Some Stereotypes
and
Some New Ideas
on
SSP - Faculty Advising for Third World Freshmen

After lunch on May 31, at the MPC retreat, six faculty members and 35 students pooled ideas on advising. Following instructions, they listed as many answers as they could think of to ten questions, conscious always that none of these responses represent the 'real' opinions of any individual present; taken together, however, they have a consciousness-raising effect for most readers.

(1) Faculty often err in dealing with minorities by:
putting them all in one category;
reacting to them as minorities not as students;
impatience, condescending attitudes;
assuming that Third World Students are "culturally deprived";
not being willing to talk of extra-academic things with them;
insensitivity to a student's individual racial identity.

(2) Minority students often err in dealing with faculty:
putting them all in one category;
not taking full advantage of them as teachers;
assuming they are prejudiced;
expecting leniency and special treatment from them;
being afraid of them and suspicious and not trusting them;
sticking too closely to conventional academic patterns and standard programs;
not exploiting the flexibility of the new curriculum.

(3) When it comes to dealing with faculty, minority students would rather not:
period;
play up to (butter up) the faculty member;
get into conflict over grades or over some branch of the faculty member's academic specialty;
discuss politics as they pertain to racial issues.

(4) When it comes to dealing with minority students, faculty would rather not:
seem to discriminate;
period;
get too deeply involved - that can be left to the deans;
be too easy on them.

(5) Whether they know it or not, faculty are viewed by minority students as:
elitist, ivory tower specialists, bourgeoise, removed from reality;
indifferent, snobbish, part of the enemy;
a luxury resource;
a commodity to be "used" in the production of letters of recommendation.
(6) Whether they know it or not, minority students are viewed by faculty as:
a pain in the neck;
window dressing;
hard to get to know.

(7) The most difficult problem in faculty/minority relations is:
lack of communication;
grades;
esential privacy of research - professors are accustomed to large amounts of
time by themselves;
misleading admissions material - students are never told that faculty are expected
to spend half their time in research.

(8) When there is a case of alleged cheating involving minority students, faculty always:
? (it was agreed that there is no one thing that all faculty always do);
try not to bring it up? bend over backwards?

(9) Minority students could better use Brown’s academic resources and faculty by:
showing initiative;
believing in their own abilities;
being better informed about Brown’s academic resources and faculty;
not being intimidated;
keeping better in touch with faculty, understanding that time is very precious for faculty, and dropping by for very brief chats on something besides grades and courses.

(10) Faculty advisers will relate more productively to minority students if they:
are available;
see counseling experience as mutually educational;
expect a lot from each other;
are seen clearly as specialized scholars not deans;
do a lot of referring, calling up to find out things they don’t know;
admire their ignorance;
request “feedback” and reports about the value of the advice they hand out, not just throw it into a vacuum;
show interest in student’s training and background (students can do the same for the advisers);
share happy things as well as problems;
speak frankly.