

PLANNING FOR NEW STUDENTS TO
HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE 70's*

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There will be a New Student in colleges and universities in the 70's, one who requires new approaches to education. Traditional higher education was designed in a different era for a different kind of student, and the formulations for education that served academically-oriented youth a half a century ago are no longer adequate.

Planning for New Students requires an analysis of where we are now and where we would like to be by the end of the decade. The question of where we are now must be answered by research. The question of where we would like to go must be answered by society. This paper will attempt to analyze the answers to these questions.

Who Should Go To College? Changing Philosophies

In the history of higher education in this country there have been three major philosophies about who should go to college. At the

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turn of the century, the majority of college students came from the homes of wealthy aristocracy. Students who attended colleges had money and family social status. Some also had academic interests and abilities; others did not. Basic to the aristocratic philosophy of college admissions, was the premise that the young people who should go to college were those who could afford it and who needed it to carry out their station in life. The poor, ethnic minorities, and women, it was assumed, would not follow life patterns that really made use of a college education. The colleges that were developed to serve the aristocratic philosophy were private high-tuition colleges. Whether a boy would go to college was predictable from birth. It was a closed system, and some were "in" and others were "out."

Actually, colleges of the aristocracy probably did not give much thought to erecting barriers that would keep people out of college. It simply did not occur to anyone that a young man should attend college if he did not have the money to do so. The thesis is easier to understand when viewed through the meritocratic perspective of our times.

To many, if not most people today, it is unthinkable that a student should attend college if he does not have the ability to benefit from the instruction offered. Only in recent years

have we started to question whether the "instruction offered" might change so that it would "benefit" a new segment of the population who wished to attend college. In an earlier day, those who challenged the assumptions of the aristocracy asked the same question, why couldn't colleges change so that a broader segment of the population could attend? And, of course, in the long run colleges did change. But it was not the old colleges that had been developed to meet the needs of the aristocracy that changed first. The challenge came, not by breaking down the gates to the aristocratic colleges, but by opening new gates through which a new generation of college students poured so rapidly that the high tuition colleges no longer determined who would be college educated.

The revolt against aristocratic philosophies of college admissions was led by those who maintained that a college education was an earned right, not a birthright. Advocates of the new meritocracy that was ushered in by the land grant universities felt that criteria for college admission should be based upon scholastic ability and the willingness to study hard; i.e., upon academic "merit." Much as the aristocratic colleges had assumed that what they had to offer was static and designed for an elite portion of the population, so the colleges of the meritocracy assumed that there was a certain fairly small portion of the

population that had the ability to benefit from what they offered. Considerable attention was given in the late 1940's and early 1950's to the determination of the size of this group. The President's Advisory Commission on Higher Education of 1947 estimated that 49 percent of the population could profit from at least two years of post high school education and that at least 32 percent had the capacity for a normal 4-year college course. After considering this figure in conjunction with the observation that, "...most experts estimate that about 25 percent of the population can do college work profitably," Hollinshead's report for the Commission on Financing Higher Education concluded that, "...perhaps 35 percent of youth might be expected to profit substantially from formal full-time post high school education of the kind given at present by such institutions" (Hollinshead, 1952, p. 138).

The rise of the meritocracy was regarded by almost everyone as a move that, in the best traditions of the country, led to the democratization of higher education. There is no little irony in the fact that while the advocates of the meritocracy were zealously breaking down the barriers imposed by the aristocracy they were quite consistently erecting their own barriers. And academic aptitude tests were the instruments that served both to destroy the old aristocracy and to erect the new barriers

of the meritocracy. The "talent searches" of the 1950's were active campaigns to bring into the colleges those who did not meet aristocratic criteria but who were the epitome of meritocratic ideals. The very good student who was the son of the immigrant cobbler was the hero of the meritocracy--no money, no family social status, but lots of academic talent and a willingness to work hard.

Now once again we find ourselves in a period of philosophical transition regarding the question of who should go to college. Once again, there is pressure to democratize higher education by bringing it within the reach of a broader segment of the population. Once again there are demands for new answers to the old question of what proportion of the population the colleges should serve. The egalitarian challenge to the meritocracy looks strikingly familiar. The nature of the questions raised as well as the patterns of instituting change are not unlike those of a century ago. A new sector of the public is being represented by new students in colleges and universities. This group of New Students to higher education are repeating history by entering the system, not so much by breaking down the barriers erected by the meritocracy, although there is some of that, but by flocking to a new kind of a college dedicated to serving a different clientele.

It appears that in 1970, the prevailing attitude in the country is still largely meritocratic, but there are signs everywhere of a straining at the barriers. The mingling of meritocratic and egalitarian philosophies is the occasion of considerable controversy among educators as well as in the popular press. The sign of the times is illustrated by a headline reading: "Open Admissions: American Dream or Disaster?" (TIME, October 19, 1970). At the same time that the formerly selective, tuition-free City University of New York was instituting egalitarianism by throwing open its doors to all 1970 New York City high school graduates, regardless of academic "qualifications," the 1970 President's Task Force on Higher Education was embracing meritocracy and attempting to clear away the last vestiges of the aristocratic era by recommending financial aid to "students of all races who have the desire and ability to profit from post high school education..." (emphases added). John Gardner has asked, can we be equal and excellent too? Can egalitarianism and meritocracy coexist? What happens to the value of the college degree when everyone has one? Is there some fixed concept that represents "college" that will permit us to say who should attend? Should higher education serve those who can "profit" from traditional offerings or is there an obligation to change the offerings to meet the needs of those who wish to attend college?

Almost everyone wishes to attend college today--a simple fact of life that means most voters want college education for their children. On the eve of the egalitarian phase of college admissions, we find ourselves concerned about how to get young people into college rather than about how to keep them out.

As a matter of fact, in the decade just past, we have given considerably more attention to the procedures of getting New Students into college than we have to the educational questions of what to do with them once there. When colleges maintain the right to select who shall study with them, an educational "match" can be made by choosing students who fit the college. When colleges forego the right to select, the match has to be made by designing educational programs to fit the students. To date, we have concentrated on making New Students over into the image of traditional students so that they may be served by traditional education. Our concern has been the creation of access models to education.¹ We have devised all kinds of ways to make New Students eligible to participate in traditional higher education. Remedial courses are designed to remove academic "deficiencies"; counseling removes motivational "deficiencies"; financial aid removes financial "deficiencies."

1 For a discussion of some alternatives, see Cross, 1971.

If the answer to the question, who should go to college, is to be an egalitarian response of "everyone," then the task ahead will involve the recognition that educational systems will have to be designed to fit the learning needs of New Students. Who are the New Students? Under an egalitarian philosophy of 14 years of schooling for everyone who wants it, New Students will be high school graduates who are not now continuing their education. Research provides some information about who is going to college now, and this enables us to look at the reservoir of New Students--those who will be entering some form of postsecondary education in the 1970's.

Who Is Going To College? Some Barriers to Attendance

Who are the young people who are entering college today? And as the corollary, who are the young people who are not entering college? Most laymen recognize that bright high school graduates are more likely to continue their education than those who have had to struggle for grades throughout high school, that doctors' sons are more likely than laborers' sons to attend college, that whites are more likely than blacks, and men are more likely than women to seek further education. These elements of the folk wisdom about who goes to college can be cast into more precise and accurate information through research.

Two dimensions that researchers have been able to measure seem to hold primary roles in explaining who goes to college, where they go, and even how long they stay. Socioeconomic status (SES), which includes measures of family occupation and parental education, and academic ability are the two most powerful measures we have of who goes where to college.

Some of the most important data extant on the interrelationships between SES and ability in college attendance rates have been presented by Schoenfeldt (1968) for Project TALENT high school graduates of 1961, and by Dr. Thomas Hilton who analyzed ETS Growth Study data for 1967 high school graduates using the same scheme of tabulation.

TABLE 1								
Probability of High School Graduates in 1961 and 1967 Entering Some Form of Postsecondary Education								
Ability Quarter	Socioeconomic Quarter							
	1 - Low		2		3		4 - High	
	1961	1967	1961	1967	1961	1967	1961	1967
<u>Male</u>								
1 - Low	21	48	28	55	30	40	51	65
2	37	57	47	58	51	69	61	79
3	47	74	52	77	66	79	82	88
4 - High	69	82	83	89	87	93	93	94
<u>Female</u>								
1 - Low	14	39	25	41	26	55	39	60
2	26	40	27	44	41	64	57	76
3	38	52	51	58	54	77	76	86
4 - High	58	69	66	77	84	88	91	95
Sources: 1961 graduates, with 1962 follow-up, Schoenfeldt, 1968. 1967 graduates, with 1968 follow-up, ETS Growth Study data analysis by Hilton.								

Table 1 shows the two sets of data side by side. The two sets of data were not designed to be comparable, but we can be rather certain of some things. For example, the probability is extremely high that the son of a surgeon who has been an A student in high school will continue his education. For young people ranking in the top quartile on both SES and ability there is little difference between the two sets of data. Almost all of this group enter college, there has been little change over the past decade; i.e., it has reached the saturation point. The 6 or 7 percent of this highly privileged group who don't attend college may be prevented from doing so by illness or other unusual emergencies. In 1970 the fact is that very few additional college students are to be expected from among high school graduates high in both academic aptitude and socioeconomic status.

At the other extreme are the doubly disadvantaged, those scoring in the lowest quartile on both SES and ability. The lowest probability for college attendance occurs in the cells in the upper left hand corner of the tables. For example, in the 1961 TALENT sample, 21 out of 100 lowest quarter SES males who also scored in the bottom fourth of the class on a test of academic ability entered some form of postsecondary training following high school graduation; for women it was only 14 percent.

At the beginning of the decade of the 60's we could predict with fairly reasonable accuracy the probability of continued education for young people in the extreme cells of Table 1. For men, for example, we would have been correct 93 times out of 100 in predicting that a high-ability, high SES student would enter postsecondary education; we would have been correct 79 times out of 100 in predicting that a low-ability, low SES student would terminate his formal education with a high school diploma.

The effectiveness of the meritocracy of the 1960's is clearly evident in the 1967 ETS Growth Study data. We can predict that an extremely high percentage of boys who make high test scores will embark upon postsecondary training--almost all of them in 2- or 4-year colleges--in the 1970's; 82 percent of the males in the top ability quarter of the ETS sample continued their formal education after high school graduation in 1967 even if they ranked in the lowest SES quartile. The handicap of low socioeconomic status was not as serious for boys in 1967 as the handicap of low academic ability. If a boy met meritocratic standards of above-average school achievement--as measured by traditional academic aptitude tests--he was very likely to continue his education. Over 80 percent of the boys who ranked in the upper half of the class academically were going on to college.

Women have not yet emerged from the aristocratic era of college admissions. Their probability of college attendance is influenced as much by socioeconomic factors as it is by the achievement factors of the meritocracy. The greatest discrepancies between the college-attendance rates of men and women exist among high ability students who are below average in socioeconomic measures. A bright but poor male has a better chance of continuing his education than has his equally able sister. Much of the difference can be attributed to parental attitudes. Census Bureau interviewers found that the higher the educational level of the parents, the less they were likely to distinguish between the educational needs of sons and daughters. For example, 73 percent of the mothers with a grade school education wanted college for their sons, but only 60 percent expressed the same desire for their daughters. Among mothers who had attended college, there was virtually no difference in the education desired for males and females--98 percent wanted sons to go to college and 97 percent wanted college for their daughters (Froomkin, 1970). The large increases in college attendance for women are now coming from the ranks of above-average students from all socioeconomic levels, as women continue toward the peak of the meritocratic era in college attendance. For men, the meritocratic phase has passed its peak and in the decade of the 70's, the major increases in college attendance will come from lower-ability men.

As we move into the egalitarian phase of college admissions, the remnants of the earlier aristocratic and meritocratic phases can be observed. Both SES and academic aptitude have powerful influences on who goes to college. The effect is especially potent when they occur in combination. Young people, men and women, in the upper half in both ability and SES have a high probability of continuing their formal education--at least three-fourths are doing so. Young people in the lower half on both ability and SES are not as likely to continue their education, but for boys, over half are embarking upon some form of postsecondary training; for lower-half women about four out of ten high school graduates are pursuing further education.

Who Will Go To College? New Students To Higher Education

The decade from 1965-1975 is likely to be highly significant in the annals of education because it provides the perspective from which we can identify the aristocracy as outgoing, the meritocracy as prevailing, and egalitarianism as the mood of the future.

National statements of policy formulated in the 1960's support the prevailing meritocratic criteria for determining who shall have the opportunity for postsecondary education by phrases such as "...identify qualified youths of financial or cultural need with an exceptional potential for postsecondary educational training

and encourage them to complete secondary school and undertake postsecondary educational training" (Public Law 90-575, October 16, 1968, emphases added). But federal programs have also launched the beginning of an egalitarian era with programs for the disadvantaged which "are designed to generate skills and motivation necessary for success in education beyond high school" through the provision of special or remedial services for students "of deprived educational, cultural, or economic background or physical handicaps, [who] are in need of such services to assist them to initiate, continue, or resume their postsecondary education" (Public Law 90-575).

The emphasis of the 1960's was on access. The goal was to move young people toward traditional postsecondary education through supplying money, incentive, and remediation of past educational deficiencies so that New Students would have the same educational opportunities as traditional students. Partly because of the success of this effort in the 1960's, the task of the 1970's will be accommodation of education to the needs of students who gained admission through access programs. The emphasis will change from moving students toward higher education to moving education toward students. The 1970's has brought the realization that success at academic tasks in the past is not an infallible predictor of success in the future, especially when past

opportunities for learning have not been equal for groups of differing locales, ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic status.

The press is strong for an egalitarian philosophy of access to postsecondary education. Egalitarians maintain that anyone who has the desire to pursue further education should be helped to do so, regardless of economic resources and regardless of past academic achievement. If the meritocracy is ebbing and egalitarianism is on the rise, who will go to college?

The description is not quite accurate, but it is generally conceded that we have, in this country, a system of universal secondary education wherein young people who are physically and mentally able to attend high school do so. In reality only about 80 percent of the young people graduate from high school. If we assumed that universal higher education existed when it became as common as high school graduation is today--i.e., when 80 percent of the high school graduates continued their education--then we might construct a hypothetical egalitarian form of Table 1, wherein every SES-ability cell had an 80 percent postsecondary education attendance probability. Eighty percent of those in the top quarter on both SES and ability would continue their education, and 80 percent of those in the bottom quarter on both indices would also continue in some form of post-secondary education.

Table 2 shows the reservoir of potential New Students to higher education. It is obtained by subtracting the percentages in each cell of Table 1 (the reality) from 80 (practical egalitarianism).

TABLE 2				
The Hypothetical Reservoir of Potential Students for the Attainment of Egalitarian Postsecondary Education				
<u>Ability</u>	<u>Socioeconomic Status</u>			
	1 - Low	2	3	4 - High
<u>Male</u>				
1 - Low	32	25	40	15
2	23	22	11	1
3	6	3	1	--
4 - High	--	--	--	--
<u>Female</u>				
1 - Low	41	33	25	20
2	40	36	16	4
3	18	12	3	--
4 - High	11	3	--	--
Source: 80 percent minus the percentage in each cell of the 1967 ETS Growth Study data presented in Table 1.				

Quite clearly, most of the New Students would come from rows 1 and 2--the lower half of the class academically. There would be almost no additional males from the upper half of the class, but there would be a fairly large number of women who stand in the top half of the class academically--almost all of them from the lower half of the socioeconomic scale.

Who will go to college? New Students to higher education will be students whose performance at academic tasks in the past has been below average. Low academic ability, as that ability is traditionally nurtured and measured in the schools will be their distinguishing characteristics. We need to turn our attention to the complicated problems of designing educational programs that will educate those who have been relatively untouched by instructional programs of the past. Institutions of higher education are not now prepared to teach New Students. Nothing in our experience of designing educational programs has prepared us to think about whether the present meritocratic goals--i.e., high academic achievement--are compatible with egalitarian access. Do we plan to admit everyone, but graduate only those who meet meritocratic standards? Perhaps the place to start conceptualizing the enormous task before us is with achieving a better understanding of the characteristics of New Students.

A research description of the abilities, attitudes and interests of New Students, with emphasis upon suggestions for the design of appropriate educational programs for New Students is underway with the support of Educational Testing Service, the College Entrance Examination Board and the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. A very brief capsule profile of some characteristics of New Students is presented here. For purposes of this description as well as those of the comprehensive study, New Students are defined as those scoring in the lowest third of samples of high school seniors on traditional tests of academic aptitude.

Most New Students are Caucasians whose fathers work at blue-collar jobs. A substantial number, however, are members of minority ethnic groups. The great majority of fathers have never attended college and the expectation of college is new to the family. Those who constitute the New Student pool of high school graduates have not been especially successful at their studies in high school. Whereas traditional college students (upper third) have made A's and B's in high school, New Students tended to make mostly C's. Traditional students are attracted primarily to 4-year colleges and universities, whereas New Students plan to enter public community colleges or vocational schools.

Fundamentally these New Students to higher education are swept into college by the rising educational aspirations of the citizenry. For the majority, the motivation for college does not arise from the anticipation of the joy of learning the things they will be learning in college, but from the recognition that education is the way to a better job and a better life than that of their parents.

Most educators and legislators have become sensitized to the failure of schools in minority ethnic neighborhoods to provide adequate academic foundations upon which young people can build college educations. But in a recent study sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation, Binzen (Carnegie Quarterly, 1970) found that Kensington, a blue-collar community that is 99.7 percent white, has some of the same problems.

Kensington is a community in crisis.... In many ways it looks, thinks, and acts like so many of the Negro ghettos festering in American cities. Its educational, political, social, and economic problems are almost as great as those found in the black slums. It, too, has failed to solve these problems, and failure has made it sullen, surly, and suspicious [p. 2]....

People forget that, in the metropolitan areas, twice as many white as nonwhite families live in "official" poverty, and of course many Whitetowners don't quite qualify for that governmental distinction. They are poor but not poor enough to get help. Usually earning from \$5,000 to \$10,000 a year, the Whitetown husband and father works hard as a truck-driver or turret lathe operator or policeman or longshoreman or white-collar clerk--perhaps at more than one of these jobs--to buy and hold on to his fourteen-foot-wide house and new color television set. [p. 1]....

Some of the immediate implications for federal programs that result from this influx of New Students are apparent from a knowledge of SES and ability characteristics alone. Among these are the following:

1. The majority of young men now entering public community colleges will require some form of "remedial" help before they can meet the traditional standards of college. Seventy-two percent of the men entering public community college in the fall of 1970 made below-average grades in high school (ACE, 1970).
2. Female New Students are coming from the lower socioeconomic classes, but generally speaking women attending community colleges made average grades in high school. Their greater need is financial assistance. Women entering public community colleges are more worried than men about financing their education (CGP, 1970). Because part-time jobs and loans are more difficult for college women than for men, these young women will be placing increasingly heavy demands on the financial resources of colleges.
3. It is the opinion of this author that highest financial priority should now go toward developing effective educational programs for New Students. The access

programs of the last decade have been, by and large, very successful. If after placing postsecondary educational opportunity within reach of these young people, we offer nothing more than further frustration and further opportunity for failure in educational programs that are inappropriate for the students and the times of the 1970's, then equality of educational opportunity is a hollow victory.

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