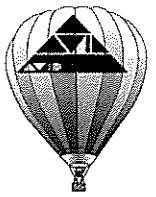


ACCESS



Expanding AVID To Meet Increasing Disparities In Education: Opening The Advanced Placement Curriculum

Mary Catherine Swanson, AVID Founder and Director

The Hopwood decision in Texas, Proposition 209 in California, similar legislation on ballots in Michigan and Washington which will no longer allow special admission criteria for underrepresented groups of students, coupled with ever more difficult college admission criteria across the nation make it critical for AVID to expand its focus. During AVID's seventeen years of work, it has enrolled students most underrepresented in postsecondary education who are languishing in the middle academically in secondary schools. In over three or more years of intervention in the AVID elective and placement into rigorous curriculum, in broad terms, AVID has moved thousands of students

from "C" level students in non-academic curriculum to "B" level students in college preparatory curriculum. During the 80's and early 90's, "B" level students could achieve acceptance to most colleges within the U.S. This is no longer the case.

It is clear that America's higher education system is not equipped to meet the needs of the burgeoning number of students, particularly those among groups most underrepresented in postsecondary education. The nation must be prepared to educate over four million more students in 2015 than it educated 25 years earlier, simply because of the population growth. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, if the current growth in

the number of students entering colleges continues, "the number of full-time college students will increase from the 1995 level of 10.3 million to approximately 13.2 million by 2015."¹ A concomitant problem is revealed in a 1997 RAND study, which predicts that "if current funding trends continue, the higher education sector will face a calamitous shortage of resources."²

Colleges in California, a state with a rapidly increasing population and an economic slump for the past several years, are already facing the challenge. Between 1991 and 1996 more than 215,000 fewer students were enrolled in California public universities.³ Because the number of spaces in

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Dr. Wayne Lett: Creating a 'Lighthouse District' in Virginia

The Spring, 1997 Access Interview

As superintendent of the Newport News Public Schools, Dr. Wayne Lett oversees a district of over 30,000 students and 46 schools. In addition, Newport News—which has implemented AVID in all of its seven middle schools and five high schools—is at the center of AVID's efforts east of the Mississippi—literally.

Just down the road from the Newport News Public Schools district offices is Christopher Newport University, where AVID's Eastern Division is housed and where AVID's Eastern Division Summer Institute takes place.

Having a large number of excellent AVID programs and being

proximate to AVID's Eastern Division offices means that Lett's district receives frequent visits from school districts throughout the southeastern U.S. that are considering the implementation of AVID. Far from disruptive, however, the numerous teachers and administrators studying AVID

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higher education are not keeping pace with the growing student population, colleges have dealt with the dilemma through raising their admission standards. At AVID's home base in San Diego, students in the 80's and early 90's were able to enter the University of California San Diego with a 3.2 grade point average in appropriate courses and completion of an ACT or SAT exam. Last year's freshman class entered with an average grade point average of 3.96 and an SAT score of 1250.4 The Berkeley and Los Angeles campuses are even more selective; five of the nine UC campuses will be highly competitive by the fall of 1998. And for the first time in its history, San Diego State Uni-

AVID Summer Institutes, 1998

Over 3000 educators will attend AVID Summer Institutes throughout the world in 1998, including the following:

10th Annual AVID International Institute - Town and Country Hotel, San Diego, Aug. 10-14.
Contact: Cyndy Bishop,
(619) 292-3563; fax (619) 541-0265

Northern California AVID Institute - West Valley College, Saratoga, August 3-7. Contact: Andrea Lichter, (408) 453-6899; fax (408) 453-6905

Eastern Division AVID Institute - Christopher Newport University, Newport News, Va., July 26-30. Contact: Dr. Thelma Spencer, (757) 594-8711; fax (757) 594-8817

DoDDS Pacific Summer Institute - Honolulu, Hawaii, June 16-19.
Contact: Anne Muse:
(703) 696-4414 (ext. 4131);
fax (703) 696-8956

versity is studying application of a more stringent entry criteria.

The critical problem is that the greatest population increase is among student groups least likely to go to college. Recent projections by the Bureau of the Census suggest that, by 2030, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans will collectively constitute 42% of the under-18 population, with most of this growth among Latinos.⁵ If current population trends continue, California will be majority Latino in the year 2005 and Texas will be majority Latino in 2010, and yet the freshman class of 1997 at the University of California included only 8% Latinos⁶ and the enrollment in the University of Texas was only 12% Latino.⁷ It doesn't take a genius to conclude that if the current underrepresentation of non-Asian minorities in our top educational institutions continues, it will lead to an escalation of intergroup conflict around leadership representation and economic issues.

Over the past three decades, researchers have repeatedly documented large disparities in academic achievement among certain ethnic groups. Looking at grade point averages for example, the National Assessment of Educational Placement 1994 Trends in Academic Progress study showed that of those in the sample who were college-bound seniors in 1992, only 4.1% of the African Americans, 10.3% of the Latinos, and 5.3% of the Native Americans had 3.5+ GPAs (on a 4.0 scale) in high school, compared to 29.3% of the Asian Americans and 20.9% of the Anglos.⁸ With non-Asian minorities collectively representing about 30% of the under-18 population in the mid-1990's, GPA patterns such as these translate into extreme underrepresentation for these groups in the top postsecondary institutions. AVID must respond to this looming crisis

in education not by abandoning its current emphasis on identifying underachieving students in the middle, but by also addressing the needs of the next tier of students and giving them the support needed to achieve in the most rigorous curriculum, including Advanced Placement courses, now a commonly applied criteria for entry into the top college and universities.

According to the College Board, in 1997 enrollment in Advanced Placement classes was 5% African-American, 8.7% Latino, 12.6% Asian, 71.5% Anglo, and 2.2% other. The national passing rate is 63% achieved almost equally among all ethnic groups; however, not all groups are equally represented within Advanced Placement classes.⁹ When colleges nationwide are raising admission standards, the lack of enrollment of underrepresented students in AP courses spells disaster.

It is clear that based on AVID's well-researched record of preparing underrepresented students for college, AVID must now expand its goals through:

- Identifying high achieving underrepresented students who are not prepared for advanced placement classes and giving them the academic support to be successful.
- Providing professional development for AVID elective teachers and tutors to support underrepresented students in targeted AP courses.
- Providing professional development for advanced placement teachers to open the course curriculum to a wider audience of students.

To this end, the AVID Center will seek funding to work collaboratively with the College Board and others to write curriculum and provide training to

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achieve these goals. Co-sponsored by the College Board, the AVID National Summer Institute in San Diego the week of August 10 will provide an "Opening the Advanced Placement Curriculum" strand throughout the week, and a postconference intensive Advanced Placement staff development opportunity for all advanced placement teachers whether or not they teach in AVID schools. Dr. Uri Treisman and his outstanding team of mathematicians at the University of Texas will co-train a new "mathematics toolkit" they have developed in conjunction with the College Board which is designed to open the AP mathematics curriculum through vertical teaming in middle schools and high schools.

I implore all of you, as master schedules are developed at your sites this spring, to increase the number of Advanced Placement courses you are offering and to place underrepresented students in those courses. I further urge you to take advantage of the Advanced Placement train-

ing which will occur in San Diego in August and to encourage the Advanced Placement teachers or those wishing to be Advanced Placement teachers at your site to attend.

The mission of AVID is to work within the public education system to provide an excellent education for all students regardless of their national, ethnic, or family backgrounds. Huge disparities in educational achievement are increasing in the United States. Unless we in AVID fully dedicate ourselves to those approaches which we know through research and practice will help alleviate the problem, we will all find ourselves living in a country which is not humanistically or economically viable. Once again, AVID educators can show the way, for AVID educators have the wit and will to reshape education to serve the needs of all students.

1 The National Center for Education Statistics: Projections to 2015.

2 Council for Aid to Education, An Independent Subsidiary of

RAND, "Breaking the Social Contract: The Fiscal Crisis in Higher Education," 1997.

3 Report, California Higher Education Policy Center, 1996.

4 Higher Education Update, California Postsecondary Commission, "Enrolling a Student Body: The Changing College Admissions Process in the 1990's" December, 1997.

5 Population Projections of the United States by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1995-2050 (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Census, Current Population Reports, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).

6 Higher Education Update, California Postsecondary Commission, "Enrolling a Student Body: The Changing College Admissions Process in the 1990's" December, 1997.

7 Texas Education Agency (October, 1997) For Demographic Characteristics.

8 "Making the Cut: Who Meets Highly Selective College Entrance Criteria," Statistics in Brief (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1995).



AVID Program Recognized at White House Education Event

During a February 4 event at the White House, the AVID Program was recognized for its success in helping students attain the dream of college. The ceremony, which featured remarks by President Clinton and Vice-President Gore, marked the announcement of a new initiative to inspire more young people to go to college. Proposed legislation announced by the President will allow for an initial funding of \$140 million (FY 99) to pro-

mote partnerships between colleges and middle or junior high schools in low-income communities, to provide children with the support they need starting in sixth or seventh grade and continuing through high school graduation.

White House materials took note of AVID's success rate at enrolling 90% of AVID students nationwide in a college-preparatory sequence of courses and enrolling a significant number of

graduates in four-year colleges and universities.

In describing President Clinton's efforts to find programs that are already successful in addressing the gap between college opportunities for low-income students and higher income students, Vice-President Gore noted, "...the AVID Program... brings together colleges and high schools to tutor, mentor, and

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