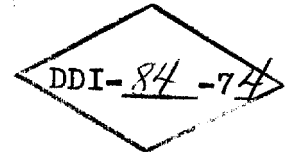


10 January 1974



MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Hiring Black Professionals for OER

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1. Agency recruiter [redacted] and I recently visited several black colleges and universities seeking to interest students in Agency employment in the field of economics. In talking with numerous school officials and some students, one thing stood out: OER faces an up-hill road in its determination to expand the minority component of its professional work force. We must try harder than we have in the past and must be willing to shuck off old habits and orthodoxies in our approach to the problem. This memorandum discusses some of the problems associated with recruiting black students and suggests ways that we can solve them.

The Difficulties

2. A major set of impediments to successful hiring of blacks is grounded in the attitudes of the black students themselves. There is considerable hostility among many of the black students toward CIA. Some of this is the product of the general level of radicalism that pervades much university life these days, but the attitude goes even deeper. There is identification of CIA with, and criticism of, its role in the Vietnam war, a war for which many blacks feel they carried a disproportionate share of the burden. In addition, many black students identify very strongly with nationalist movements in Africa and elsewhere, and radicals among them have fostered the notion that CIA perpetuates the reactionary status quo in these areas and thwarts the legitimate aspirations of black people everywhere for social, political and cultural growth. Regardless of the validity of these attitudes, they appear to be well entrenched. On more than one occasion, I was told by black professors that, while they were sympathetic with the work being done by CIA in my field, they could not appear to sponsor a favorable

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viewpoint toward us in their classrooms if they expect to maintain any empathy with their students. In addition to the difficulties which arise out of misinformation about the Agency, we also face the problem that many students have little or no perception of what a professional career in a Research organization would be like. As one professor said, many of his students, having been raised in disadvantaged cultural and intellectual circumstances, have never even heard of research, much less do they perceive the job opportunities in the field. Their view of white-collar society beyond social work, teaching, and the legal and medical professions, was nothing but a blur.

3. The second major category of problems is of our own making. The Agency's professional employment standards and procedures present major obstacles for many black students.

4. It is a simple fact that none but the best and most advantaged black students can hope to compete for professional positions in our organization. Many of the black students enter college with very great gaps in their education, and these may be only partially remedied by their subsequent college work. Reasons for this are obvious and well-known, but one example especially brought the situation home to me. A guidance counsellor (Black) at Spelman College, reminiscing about her own high school days, remembered her math teacher who had only a grade school education (!) and in her words, blighted two generations of black students with her utter inability to understand, much less teach, the material for which she was responsible. The college economic faculty I talked with were without exception dedicated and fairly well prepared for their assignments. They were, however, overworked and caught up with the need to try to fill in these large educational gaps of their students. They had little time or energy to bring their courses up to standards which we expect of most university programs. Despite the very best efforts of such a dedicated teaching faculty, most of the schools I visited cannot be said to provide the educational opportunities of the major universities from which we draw most of our professional work force. As examples, the Chairman of the Department of Economics at North Carolina Central University was only an instructor two years ago, and he, the ranking member of the staff, has just completed his Master's degree. Most of his conversation concerned the problems he faced in helping his students learn about urban civilization in the Twentieth Century and his approach, quite paternalistic,

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was quite obviously very demanding of his time as a human being and less so of his qualifications as a teacher of economics. Similarly, the Department of Economics at Spelman College lays claim to offering a full economics program at the Bachelor's level, and this only because of the valiant efforts of one woman who, until two years ago, was the only economics instructor at the college.

5. As to employment procedures, few of the black students understand the necessity of the elaborate investigative procedures, documentation, and the like. Many of them come from home surroundings of hire-on on Monday and payday on Friday. It does little for our recruitment program to trot out the 20-odd-page PHS form, say "fill this out and wait 3-6 months after which time we may hire you, if you pass the security check."

6. Finally, our recruitment effort runs up against a very vigorous and aggressive set of competitors. Black students, mediocre to good, are in much demand by the business community and graduate schools throughout the United States. At all of the colleges I visited, there was profuse evidence of very slick recruitment efforts by most of the major US corporations. Placement offices were loaded down with colorful and interesting recruiting literature. Recruiting officials make frequent pilgrimages to all the Black schools and frequently stay several days, spending liberally on student and faculty alike, not forgetting the college placement officials. Furthermore, when these corporations identify students they are interested in hiring, their pursuit becomes intensive, resembling in most particulars the old fraternity hot-box approach to pledging. One composite example will illustrate this. A major US corporation recently identified a black student at Atlanta University who fitted into their employment picture. They invited the student to visit the corporation's headquarters, all expenses paid, offered him summer employment during the same visit, which, for one reason or another, he declined. Subsequently, the corporation paid several calls on the student, always making certain that they conveyed their interest to the Director of Placement (a long lunch was usually the most appropriate vehicle for the discussion). Early in the recruiting process, the recruiters made a firm employment offer, and, once the student had decided to come with the company, they brought him into the corporation at a time selected by the student.

Furthermore, as a follow-up, the placement director of the university was given an all-expense-paid visit to the corporation headquarters after the student had gone to work for the company.

6. Perhaps more subtle, but albeit, effective tactics are being used by many of the major graduate schools. Nearly all black students with B and A averages are able to go on to graduate school will full-expense-paid scholarships. Such arrangements frequently include research grants for the summer periods as well. One professor at North Carolina Central University told me that he had carte blanche from several Ivy League colleges to offer this kind of arrangement to any students in his class whom he felt could reasonably handle graduate work.

What Might be Done

7. Granted at the outset that fiscal (and perhaps ethical) constraints prevent us from duplicating the more flamboyant tactics of some of our competitors, there are some steps within our means which should be considered. First and foremost, we need to work on our image among the black student community.

8. This means we must be willing to move out of the closet. Each of the campuses I visited has set aside several days in the fall and in the spring for a kind of "recruiting fair." Recruiters are invited to set up booths in a central area, usually the student union, where they can meet with the students on a casual basis with no commitment on either side. Several placement officers told me that this was one of the best ways for the prospective employer to get his message across to the students. Having no commitment, students could make contact with us through this means without risking the criticism of their peers or without, as they might suppose, becoming ensnared by the CIA. The risks to this kind of approach are obvious: We will be heckled at times, and a certain local notoriety may arise. The rewards, however, would seem clearly offsetting. The mere fact of our being willing to bring our message into the open will cause some students to rethink their views of CIA. Furthermore, we undoubtedly will get more line on job-seekers through this informal procedure than we can hope to through the placement office.

9. Secondly, we must as an office be willing to send our professional people to the black colleges a couple of times a year to give short talks to student groups as arranged by the economic faculty. It is my impression that such meetings could be easily arranged through the faculty at every college I visited. Our officers who participate in this program must be sympathetic to the student viewpoint and sufficiently thick-skinned to stand some heckling and pointed criticism. These sessions need not, and perhaps should not, be oriented toward a recruitment drive, but my experience suggests that at least one or two students will come forward for an interview as a result of such sessions.

10. Thirdly, I believe it is most important that we invite a group of faculty from the economic departments, and students of their choice, to come to Washington at our expense for a tour of the Agency and a set of briefings on both Agency matters and economic substance. In particular, the former should stress the very forward-looking employment policies we as an agency practice toward the minority employee. The latter could be at an unclassified level and could be tailored to be both impressive to the student and informative for the faculty. Perhaps as a bonus, a tour of Washington could be arranged. Such an offering would be easy to set up and could be justified on other than public relations grounds if necessary (e.g., a symposium on the economic issues of Black Africa could be one of the features of the tour). The expense of such a procedure would be relatively small (20 participants -- \$2,000).

11. All of these tactics considered, the most important step in brightening our image in the black community and improving our chances of employing black professionals will depend on the extent to which good will and opinion of Blacks already working for us filters back to the academic community. There is, of course, circularity in this situation. However, short of hiring the straight "A" graduate by employing normal personnel procedures (a feat which we have been noticeably unable to accomplish), there are other means of breaking through. Our present program for summer internships should and must be given wider publicity on the black campuses. This is already being done to some extent, but a series of personal letters from the Director, OER, to the appropriate department heads would be an additional step that can be taken. I was told that the chief problem with our internship program as far as the black student is

concerned is that many who are going on to, or are now in, graduate school already have full 12-month-a-year assistantships which would be jeopardized by such employment. There is really no way around this problem except to publicize to the schools the fact that our internships offer considerably more than a summer salary and that the educational benefits from experience in research in Washington would be a unique contribution to the student's academic development. Furthermore, the internship might be offered to graduating seniors who have not made up their minds whether to go on to graduate school.

12. Another image-building effort to which we must give serious attention is the CO-OP program. Several placement directors indicated to me that this is the best single way for us to introduce ourselves to black students with relatively little commitment on either side. CO-OPing is now a standard educational procedure at a number of universities, both black and white, and I am aware that some Government agencies, and I believe even some departments in this Agency, already are engaged in it. CO-OPing is simply this: The student in his junior or senior year is assigned to a company or Government agency for up to six months, during which time he is expected to work under close supervision in fields related to his college major. He is paid travel expenses to his place of work and given a salary commensurate to the type of work to which he is assigned. Sometime during his work period, one or more of his faculty advisors visit him on the job to observe his progress. Black colleges are enthusiastic about the CO-OP program. It provides an opportunity for cultural broadening, which most of their students are desperately in need of. From our point of view, it would give these students a chance to look us over and, at the very least, when they return to college, they would report quite a different image of CIA than currently prevails on the campuses. While there would be no obligation on our part or the student's part to full-time employment on graduation, we would have a most favorable opportunity to offer employment should we choose. The disadvantages would mainly be on the extensive amount of patient supervision that these students will require, the costs, which would not be compensated by the amount of work we could expect from them, and the security difficulty. I am persuaded that all of these difficulties could be surmounted and that the rewards to the Agency would, in the long run, far offset the costs.

13. Finally, the overall employment procedure will probably have to be simplified. Well-educated white students from the middle class blanch at the PMS long form. How much more foreboding must this be to the black student less well-educated and filled with fear of, and misinformation about, "police tactics" of the white establishment. I understand from [redacted] that he has been working on some simplifying procedures for employment application and processing. These deserve our attention.

[redacted]

Chief
Southeast Asia Division

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DPI Offices and Staffs ^{like}
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This memorandum from Norm Jones
based on a recent recruiting trip to
black schools is well worth reading.

Amen!

MAURICE C. ERNST
Director
Economic Research

File
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9 January 1974
(DATE)

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