

UNIVERSITY MEMO

TO: Members and friends of the University community

SUBJECT: The events of January 13-15, 1969, at the University of Minnesota

Last Monday (January 13) seven Black students, representing the Afro-American Action Committee, asked for an appointment with President Moos. They hoped to discuss three "demands":

- (1) That a Department of Afro-American Studies be established;
- (2) That the University guarantee generous support for a Black students' conference to be held on campus in February;
- (3) That a Black community agency be given control over the Martin Luther King scholarship fund.

Because President Moos was out of town, Dr. Paul Cashman, Vice President for Student Affairs, met with the students. They presented him with a set of demands and agreed to come back to talk with President Moos on Tuesday. They set a deadline of 1:00 p.m. Tuesday for the University to respond to their proposals.

President Moos met with some 50 or 60 Black students at 1:00 p.m. Tuesday. After 25 minutes, during which President Moos sought to make clear actions under way within the University in these areas of concern, the Black students left peaceably, saying that their demands were not being met. They then entered the Bursar's Office and the Office of Records on the first floor of Morrill Hall, permitting no one to enter those offices but allowing students and Civil Service personnel to leave. Most of the personnel were dismissed for the day and the offices closed. The blockade continued throughout the afternoon, peaceably except for a minor incident when an angry student sought to force entrance.

"Occupation" continued all night, and was expanded to include the outer doors to Morrill so that no one could enter unless okayed by the students manning the doors. In late evening, the original group of Black students was reinforced by white students representing Students for a Democratic Society and possibly other student groups and apparently by some non-students. During the night unidentified members of the occupying groups moved furniture, blockaded doors, upset files and caused damage to building and equipment (later estimated at about \$11,000).

University officials, meeting almost continuously from early Tuesday afternoon, decided to seek settlement of the dispute by negotiation. The grounds for the decision were that the Black "demands" were close to actions already under way in the University; that avoidance of violence and possibly bloodshed was a value more commanding than a solution by force might achieve; that continuation of as many University functions as possible was imperative; and that negotiation would lead toward community understanding, but that harshening of the lines would widen breaches.

At the same time, the first steps in the implementation of the Campus Demonstrations Policy were taken. Members of the administration met with student leaders, chairmen and key faculty senate and student committees. These individuals played an active role in all the subsequent events.

Through Tuesday afternoon and again Wednesday morning a group of AAAC representatives and an equal number of faculty, administrative and student personnel conducted negotiations. A prime problem, it turned out, was student misunderstanding: failure to recognize that a "program" of cross-discipline nature would achieve as solid educational results as an "Afro-American Studies Department"; lack of presentation by AAAC of adequate budgets and planning for the proposed conference together with failure of University agencies to seek all avenues of funding (though some had already been found) in setting up the conference; and misunderstanding in the Black Community of the nature of the Martin Luther King program. It was clear also that many University personnel failed to comprehend fully the nature of the Black students' demands and the frustrations they felt over what appeared to them to be inaction. In brief, there exists within and outside the University a serious problem of communication between blacks and whites.

At about 1:00 p.m. Wednesday, accords were reached:

- (1) The AAAC approved the University's ongoing plans for establishment of a program in ethnic and racial studies that would give appropriate attention to study of Black and other ethnic and racial development, under an arrangement that would involve the Black community in consultations and plans for the program but would leave decisions on courses, degrees, etc., in faculty hands
- (2) The AAAC and the University negotiations agreed to work for realignment of the control group for the Martin Luther King Fund (a fund not under University management) raising board membership from 14 to 21 and assuring wider representation of the Black community and of the poor community;
- (3) The AAAC accepted a guarantee of \$5,260 from non-public sources, to be made available through the Union after the development of and appropriate plan and budget for the proposed conference.

Upon these agreements, the occupation of Morrill Hall by all the groups involved ceased.

What have been the positive results of this series of events?

1. Demonstration of the effectiveness of the negotiation method for examining and solving disagreements between elements in the University community.

2. Achievement of accord without violence, bloodshed, or heavy property loss, and with a minimum of disruption of University functioning and none of the academic process.

3. Improvement in communication and understanding between the campus Black community and the University and emphasis on the need to continue efforts to expand communication and understanding. The gulf in communication between Black and white communities in America, however, is so great that no one should assume that further misunderstandings will not emerge.

4. Demonstration of the great effectiveness of friendly and instantly available relationships between the University and leaders of the Twin Cities Black community, a number of whom were instrumental in bringing the complainants and the University negotiators to an understanding of each others' views.

Among the negative results:

1. Temporary disruption of several important University administrative functions, to the inconvenience of both students and University staff (students lost access temporarily to the admissions, records and bursar's offices; a few staff members received paychecks a day late).

2. Physical damage to the extent of about \$11,000, and other costs such as unauthorized long-distance telephone calls, and extra pay for University staff in restoring order.

3. Widespread public demand for assurance that similar disruptions can be avoided in the future -- a most difficult task.

4. Wide off-campus anger at or loss of confidence in the methods employed by the University to meet the emergency.

The issue of discipline or assessment of penalties was not part of the negotiations. The University, however, has initiated steps to ascertain what civil laws and University policies, principles, and regulations were violated, and by whom. An investigating committee, made up of students, faculty, administration and members of the community, is expected to be named and to begin work early in the week of January 20. Once facts are known, appropriate University or other action will be undertaken, placing the responsibility for unlawful behavior if any and assessing penalties.

The University has committed itself to full speed in implementing the agreements reached with the responsible AAAC leaders. This is made easier by the fact that the agreements in all three areas are consonant with programs or policies already instituted by the University (to repeat: at least some of the original complaints might have been avoided had full understanding existed before January 13). It also commits itself to immediate active effort toward identifying and meeting dissatisfactions in the University community before they reach boiling point, and toward positive steps to resolve them; and to steps that will provide all possible assurance against unlawful action as part of complaint or protest against University procedures.

Finally: The incidents and issues of January 13-15 at the University are similar to incidents at other American colleges and universities. The kind of issue raised by the AAAC is akin to the kind raised at Columbia University, at Oberlin, at Oshkosh, San Francisco State, Southern Illinois, and elsewhere. In no other case we know has the issue been resolved more peaceably, with less violence and property damage, with more rapidity, and with more satisfactory outcome than this one at Minnesota. The method here described consciously prefers broken chairs to broken heads, and increase of community understanding -- a value that has both human and educational merit.

We believe in positive effort to respond to the legitimate needs of students, positive steps to clarify thinking of both students and staff, and positive steps to emphasize the institutional need to define responsibility and to uphold the requirements of good citizenship so essential to healthy education.