

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Task Force on Student Access

Report of Subcommittee B

March 9, 1976

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I. Summary

We study access because we know from experience that not all students who wish to take advantage of University instruction can be served; indeed enrollment projections for the next ten years show the problem will intensify as more students graduate from high school and seek college training.

The focus of the Task Force on Access is on new students. Alternatively, one could start by studying a set educational process and identifying the need for "raw material" in the form of new students to feed it. Or, one could study market value and need for graduates. The subcommittee believes the appropriate point to enter the access question is by taking a position on the types of new students that should be admitted.

A University as complex as this one may never reach consensus on the question of which students it should serve. Access will be thought by some who view the University's primary role as the advancement of knowledge as being already too broad. Others, who view the University as an instrument of social change, will see it as too narrow. This report takes the point of view that the present mix of students is appropriate to the role of a senior public institution, that we should not slip into a new position on access without good reasons and an explicit decision to do so, and that the form of control by which institutions can change the mix of students is neither well understood nor very powerful.

Marginal changes in student mix may be desirable. We may want to attract more minority students, mid-career adults, students with certain achievement backgrounds, etc. We should seek to attract them within existing admission standards. To do so, the institution must provide good information to prospective students and attempt to influence their choice of colleges.

The University must change to meet the needs of students currently admitted. We need a more flexible instructional environment, one in which the student can strive to test himself and meet requirements in his chosen field.

II. The University's Students

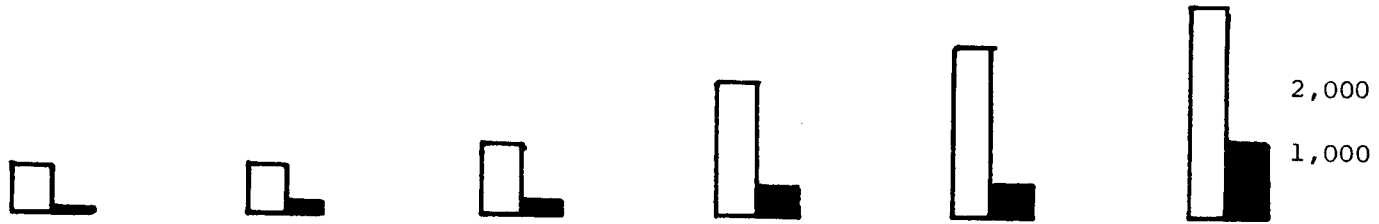
New University students are increasingly transfers from other institutions (about half of the 1974-75 new Twin Cities undergraduates had begun their college work elsewhere first). Coordinate campuses are increasingly taking on the responsibility within the University system for admitting new freshmen. Figure 1 shows the extent of change over the past 25 years.

Figure 1

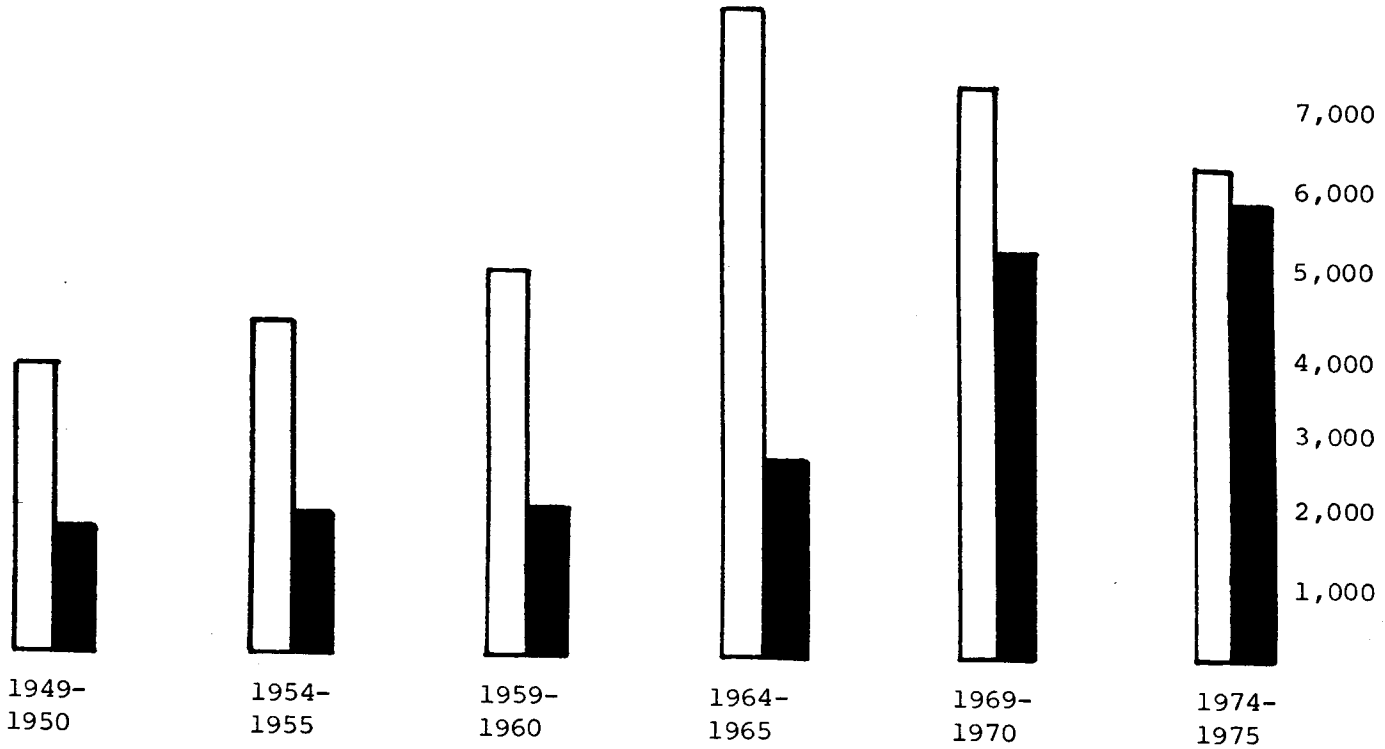
How New Undergraduate Students Enter the University of Minnesota, Freshmen Versus Transfers

□ Freshmen ■ Transfers

Coordinate campuses



Non-Cities campus



Though these dramatic shifts in input are occurring, the attributes of new University freshmen have remained fairly stable over the past seven or eight years. They are capable (half were in the top quarter of their high school class in academic accomplishment); come predominately from the Twin Cities metropolitan area; and on test scores and indices of socioeconomic status, reflect changes in the educational realities of their secondary schools on the one hand, and increased parental socioeconomic status on the other. Tables 1 and 2 present data on high school achievement (all freshmen) and socioeconomic status indicators (CLA only, combined data not available). Minority student enrollments within the University as a whole, are proportional to areas from which the University draws its students, but University minority students may not be drawn from those geographic service areas, making affirmative action within those service areas still a priority item for the University.¹

Advanced standing students (transfers from other institutions) are on the average older each year (see Table 3). They come more predominately from community colleges within Minnesota, but sizable numbers still transfer from colleges outside of Minnesota (many are residents who completed a year or two elsewhere).

Precisely what the mix of new students is may change without any control by the University, but for several reasons we believe the retention of a mix approximately similar to the present one is critical to the health of the institution and should be maintained. The land grant philosophy argues for "...providing Minnesota students with access to a broad range of educational programs at the lowest possible costs."² If we do not keep educational issues

¹Task Force Subcommittee A will provide information on minority students.

²Mission Statement, University of Minnesota. July 11, 1975.

Table 1

High School Achievement of University Freshmen
(High School Percentile Rank for All Freshmen)

Year	Percentages of University Freshmen with High School Percentile Ranks					
	Bottom 25%	Bottom Half	Top Half	Top 25%	Top 10%	Top 5%
1963	9	27	73	43	18	9
1964	10	28	72	42	18	9
1965	7	22	78	48	22	11
1966	7	23	77	48	22	12
1967	6	21	79	50	23	12
1968	7	20	80	52	23	12
1969	5	18	82	54	25	13
1970	6	18	82	54	25	13
1971	5	18	82	54	25	13
1972	5	17	83	54	25	14
1973	6	20	80	53	25	14
1974	6	20	80	51	24	14
1975	6	21	79	50	24	13

Table 2

CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS ADMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

FRESHMEN - CLA

Year	Male	Female	Female %	Older Than 21%	Father's Occupation Other Than Professional-Managerial	Father's Education Less Than High School Graduate
				%	%	%
1963	1590	1665	51	3	72	25
1964	2016	2163	52	3	75	25
1965	2154	2258	51	2	73	23
1966	2200	2243	50	2	74	22
1967	2054	2149	51	2	64	20
1968	2021	2263	53	3	62	20
1969	1712	2125	55	2	60	17
1970	1737	1904	52	3	55	15
1971	1707	1918	53	3	54	14
1972	1519	1730	53	2	53	13
1973	1538	1592	51	3	55	10
1974	1563	1580	50	4	58	10
1975	1561	1674	52	4	44	10

Table 3

CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS ADMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
 ADVANCED STANDING - CLA

Year	Male	Female	Female %	Older Than 21%
1963	431	323	43	11
1964	456	342	43	12
1965	426	351	45	10
1966	482	540	53	12
1967	465	424	48	7
1968	570	623	52	12
1969	493	495	50	11
1970	687	652	49	14
1971	710	648	48	19
1972	752	631	46	20
1973	750	654	47	25
1974	798	809	50	25
1975	840	822	49	27

before the University community in the form of a diverse student body with whom the faculty must interact, we may soon find ourselves insulated from the educational problems for which the institution should develop solutions. The University has, within the state, the resources which can be brought to bear on the development of new instructional methods, new means to identify talent, and new ways of meeting student needs; it must provide a service to the state through its leadership in solving the problem of how to best educate a diverse student body.

The need to provide a receptive competitive climate for transfer students also argues for keeping a mix of native students (freshmen). Were the institution to select only the brightest freshmen, the academic competition might become so keen that transfer students similar to those formerly admitted as freshmen, but now coming as transfers from other institutions, would face too fast a pace and a too competitive student body. With experience, transfer students, provided with information on the fate of their predecessors, would be advised to transfer to other institutions, thereby reducing the University's effectiveness in meeting its responsibility to provide specialized instruction.

When it has been considered before (Senate, 1968), the recommendation for controlling enrollment has always been to institute procedures which will insure a mix, and this committee retains the same view.

III. Marginal Changes in Student Enrollment

What marginal changes should be sought? Clearly the University should continue its responsibility to increase the availability of upper division instruction to transfer students from community colleges in Minnesota. Beyond that, the Task Force should take positions on several

other categories of students. Subcommittee B has not had time to investigate each, and what follows here represents value judgments by the subcommittee.

- A. Minority students. Regardless of the difficulties it may present, the University should do everything possible to bring more moderate achievement, Minnesota resident minority students to the University. High achieving minority students have good opportunities at a number of institutions. The University should concentrate its efforts on students who, though their prior achievement is "average," would not attend college without the effort by the University. The English subcommittee is providing an analysis of minority student needs.
- B. Non-resident students. The subcommittee sees no particular need to increase the number of non-Minnesota resident students in undergraduate colleges. The arguments in favor of doing so are 1) we want to change the mix of students in ways which cannot be accommodated by drawing from the state, and 2) the University is provincial in orientation and the infusion of students from other states will bring new points of view to campus and make the institution more cosmopolitan.

The Task Force is faced with tough choices of recommending which Minnesota students to attract and admit already. Given the enrollment pressure which will come in several years ahead, the arguments about changing the

mix should be considered at some future time when we are first meeting the University's commitments to resident students. In fact, recent reciprocity agreements with neighboring states have increased accessibility to non-resident students. With the great increase in communications over the past thirty years (e.g., television, paperbacks) and the increasing level of cultural opportunities in the metropolitan area, the old arguments about provincialism lose much of their weight. The University campus is an exciting and stimulating place with a national orientation. We see no need at this time to stimulate the admission of more non-resident students at the undergraduate level.

- C. Foreign students. The University is not structured to deal very well at the undergraduate level with the unique needs of foreign students. The International Student Office does an excellent job of providing support, but undergraduates are so few in number that they meet a strange educational system unprepared for them in their primary activities in the classroom.

The recommendation is not to exclude foreign students, but rather not to make an aggressive attempt to bring more undergraduate foreign students to campus. The same concerns do not apply to graduate students; the committee does not mean to take a position on the issue of bringing more graduate foreign students to campus.

D. Mid-career adults. The University's expertise in instruction in day school programs is with typical full-time students. Adults, including senior citizens who have come to the institution under a new program this year, add to the classes in which they participate, in the views of a number of instructors. The University has had an adult special classification for many years. Increasing the number of adults on campus should be an objective and should represent marginal change in University access policy, particularly when such students wish to take advantage of ongoing instructional programs and when they are served on a space available basis, as in the case of senior citizens. If they become competitive with more traditional college-age students, a reappraisal will be required. The development of innovative new programs might best follow demonstration of significant increase in demand for such new instruction, rather than as a means of attracting new mid-career students. If increased funding is available, so that adult students are not competitive, they should be sought. The position is not intended to apply to Continuing Education and Extension, the traditional home for non-career adult students.

IV. An Issue of Choice

Colleges, and admission officers in particular, like to believe that admission requirements determine what students come to an institution. Admission requirements, when publicly stated, might better be viewed as determining which students do not come to the institution, for their effect

is only to raise the threshold and exclude some additional number of poorly qualified potential students. For those who do qualify, the decision to attend the University is a complex reaction to a variety of influences. If change in publicly-stated admission requirements is the process used to control enrollment, it will raise the threshold and exclude students with poor achievement histories. The relationship of high school achievement to family socioeconomic levels has been demonstrated³; increasing the threshold admission requirement will exclude more low SES applicants than high SES applicants. In years of high enrollment pressure, the threshold will rise, and when fewer students are available it will be reduced. Fast reactions from the lower division instructional staff will be required to match the cyclical change in new student qualifications.

The subcommittee did review several means by which student decisions to attend the University are influenced by means other than the change of admission requirements. Perhaps the most significant influence on choice of the University is the overall reputation of the University as it reaches prospective students, their parents, and their counselors; a reputation which is built largely by the press and by the University's former students; when negative, it is overcome only with difficulty. The press emphasizes the University's problems and its most highly visible programs. University students and graduates probably give a balanced view, albeit in only those areas with which they have (or had) contact. University Relations performs a valuable service in attempting to fill out the picture.

Bulletins are the primary publications which reach prospective students. They are ill-suited to representing the University to a prospective student,

³ Presentation to the Task Force by Tom Mortenson.

whether freshman, junior, professional college or graduate; for in attempting to meet a number of objectives (e.g., inform prospective students, represent academic opportunities, become current students' "contracts" on degree and academic progress requirements), they meet none very well. They are unattractive, pedantic, and out-of-date. More than a cosmetic change is needed, a creative overhaul of bulletins starting from objectives they are designed to meet is necessary.

More direct attempts at influence of choice are represented by central and collegiate prospective student programs. The central program (Admissions and Records) has developed without clear University mandate by reallocation of A&R funds to its support. It is hopelessly understaffed; the University expends approximately \$8.00 per new Twin Cities student for central services, compared with perhaps \$250 per new student for a private liberal arts college.

Materials published centrally (e.g., mini-bulletins, Counselors Handbook, Report, New Student News, In Focus, Next Step) are creative and well oriented but minimal. The office has had to depend on high school and community college counselors to reach prospective students so many publications are directed to counselors.

In other programs (high school and community college visits, on-campus conferences for high school and community college counselors and deans, the hot line) the office does a good job. Campus visits by students, a stable program for any private college, is weak, a reflection of the logistic problems of a metropolitan campus. The new A&R/Bookstore building will contain facilities for reception of groups of students and counselors, and innovative programs may be possible (e.g., video tape outstanding professors discussing their field and University education).

The office recognizes the need for course transfer coordination for community college courses, the principle difficulty in transfer from community colleges, according to comments to the committee from community college personnel. Resources have not been available to work on a solution.

College based prospective student programs are diverse, varied, and uncoordinated. The range from services roughly parallel to central services (Institute of Technology) to services tied closely to central programs. A voluntary prospective student committee, representing Twin Cities lower division programs, is the principle means of coordination. Colleges interested in attracting more students field any programs they can afford. In at least two areas, a clear and immediate need to centralize services does exist: 1) a coordinated approach to course transfer evaluations is required; a department-by-department analysis should be made available to community colleges, and 2) employment and probability of graduation data should be published for parents, students, and counselors.

Other college and campus student contact programs are extensive. They consist of (I.T.) subject matter articulation conferences, (CLA) other interactions with high school teachers (debate judging), (CLA) summer institutes in music and theatre, and (CLA) student search programs for talented potential students. Agriculture uses the Ag Extension Service to expand its activities, and other state-wide efforts operate through concerned professional groups.

Individually, the college/department programs are to be applauded, but together they may appear uncoordinated to those to whom they are directed. A high school might, for example, be involved in debate judging; invitations to summer music and theatre programs; special language projects; information

from ROTC for students; information from University Bands about auditions; high school visits from representatives of the Prospective Student Office, Institute of Technology, and one or two coordinate campuses; special invitations to honor programs; letters to high achieving students from the President and Vice President for Student Affairs; and at the same time be explaining changes in freshman admission requirements to students. If the University is to affect college choice by students, a coordinated approach to influencing student decisions would be more effective, and a clearing-house for University contacts with prospective students should be developed.

We do not have good information on whether prospective student programs, central and/or peripheral, can be used to manage enrollments. Most of those associated with prospective student programs have a hunch that developing such programs will increase the number of students who come to the University but not manage the number. But they are the only effective tool which can be used to influence choice by those students who meet floor admission requirements.

What can be used to manage enrollments other than escalation of admission thresholds and better information to prospective students, their parents and counselors through prospective student programs? Early and firm deadlines are acceptable to high school counselors and the general public. Some provisions must exist for special students (e.g., minority applicants, recently discharged veterans, talented students who change their plan to attend another institution). Forming an applicant pool and selecting therefrom at an early date is another possible control. Selection by lottery from such a pool is a method which will best maintain a broad student mix, but that is about the only positive thing to be said for it; for it raises serious relationship problems. Selection from a pool on

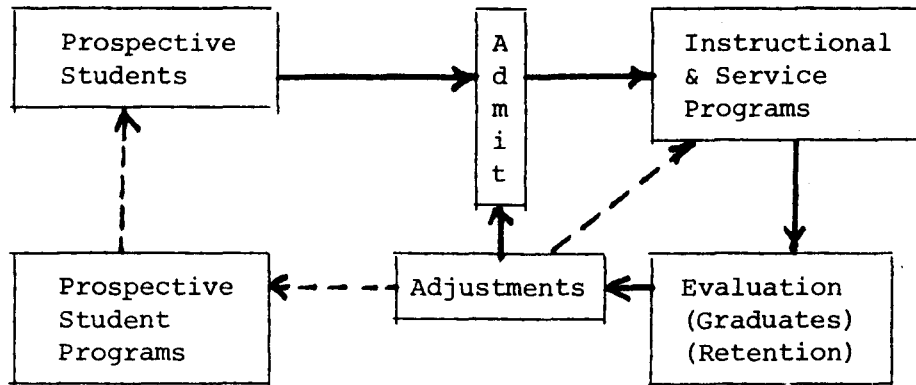
student characteristics of particular interest to the institution allows admission to be targeted to special students (e.g., students with unusual interests and objectives, with research interests or experience, with particular achievements in student government, dramatics or music, etc.). There is research evidence that non-academic accomplishments in high school are related to similar accomplishments in college, even though knowledge of them may not improve the precision with which college grades can be predicted. The point is that there are alternatives which can be designed to control the number of new students admitted. They will work best if implemented in concert with an effective and coordinated prospective student program.

V. An Institutional Response to Access Issues

Providing an opportunity to students through access to the University is not by itself enough. Applicants must be provided with enough information to make a sound decision whether to attend or not and once enrolled must receive assistance from the institution in reaching their objectives.

Two problems in this area were brought to the subcommittee's attention. First, a number of minority students believe they are blocked in General College and will never be able to transfer to another program. They view their admission to the General College as a convenient solution by the University to a pressing social problem, not as an opportunity to bring their academic skills to the level where they can compete successfully in mainstream University programs. Second, other students find that conditions change after they enter a program and are then forced to change objectives, for example, when an upper division college increases entrance requirements without adequate lead time.

The access dilemma can be demonstrated by the following diagram:



We have tended to concentrate on adjusting instructional programs within General College and adjusting admission requirements to other programs. The prospective student programs of the University have not been viewed as a means of influencing decisions by students to attend. The underlying assumption seems to be that the right type of student must be supplied to constant programs in most units but the General College must gear its instructional programs to the students it receives. The example is overdrawn, for CLA has developed an honors program, in part to meet needs of entering students; Technology has developed innovative tutorial programs and created special opportunities for women, and freshman colleges have developed Martin Luther King assistance programs. But overall, programs are developed to meet collegiate objectives and then attempts are made to select students who will meet the needs of the new programs.

Three options should be considered when the evaluations of instructional and service programs indicate a mismatch of students and programs has occurred: 1) change admission requirements, 2) change the University's instructional and service programs, and/or 3) influence students' college choices prior to application.

There are several things which the institution might change to be able to better meet the needs of new students. They are designed to increase flexibility within the institution:

- 1) Instructional staff members with common concerns might share their classroom problems and successes and review innovative approaches to instruction. For example, faculty members in English, Writing (General College), Communication, Rhetoric departments could meet regularly to share information. Other discipline areas also run in parallel within different administrative units designed for different students.
- 2) Barriers to cross-college registration might be lowered. While there is greater flexibility now than at some times in the past, lower division students are still constrained by rules which prohibit selection of courses in another college when similar courses exist in their own. A free market would require better advising, more information, and greater attention to and definition of individual student needs and the types of students which specific courses serve best.
- 3) Cross-college advising might be encouraged. Limitations on resources available to student personnel and other staff members have reduced the extent of cross-college advising. Advising pre-transfer students who are not likely to meet requirements for transfer may indeed be less relevant to an individual college's objectives; doing so may also foster unrealistic expectations by marginal students, and the pre-transfer student may get poor information about

alternatives other than the one represented by the adviser. Still, some means should exist for pre-transfer students to have meaningful contact with a representative of the program in which he aspires to become a student.

- 4) Flexible admission policies might be provided. In a period of increasing enrollment pressures, accepting students who do not meet the stated admission requirements may not be politically expedient. If the metric in which college instructional work loads is evaluated moves to student credit hours, instead of headcount, and if students take coursework similar to present programs, the problems of admission of marginal students to any particular unit will dissolve. University resource requirements devoted to advising and student services would need to change so services could be provided by units with increased service loads.

The overall objective of changes outlined above would be to package University opportunities differently, in part to dispel the idea that the University has structured dead-end paths for minority students where students do not have appropriate backgrounds, enter General College and cannot take courses they "need", are not admitted to four year colleges because they do not have appropriate coursework and, when and if they are, do not have the background necessary to survive in the mainstream college. But such changes might be just as appropriate to very capable students who would benefit from a wider choice of resources and better information about University programs. Marginal changes which bring more mid-career students

to the day school might also be earlier if a more open environment meets them at registration.

VI. A Summary of Recommendations

- A) The University should make no significant attempt to change the mix of students to whom it provides access.
- B) However, the increase in new transfer students should be continued.
- C) Two marginal changes in student mix should be sought:
 - 1) The number of Minnesota resident minority students with moderate achievement backgrounds should be increased;
 - 2) Mid-career adults who seek traditional day-school programs should be encouraged.
- D) At the point more total students can be accommodated, the University should reconsider access questions with special attention to:
 - 1) Non-Minnesota resident students;
 - 2) Foreign students seeking undergraduate programs;
 - 3) Adult students seeking non-traditional programs.
- E) The University's bulletin program should be revised to make information about the University attractive, timely, and useful.
- F) Prospective student programs should be expanded with particular attention to the following:
 - 1) Providing course equivalency data to community colleges;

- 2) Designing an organized program of on-campus visits for prospective students;
 - 3) Establishing a clearinghouse to better coordinate diverse college and campus visits which reach high schools and community colleges;
 - 4) Providing information on probabilities of graduation and employment to prospective students in a manner which helps them to evaluate the full range of costs and benefits of University educations.
- G) If it becomes necessary to limit enrollment, that should be accomplished through the use of:
- 1) Earlier and firmer application deadlines;
 - 2) Formation of an applicant pool and selection therefrom on the basis of student accomplishments in a variety of areas.
- H) When adjustments are necessary in response to a determination that the match between new students and University programs is not good, three options should be considered together:
- 1) Influence student choice through prospective student programs;
 - 2) Change admission requirements;
 - 3) Change University instructional and service programs.
- I) In response to current problems, the University should consider changes in institutional procedures to provide greater flexibility:

- 1) Increase contact between instructional staff members in similar disciplines which are administratively separate;
- 2) Reduce barriers to cross-college registration;
- 3) Encourage cross-college advising;
- 4) Develop more flexible admission requirements where they can be justified by increased support services.