

It is April 1995 in Ithaca, New York. The computer has just printed out the list of 224 names accepted for admission to the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations for the fall semester, and Richard Wagner, the dean of admissions, is looking it over. He is a tall, distinguished man with white hair, a Vermont Yankee who thinks his efforts to place blacks, Hispanics, and Mexicans into the I&LR school may one day get him into heaven. But now as he stares at a copy of this list, his eyes show concern, perhaps a little sadness. "In terms of affirmative action, this is going to be a bad year," he warns. "We can offer only a few under EOP [the Equal Opportunity Program]. And there is intense competition for the ones that don't need EOP to get in."

Wagner hands the list to a visitor and begins to explain the letters under the heading "Ethnicity." *A* is American Indian. *B* is black. *C* is Hispanic, that is, any Central or South American who is not of Mexican ancestry or a Puerto Rican national. *D* is Asian—that counts as a minority but not an "under-represented" minority. *E* is Puerto Rican. *F* is Caucasian. *G* is Mexican-American. *J* is foreign. And *N* is not reported—applicants are not required to disclose their ethnicity, though Wagner is not above making an educated guess.

About three-quarters of the way across the page is a column marked "Academic Index." Wagner explains that it is derived by taking the average of an applicant's highest math and verbal SAT scores, the average of his three highest SAT achievement test scores, and his percentile class rank. Each of those three figures—combined math and verbal SAT, achievement SAT, class rank—is then translated into points, with 20 points reflecting the low end of the spectrum and 80 points the high end. The three scores are then added together to produce the "Academic Index." The lowest possible AI is 60, the highest, 240. Among those accepted for admission the highest score was 228, the lowest, 161.

That score, 161, could translate into 440 on the verbal SAT, 580 on the math, 400 to 480 on the achievement tests, and a 3.3 high school GPA, putting an applicant in the top 25-30 percent of his class. "I'll let you in on a little secret," Wagner continues. "This year the eight Ivy League presidents decided to make 161 the cut-off for athletes—anyone lower than that can only be admitted to an Ivy League school by the vote of a special review committee. So we decided to make it our affirmative action cut-off as well."

Wagner begins reviewing the list. He stops at a Jewish name in the top cluster. "This young man is from a high school in Long Island. Three of the top five in his graduating class applied to the I&LR school."

Did the other two get in?

"No. We can't have that kind of concentration; it has nothing to do with affirmative action."

Would you say that if they were "under-represented" minorities?

"I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. Right now I have trouble finding three from the same city."

The eighth name on the list has a Spanish surname. "This is my pride and joy," says Wagner. "Mexican. Her folks are migrant laborers from California. And look at that Academic Index, 218! Can you imagine that! She's also been accepted at Stanford. I'm holding my breath."

That is a big problem for Cornell and many other schools. The top under-represented minority high school graduates get into Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, and Duke on their own, just like any outstanding student. Then these schools move down a rung, accepting minority students who, in most cases, would not make the school if they were white. That, in a nutshell, is how affirmative action in the service of university "diversity" works. But it leaves top-flight institutions like the I&LR school with many minority students who, were they white or Asian, would be heading for Boston University, Syracuse, or Ohio State—fine schools all, but not the nation's most selective.

The migrant workers' daughter is not counted as an Equal Opportunity Program admission, since she was accepted strictly on merit.

Four places below her on Wagner's list is another Mexican-American girl about whom he is nearly as excited, and 18 places further down, an Hispanic boy; both are clearly merit admissions. Then the pickings become slim. The first black, a young woman, is the 124th name to appear on the list, but still with a solid academic index of 194. Below her name, there is only an occasional under-represented minority until near the bottom of the fourth and

final page. Of the bottom 13 names, one is Caucasian and one Asian. The rest are EOP admissions.

But of the 224 names on the list, only ten are black—half the 1994 total. The reason stems from a math course that was added to the I&LR curriculum at the insistence of the faculty, who judged that pre-calculus is a prerequisite for the sort of advanced statistics courses now required in the fields of personnel administration and labor economics. But when the 1994 freshmen took the "pre-cal" course, more than half of those admitted under I&LR's affirmative action program received grades no higher than D, and more than a third flunked outright. So the faculty snatched at least part of Wagner's discretionary authority from him and imposed a rule that no student would be accepted who failed to score at least 500 on the math portion of the SAT.

"That devastated our affirmative action program," says Wagner, who calls it "an example of a self-perpetuating white male culture. And," he sighs, "it's so unnecessary."

He has more paper to show, a list of the 33 EOP students selected for the classes of '92 through '98. So far, two have been dismissed for academic reasons, three others have dropped out for reasons that may or may not have anything to do with academics. "This year our graduation rate will be 100 percent. 100

Race and University Admissions

by **Bob Zelnick**

percent! And look at this.” He points to the name of a black member of the Class of '95. SATs: 330 verbal, 390 math. “Consider what this kid’s life would be like without EOP and what it will be like because we gave her a chance. Now, is there anything else you want to know?”

Yes, what about those two Jewish kids from Long Island who didn’t make the cut?

“Ah, they’ll be fine.”

Those two kids were in good company. The 12-page list of all applicant dispositions shows many Caucasians who had been rejected with SAT scores above 1,200, even 1,300, while the minority applicants with much lower scores were being accepted or placed on the waiting list.

Professor John Bishop was the leading faculty advocate for requiring a minimum score on the math SATs, which caused the I&CLR school to wind up with a numerically small group of minor-

ity students compared to recent years, but a group that also could be the most academically competitive in the school’s history.

Bishop’s position is consistent with his long-held view as a labor economist that it is wrong and self-defeating to make it difficult for employers to test the verbal and math reasoning abilities of potential employees. In 1991, he told the House Labor Committee that “employers need to be told by people in authority that they are acting in the national interest when they seek out and reward those who have higher level academic skills,” because in the long run this will raise the nation’s standard of living.

Affirmative action admissions procedures produce black freshmen with decidedly lower combined SATs than white freshmen, even at those universities that attract by far the most qualified applicants of both races. The following figures are for 1992:

Institution	Gap Between Black and White SATs
Harvard	95
Princeton	150
Duke	184
Dartmouth	218
Columbia	82
Brown	150
Rice	271
Pennsylvania	150
Cornell	162
Stanford	171
Johns Hopkins	155

Many academicians claim that the tendency of prestigious institutions to enroll blacks who lack top academic credentials produces a “mismatch” of students and schools that cascades all the way down the academic ladder, with

black students forced to struggle at schools a notch or two above where their talents should have landed them. The black who is a marginal student at Stanford, Rice, or Dartmouth, it is argued, could be a substantial academic presence at, say, Cal Santa Barbara, Texas A&M, or Boston College, and so on down the line. Sadly, this mismatching can easily lead blacks and whites at all levels to assume blacks are academically inferior, when in fact mismatched white students would also fare badly. Since students admitted under affirmative action would almost certainly have succeeded at more appropriate schools, they suffer a terrible blow due to some schools’ misplaced sense of social responsibility.

While many prestigious universities have continued aggressive affirmative action admissions programs, others have leveled off or cut back. The result appears to be a declining enrollment of blacks, at least at many of the nation’s premier schools, but with those blacks who do attend doing reasonably well in comparison to whites.

A majority of these schools now have around 90 percent of their black students graduating within six years. Producing a student body in which all races succeed academically at roughly the same rate is an excellent reason for colleges and universities to temper their numbers game.

ABC News correspondent Bob Zelnick is the author of *Backfire: A Reporter’s Look at Affirmative Action*, from which this article is adapted.

Diminished Doctors

In the 1988 National Board exams for doctors, pass rates were 88 percent for whites, 84 for Asians, 66 for Hispanics, and 49 for blacks, according to the September 7, 1994 *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The mean score for black females was 369; for black males, 392; for white females, 467; and for white males, 499.

Admissions for medical school are, of course, highly competitive. But affirmative action is the operative national admissions policy. The motto of medical schools these days is “3,000 by 2000”: 3,000 new minority medical school students by the year 2000. As it is applied, the policy routinely denies admission to more qualified whites and Asians while providing admission to less qualified blacks and Hispanics. The evidence is overwhelming that this gap carries over into performance in medical school and on the qualifying exam to become a doctor. As early as 1976, Prof. Bernard Davis of Harvard Medical School published a critique of Harvard’s practices in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that chronicled the erosion of standards after Harvard decided to reserve 20 percent of each medical school class for minorities. First, required science courses were dropped when it became clear minorities fared poorly in them. Next, a pass-fail grading system replaced traditional letter grades. Then simply passing the national medical boards was determined to be adequate. When minorities failed their boards in disproportionate numbers, they were given five opportunities to pass, and when this proved insufficient, the provision was waived altogether.

The conclusion is inescapable: because of race preferences, this country is producing doctors who are substantially less qualified than those who would be starting the practice of medicine if race preferences were abandoned. The same society that keeps potentially useful drugs off the market until they are tested for a near-eternity, that bans carcinogens that must be consumed by the gallon to produce harm—this society deliberately graduates doctors who are less qualified to treat the sick than would be the case if admissions to medical school were based purely on ability and not on race.

Separate Unequal

SEGREGATION ON CAMPUS

"We're facing a historical struggle today.... This is an issue of justice," thundered the Rev. Al Sharpton. "We've faced 400 years of racism and barbarism!" A crowd of 500 roared approval and burst into chants of "No Justice, No Peace!"

Sharpton makes a living by delivering jeremiads against racism and oppression. Yet this rally was unusual. It took place not in Bensonhurst or Harlem, but at Cornell University, which prides itself on its racial sensitivity.

Sharpton's speech provided the climax to a month of rallies, hunger strikes, and protests at this Ivy League school. The maelstrom started when school administrators decided to prohibit freshmen from living in the school's three ethnic dormitories: the predominantly black Ujaama; the Latino Living Center; and Akwe:Kon, an American Indian house. Many minority students opposed this rule, claiming that minority freshmen would lose their racial identities if they could not reside in these ethnic dorms. As one black student put it, "I don't want to be white."

It's difficult not to sympathize with the minority students. College life can be unsettling, and associating with similar people can provide security at a predominantly white university. Many minority students say that residing in an ethnic dormitory is like living with a "family."

Yet racial separatism on campus is rife with ironies. The American university is supposed to be a place where individuals from diverse backgrounds can engage in intellectual pursuits free from "real world" problems of race. But in fact, race is paramount on many college campuses, and tensions run high even—or especially—at elite Northern schools where students and faculty are supposedly more open-minded. Justin Samuels, a black student from Alabama, said, "I come from the South, and the race situation is far from perfect there, but it's not [as bad as] here" at Cornell.

The same universities that enact affirmative action programs to foster diversity and mutual understanding also encourage self-segregation along ethnic lines. Their motivations arise partly in response to intimidation, and partly from well-intentioned but misguided liberal paternalism.

Cornell is a particularly telling example. At times, the school has facilitated racial separatism under pressure from

BY KENNETH LEE

threats and building sit-ins. Ujaama, for example, was established in the wake of the infamous 1969 building takeover by armed black students. (Notable professors Walter Berns, Thomas Sowell, and Allan Bloom all left Cornell soon after this incident. Black Republican presidential candidate-to-be Alan Keyes, then an undergraduate, opposed the building takeover and left after being threatened by fellow students.) In 1994, Cornell erected the Latino Living Center after protesters stormed the main administration building, injuring several campus police officers. Now in 1996, after students rallied with Sharpton, Cornell has backed off from its plan to disallow freshmen in the ethnic dorms.

But although protests have figured in the establishment of ethnic dormitories, Cornell's liberal paternalism has played a larger role in encouraging ethnic segregation. Ethnic theme houses received the administration's full support until the *New York Times*' reporting embarrassed the school. And these dorms represent only a fraction of the campus's institutional separatism. From the moment minority students are accepted at Cornell, the school isolates them and treats them like delicate commodities.

Minority engineering students, for example, have separate study lounges. A Minority Affairs Office exclusively serves minority students. Ethnic studies depart-

