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Letter from Ronald Banks to John Bynoe on Recommendations for Minority Students

Ronald F. Banks
University of Maine

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President Libby

Mr. John Bynoe

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November 4, 1968

I think the answer to the question posed is that we will continue to recruit students from the urban disadvantaged groups. We have no intention of back-sliding. On the other hand, we must place a higher priority on attending to the urgent needs of our own deprived families in Maine. That we are serious about this is evidenced by the two documents which I gave Frank Santia. One outlines the work we are doing for disadvantaged groups; the other con-

November 4, 1968

Mr. John Bynoe
Regional Civil Rights Director
Office of Civil Rights
John F. Kennedy Federal Building
Boston, Massachusetts 02203

Dear John:

Since I was delegated the responsibility for handling the details of your visit and subsequent matters, President Libby has turned over to me your letter addressed to him dated October 21, 1968. I must take the responsibility for overlooking in your letter of October 1, your request for properly notifying your office of the action we have taken on your recommendations. What follows is an effort to do what you requested.

First, I am enclosing a copy of a memorandum which I prepared and duly circulated dated October 18, 1968. This memo, I believe, addresses itself to Recommendations 2, 3, 10, and 11 on pages 1-3 and numbers 1, 2, and 3 on page 3.

Secondly, I will attempt to address myself to your other recommendations which are not covered in the memo.

Recommendation #1 - It is our feeling that our Martin Luther King Scholarship Committee performs the roles which you recommend for an Equal Educational Opportunity Committee. Their specific charge was to advise the President on programs and policies which would result in opening greater educational opportunity to minority and other disadvantaged groups. Their work is not confined to the recruitment of black students only.

Recommendations #4, 5, 8, 9 - Involves the active recruitment of minority group students from the urban areas. The Martin Luther King Scholarship Committee has taken steps to publicize its scholarship program along lines suggested in #4. The degree to which we can and should actively recruit from the urban areas is related to a much larger question. That question is "What is our responsibility to the pressing needs of our urban disadvantaged when weighed against the equally pressing needs of the disadvantaged in our own State?" This is not an academic question when you operate with very limited resources and are operating with a half million dollar deficit as we are this year.

Mr. John Bynoe

-2-

November 4, 1968

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Recommendation #6 - There is merit to your proposal for appointing a person of Indian ancestry to our staff. Yet we have to ask ourselves if this is the wisest use of limited institutional resources. If we were doing nothing then we would be culpable. Yet, I must tell you that I and three other members of the University staff are members of the Governor's Committee on Indian Education. We have visited the reservations of our Indians to inform ourselves on their needs. The problems are many and there are no easy solutions. Nevertheless, we have asked members of the University faculty and staff to begin to work closely with Indians, to inform them of scholarship opportunities and to extend help in other ways. We have taken the position that any qualified Indian will be admitted to the University with a free ride, if his situation warrants.

The real problem exists in their elementary schools and this is in turn directly related to a myriad of problems which are the result of years of neglect. I believe that through the interest of those I have mentioned all that is possible can be accomplished in respect to higher educational opportunities. Incidentally, we will recommend to the Governor the creation of the position of Education Officer for Indian Affairs. I think that the appointment of an Indian to this post is an excellent idea and will recommend as much.

Lastly, Recommendation #7 - I will bring to the attention of our Alumni Association the desirability of what you suggest.

I think that this covers the points raised in your letter of October 1. I hope my reply will suggest to you our commitment to expanding educational opportunity for all within the means available and, I might add, beyond the means available if our experience budgetary wise this year is a portend of the future.

Mr. John Bynoe

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November 4, 1968

I look forward to seeing you soon. I found our day together most instructive and enjoyable.

Sincerely yours,

November 4, 1968

Ronald F. Banks
Assistant to the President

Mr. John Bynoe
Regional Civil Rights Director
RFB:jc of Civil Rights
cc: President W. C. Libby
Enclosure Massachusetts 02203

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