0%	0.0%	4.0%
Spring 1969	11.8%	27.1%	31.2%	10.5%	3.5%	8.4%	5.0%	3.7%
Fall 1969	13.6%	26.7%	28.0%	8.6%	3.5%	9.6%	7.0%	4.0%
Spring 1970	14.9%	28.1%	28.3%	7.3%	2.3%	8.3%	1.2%	10.6%
Fall 1970	14.5%	24.0%	24.0%	6.8%	2.8%	11.0%	8.0%	6.7%
Spring 1971	16.3%	27.7%	22.6%	6.7%	2.7%	12.3%	7.0%	4.6%
Fall 1971	17.0%	25.0%	19.3%	5.7%	2.0%	11.3%	12.7%	9.5%
Spring 1972	19.2%	25.5%	18.4%	5.4%	2.6%	12.9%	2.0%	6.8%
Fall 1972	18.0%	24.1%	17.3%	4.9%	2.0%	12.7%	9.0%	9.5%

* - No grades of "H" were awarded - Faculty Resolution

** - Kent State Incident

‡ - First Semester of Open Admissions

MH:ds

April 17, 1973

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Grade Distribution of Special Admissions Students

(Fall 1971 to Spring 1974)

	A	B	C	D	R	J	X	M/I
Fall 1971	19.6%	17%	14.2%	4.6%	14.3%	4.8%	25.5%	0%
Spring 1972	19.3%	13.5%	12.4%	2.5%	15.8%	16.3%	20.2%	0%
Fall 1972	20.1%	22.2%	7.0%	2.0%	13.7%	13.0%	22.0%	0%
Spring 1973	25.3%	21.0%	10.4%	.9%	8.6%	17.1%	16.7%	0%
Fall 1973	37.2%	22.3%	13.6%	2.2%	1.7%	8.3%	14.3%	.4%
Spring 1974	16.0%	17.8%	11.8%	5.1%	0.00%	6.6%	35.5%	7.2%

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1. How were you introduced to the Special Admissions Program?
2. How would you evaluate the program--both strengths and/or weaknesses? (Counseling; academic advisement)
3. In what areas do you feel the program can be doing more?
Could you be more specific?
4. What curriculum are you in?
How did you arrive at this choice?
5. Has coming to college presented any problems of a financial or personal nature?
6. Is there anything else that you would like to add concerning your impressions, thoughts or feelings concerning Special Admissions?