

**Black, White, Mennonite:
African American Students
at Goshen College, 1968-1983**

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**Black,¹ White, Mennonite:
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Responding to a belief that the Christian church was failing to transfer its words into actions, the Anabaptist movement emerged out of the sixteenth century Reformation period in Europe, with a commitment to following Christ in all ways. The Anabaptists, according to author Walter Klassen in *Neither Catholic Nor Protestant*, stood to challenge Europe's religious and social institutions.² These radical reformers were motivated by the desire to re-establish the earliest visions of the Christian church. In the sixteenth century, early Anabaptist theologian Menno Simons wrote, "The entire evangelical Scriptures teach us that the church of Christ was and is, in doctrine, life, and worship, a people separated from the world." The Mennonite church, named for Simons, formed on the basis of Anabaptist theology and the belief that, as summarized by author Hubert Brown in *Black and Mennonite*, "complete conformity to Christ and complete nonconformity to the world," were essential to living out the Word of God.³ Anabaptists sought to put their religious beliefs into action, as Franklin Littell observed; "the

¹ The terms "Black" and "African American" will be used interchangeably throughout this paper as synonymous terms for the sake of avoiding redundancy. Acknowledging that in the larger society, the terms "Black" and "African American" are afforded a variety of interpretations, in the specific context of this paper, they are used to connote more traditionally understood definitions of the terms. This traditional definition of the terms would include those individuals who are identified as being black United States citizens with a historical relationship to the continent of Africa. This relationship with Africa however is indirect due to the generations that have separated them from a direct connection. The individuals are also generally assumed to be associated with the common culture, traditions, and heritage shared by those whose ancestors were linked to the African slaves brought to the Americas via the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. In the context of this paper, the terms should not be understood to include those black Americans who are connected to a more recently arrived group (within the past few decades) of the African Diaspora residing on the North American continent with a more direct connection to the African continent.

² Hubert L. Brown, *Black and Mennonite*, (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1976), 65.

³Ibid., 74-75.

Anabaptists meant just what they said, and their teaching is unimportant apart from the direct attempt to give it embodiment in actual groups living in history.”⁴

This early principle of living out the Word of God in action continued to motivate followers of Anabaptist theology centuries later. Showing their resistance to the dominant culture in early United States history, Mennonites were known for not owning slaves.⁵ The church baptized its first Black members in 1897⁶ and ordained its first Black bishop, James H. Lark, in 1946.⁷ With a particular vision to reach more African Americans, Lark encouraged the church to place emphasis on urban ministry. Acting on this suggestion, Mennonites in the 1940s began initiating churches and urban ministry programs in cities and Black communities throughout the United States.⁸ Consequently, Black membership in the Mennonite church increased by the 1970s.⁹ Throughout their participation in American history, Mennonites showed that part of their vision for the church was a desire to include more African Americans in their community of believers.

Goshen College, as a Mennonite institute of higher education, serves as one venue through which the Mennonite church acts to carry out its vision. In 1896, John S. Coffmann, founder of the Elkhart Institute, stated his vision that the school would build a culture of a consecrated heart and self-sacrificing spirit.¹⁰ Coffman believed that a Mennonite college should adopt a “Spirit of Progress” and be founded upon operating

⁴Ibid., 69.

⁵ Phillips P. Moulton, ed. *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 73-74.

⁶ Le Roy Bechler. *The Black Mennonite Church in North America, 1886-1986*. Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1986, 41-42.

⁷ Ibid., 55-76.

⁸ Ibid., 117.

⁹ Susan Fisher Miller. *Culture for Service: A History of Goshen College 1894-1994*. (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Press, 1994), 7.

principles counter to those of the world.¹¹ Coffmann held that the challenge of a Mennonite school would be to transform rather than conform to the models of the world.¹² In 1903 the Elkhart Institute transitioned into Goshen College. Goshen College's first president, Noah E. Byers, coined the motto, "Culture for Service," explaining his vision for the institution to be one that models high Christian ideals and energetic progress.¹³ Furthermore, Byers held that "tolerance and co-operation" were essential to Christian education.¹⁴ In recent years, the college re-stated its institutional commitments in the form of specifically articulated core values. Reflecting the motives of the sixteenth century Anabaptists, the college proclaimed that at the center of its expressed core values was a commitment to living out the vision of Christ.¹⁵

Like the early Anabaptists, in some ways Goshen College has stood apart from the norm. Goshen is nationally recognized for one of its most distinctive features, the nearly 40-year-old study-abroad program, called the Study Service Term (SST).¹⁶ As an active reflection of its desire to build "global citizens," one of the college's publicly expressed core values, Goshen points to the more than 6,500 students that have studied in 19 (mostly developing) countries since the inception of the program. Like few other colleges and universities in the United States, 70-80 percent of Goshen's graduating seniors have studied abroad.¹⁷ Furthermore, Goshen advertises that more than half of its

¹¹ Ibid., 2; 6.

¹² Ibid., 8.

¹³ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴ Ibid., 45.

¹⁵ "Core Values," Goshen College website <<http://www.goshen.edu/aboutgc/values.php>> (20 March 2006)

¹⁶ "GC places high among study abroad and service learning programs," Goshen College Press Archives, Edited by Jodi H. Beyeler, 26 August 2004, <<http://www.goshen.edu/news/pressarchive/08-26-04-us-news-rank.html>> (20 March 2006)

¹⁷ "Diversity at Goshen College," Goshen College Website <<http://www.goshen.edu/aboutgc/diversity.php>> (20 March 2006)

faculty members have lived or worked abroad.¹⁸ Along with building global citizens by encouraging cross-cultural understanding, Goshen expresses a commitment to diversity. It points to its students, who come from over 35 states and 40 different countries, as evidence of this commitment. The institution has had a long-standing reputation for the high proportion of international students it hosts to its campus. Goshen College was ranked 12th among all colleges and universities due to the fact that its international students composed at least 10 percent of its total student body.¹⁹

All of these strong qualities, along with a pledge to uphold its core values, have garnered the institution recognition in a variety of publications. For the fourth straight year, in 2005 Goshen College was again named to the list of *U.S. News & World Report's*, "America's Best Colleges." Noted specifically for its commitment to two of its core values, global citizenship and servant leadership, the institution proudly advertises its ranking in the third tier of the Best Liberal Arts Colleges category of this publication. Additionally, the college has been named a "Best Midwestern College" by the Princeton Review, "College of Distinction," "Making a Difference College," and one of "328 Most Interesting Colleges."²⁰

In the shadow of these celebrated successes however, lies a troublesome reality. Coexisting among its cross cultural experiences, high percentage of internationals, and public commitment to diversity are a disproportionately low number of North American ethnic and racial minority students. Counting its African-American, Native American, Asian-Pacific and Hispanic students in a single sum equates to a mere seven percent of

¹⁸ "Diversity at Goshen College"

¹⁹ "Diversity at Goshen College"

²⁰ "About GC," Goshen College website < <http://www.goshen.edu/aboutgc/>> (20 March 2006)

the college's total student population.²¹ Included under this summary are African Americans who currently make up little more than 3 percent of the student body.²² Goshen College's "diversity" has fallen short of incorporating a substantial number of African Americans into its campus community. Although a comparatively high number of African Americans did attend the college for a brief period beginning in the late 1960s, Goshen, throughout most of its history, has had difficulties retaining a considerable number of Black students. Yet, Goshen's low percentage of African American students has not strayed far from the national trend. In 2002, African Americans only made up 11.9% of all college students²³ and in 1999, 76 percent of Blacks were enrolled at public, rather than private, postsecondary institutions.²⁴

Goshen's reflection of a national trend represents a prevailing aspect of the modern Mennonite church. Straying further away from the founding visions of the Anabaptists, the Mennonite church in recent decades has increasingly mirrored, rather than resisted, the dominant culture. As identified by James Juhnke, "Mennonites are an acculturating religious minority who have gradually taken on the characteristics of their American social and political environment."²⁵ Hubert Brown also stated in *Black and Mennonite* that, "Mennonites have become acculturated, melted down, average John Q. Middle-class Americans with all of society's vices, materialism, and arrogant

²¹ "Diversity at Goshen College"

²² According to the most recent available numbers for the Fall 2005 semester as shown by the Goshen College Registrar's Office recorded numbers on student enrollment.

²³ "Fast Facts," *National Center for Education Statistics*, <<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98>> (12 April 2006)

²⁴ "African Americans and White Colleges and Universities," *Encyclopedia of African-American Education*, pp. Edited by. Faustine C. Jones-Wilson, Charles A. Asbury, Margo Okazawa-Rey, D. Kamili Anderson, Sylvia M. Jacobs, and Michael Fultz. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 1996), 364.

²⁵ Brown, *Black and Mennonite*, 28.

snobbery!”²⁶ Brown recounted his experience as an African American in the Mennonite church and commented:

...I have experienced a feeling that Anabaptism has been made so biological and so ethnic that persons like myself hardly know whether or not we should inquire or if in fact the territory is open for us to occupy.²⁷

As these observations indicate, much of what has become “Mennonite” is associated with the Euro-American, white, middle class ethos which defines North America’s dominant culture. Furthermore, this culture is defined in ways that exclude those who have not fit into that category from fully participating in society. Unlike the early Anabaptists, who were largely an oppressed group of society, most of today’s Mennonites in North America are a part of the country’s elite group.²⁸ In emulating the dominant culture, Mennonites are afforded many of the economic and social privileges awarded to society’s elite. Han-Jürgen Goertz in his essay, “The Confessional Heritage in its New Mold: What is Mennonite Self-Understanding Today?” observed:

The Mennonites have made their accommodation with bourgeois, capitalist society. More than that, they have availed themselves of the opportunity to participate and profit from this system, without noticing the extent to which they have thereby come into contradiction to their confessional heritage.²⁹

Goshen College, in its representation of the Mennonite church and North American society at large is not removed from these privileges. This reality helps to explain why Goshen hesitates to “push its own envelope” as the early Anabaptists did. Practicing nonconformity at Goshen would require the institutional majority to give up some of its privileges. One of the major privileges granted to social majority groups is that of

²⁶ Ibid., 93.

²⁷ Ibid., 78.

²⁸ Ibid., 72.

²⁹ Han-Jürgen Goertz. “The Confessional Heritage in its New Mold: What is Mennonite Self-Understanding Today?” in *Mennonite Identity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, pp.1-12. Edited by Calvin Wall Redekop and Samuel J. Steiner (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 11.

comfort, and the majority of Goshen College's "comfort" would be challenged if it were to act out on a full institutional commitment to diversity.

Yet, Goshen College has a responsibility to recruit and retain a larger number of African Americans as a vital part of maintaining its credibility as a Mennonite institution committed to building cross-cultural understanding and a diverse community. Black religious scholar, Preston Williams, held that the Black experience in North America is one of "victimization, integration, and black awareness." A central part of Mennonite theology according to historian John D. Roth is a common understanding amongst Mennonites that they share a responsibility for the poor, weak, and powerless in society.³⁰ Therefore Goshen as a Mennonite institution has a specific responsibility in their relationship with African Americans to live out this pillar of their theology.³¹ Part of following the model of Christ, who the college holds as the center to its core, is moving beyond practices which exclude those who have not taken part in the historical traditions and social norms of the white and middle class majority group of the Mennonite church in North America. As the apostle Paul asserted in the book of Galatians, building an inclusive community of "Jew and Greek" was central to Christ's message.³² Acting on this message, Goshen College should seek to build a community of believers that is welcoming and affirming of individuals and groups, regardless of how their historical experiences may or may not connect to the majority membership of the Mennonite church. As a part of upholding the values of the Mennonite church and those which the institution states as its "core," the college should push itself to reconstruct its superficial definitions of what is currently understood as "Mennonite" and aggressively engage in

³⁰ John D. Roth. *Beliefs: Mennonite Faith and Practice*. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005), 146.

³¹ Brown, *Black and Mennonite*, 27.

³² Romans 10:12 NIV

revolutionary actions to build a fully inclusive community. Essentially, Goshen must seek to define itself by Mennonite theological rather than ethnic standards.

A historical analysis of the period of high African American student enrollment at Goshen College, 1968-1983, revealed that recruitment and retention of African Americans was dependent on the majority's willingness to give up some of its own privileges as a way of building a more inclusive community. This perspective of Goshen College history indicated that while the college expressed, and in some ways displayed, a desire to welcome more African American students to its campus, it was unwilling to push the limits of its own comfort as a way of showing a full institutional commitment to its public rhetoric. In doing this, Goshen conformed to, rather than transformed national trends. A sustained increase in African American students may have been obtained if the college had shown through its actions that its institution was not defined by conforming to the dominant culture, but that its Mennonite identity was instead defined by the founding principal of the Anabaptists, to conform in all ways to the model of Christ.

PRE-1965

The Early Years

The earliest years of Black student enrollment at Goshen College were very much like those found at predominantly white colleges and universities throughout the United States. Prior to the mid-twentieth century, white colleges and universities in the United States made little effort to admit Black students.³³ Although African Americans began attending predominantly white colleges and universities in the early nineteenth century,

³³ Allen B. Ballard *The Education of Black Folk*. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers Inc, 1973), 52-53.

Blacks in the United States were graduating from white colleges in small numbers.³⁴ Though Oberlin became the first college in the west to enroll African Americans in 1834,³⁵ it was not until nearly a century later that Goshen enrolled its first African American students. In 1943, Juanita Lark, became Goshen College's first African American graduate. Lark had a relationship with the Mennonite church before coming to Goshen, as her father, James H. Lark, was the church's first African American minister.³⁶ In the two decades following Lark's graduation, barely more than a handful of Black students could be found on Goshen's campus in any given year.³⁷ This low enrollment of Black students was also found at white colleges and universities across the nation as, the *Encyclopedia of African American Education* reported, ninety percent of Black students in 1941 still attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).³⁸ Like Juanita Lark, many of the Black students at Goshen from 1943-1965 likely had connections with the Mennonite church before enrolling. The majority of Black students attending Goshen College during these decades came from Chicago, Illinois, and

³⁴ "African Americans at White College and Universities," 362.

³⁵ Cynthia L. Jackson, *African American Education*, (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2001), 48.

³⁶ "A Historical Timeline of Minority and Urban Ministry in the United States, 1910-1997," *Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee & Archives*, 7 February 2002, <www.mcusa-archives.org/resources/minorityministriestimeline.html> (22 January 2006).

³⁷ Number of students identified by photographs and corresponding hometown given in each edition of the *Maple Leaf* [Goshen College annual] from 1943-1965. Because the Goshen College registrar's office had no available data on racial/ethnic minority student enrollment numbers prior to the late 1970s, a sense for the number of African American students enrolled at GC between the years of 1943 to 1978 was gained from looking through each annual edition of the *Maple Leaf*, for the years prior to 1978. The name and hometown of each African American student identified in the *Maple Leaf* was recorded. Identification of African American students was based on physical features and their reported home town.

³⁸ *Encyclopedia of African-American Education*. Ed. Faustine C. Jones-Wilson, Charles A. Asbury, Margo Okazawa-Rey, D. Kamili Anderson, Sylvia M. Jacobs, and Michael Fultz. Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.: Westport, CT. 1996, 362.

Cleveland, Ohio, two of the earliest locations of established Mennonite minority and urban ministry programs in the United States.³⁹

First Actions,

A transformation began taking place in the 1960s at colleges and universities across the country. This change was largely connected to a variety of significant historical events that occurred in the United States at the middle of the twentieth century. In addition to the pressure produced by the Supreme Court decision in the 1954 case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, colleges were stirred to increase their Black student enrollment by the growing Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s along with the demands of Black student protestors.⁴⁰ Moreover, numerous forms of federal legislation passed during this period motivated colleges to begin actively recruiting Black students. Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 addressed the issue of segregation in public education.⁴¹ States and educational agencies were also given the opportunity to request assistance from the Commissioner of Education to create and foster special desegregation plans.⁴² Finally, accessibility to higher education for Black students increased due to the passage of federal legislation such as the Higher Education Act of 1965 which removed some of the financial barriers that had impeded equal opportunity in access to higher education.⁴³

³⁹ Conclusion drawn by comparing, hometown of African American students as reported in each edition of the *Maple Leaf* for the years 1943-1965, and locations identified for Mennonite minority and urban ministry in "A Historical Timeline of Minority and Urban Ministry in the United States, 1910-1997."

⁴⁰ Encyclopedia of African-American Education. Ed. Faustine C. Jones-Wilson, Charles A. Asbury, Margo Okazawa-Rey, D. Kamili Anderson, Sylvia M. Jacobs, and Michael Fultz. Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.: Westport, CT. 1996, 363.

⁴¹ Jackson, *African American Education*, 175.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 176.

⁴³ Encyclopedia of African-American Education. Ed. Faustine C. Jones-Wilson, Charles A. Asbury, Margo Okazawa-Rey, D. Kamili Anderson, Sylvia M. Jacobs, and Michael Fultz. Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.: Westport, CT. 1996, 95-96.

At Goshen, as at institutions of higher education throughout the United States, national realities were reflected locally. The level of external influence colleges and universities received was augmented in the 1960s, provoking them to increase their involvement in political and social issues.⁴⁴ One of the biggest issues at the time, Black-white race relations, was on the minds and lips of people across the country. It was also on the minds of people at Goshen College. In 1955 a formal campus appearance was made at the church-sponsored, “Christian Race Relations,” conference.⁴⁵ GC students sought to broach the subject with a performance in 1959 of *Cry the Beloved Country*, a theater production about the dynamics of Black-white race relations in pre-apartheid South Africa.⁴⁶ Furthermore, a Youth Forum held a facilitated discussion on “Integration: Attitudes and Actions.”⁴⁷ In 1964 a group from the college’s Peace Society spent a week in Chicago to make personal observations concerning segregation and urban conditions. Nearly two dozen students in the same month joined Professor J.R. Burkholder in picketing South Bend’s Pick-Wallace Hotel to protest Governor Wallace’s efforts against the Civil Rights Bill. A visit to the campus in 1964 by John Howard Griffin, author of *Black Like Me*, would also serve to raise campus awareness about the realities of the Black experience in America.⁴⁸

The era of Black awareness begun in the second half of the twentieth century increased the visibility of African Americans everywhere. Falling along the lines of this national trend, Goshen College began in the 1950s to host a variety of influential African American guests. In 1958, African American singer Marion Anderson performed at the

⁴⁴ Jackson, *African American Education*, 13.

⁴⁵ Fisher Miller, *Culture for Service*, 199.

⁴⁶ Maple Leaf [Goshen College annual] 1959.

⁴⁷ Fisher Miller, *Culture for Service*, 209.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 229.

college.⁴⁹ Other African-American visitors included Dr. Samuel Proctor, president of the National Council of Churches, and Dr. Vincent Harding, a Mennonite-affiliated leading voice in the Civil Rights Movement.⁵⁰ One of the most noted visitors of the period was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who presented a lecture at the college in 1960.⁵¹

In the 1960s, the country was stirred to take action in response to the need, as expressed by the leading voices of the Civil Rights Movement, for a national transformation. White colleges and universities began to do their part, by implementing affirmative action approaches in their admission's policies.⁵² Goshen College also sought to make changes by communicating its own interest in raising the number of Black student enrollment. In 1964, Goshen College president Paul Miniger stated his belief that Goshen should offer higher education to young people, "from various racial groups."⁵³ By making the college's first official suggestion for an increase in Black student enrollment, Miniger recognized that students of color were disadvantaged and that the college therefore had a responsibility to open itself to these students.⁵⁴ Goshen College administrator J.B. Shenk expressed the institution's desire to raise Black student enrollment to five percent of the student population.⁵⁵ Acting upon these desires, the institution went out to Mennonite churches in the Midwest, East, and local area high schools to recruit minority students. Goshen also began to increase its efforts to attract minority students from urban areas.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Maple Leaf 1958.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1966, 1967.

⁵¹ Fisher Miller, *Culture for Service*, 209.

⁵² Jackson, *African American Education*, 257.

⁵³ "GCCG and 'Moral Leadership,'" *Record*, May 17, 1968, 2.

⁵⁴ "Minorities: Ten Years After," *Record*, November 14, 1975, 4-5.

⁵⁵ "GCCG and Afro-Americans...Senate Role, Black Enrollment Issues In Human Rights Stand," *Record*, May 17, 1968, 2.

⁵⁶ Fisher Miller, *Culture for Service*, 269.

A major increase in African American postsecondary student enrollment began in the mid-1960s. This nation wide demographic change in student population was also found at Goshen College. By the 1964-65 school year, African-American undergraduates made up 6.5 percent of all college students in the United States.⁵⁷ The year 1965-66 stood as the beginning of the larger-scale entry of Black students into white universities.⁵⁸ The number of African American students attending Goshen College went from a handful in previous decades to roughly a dozen in the 1965-66 and 1966-67 school years.⁵⁹ This number doubled by the 1967-68 school year, with 24 African American students enrolled, and continued to steadily increase in subsequent years.⁶⁰ Goshen College then reached its peak in 1971, with 64 African American students enrolled, representing over 5% of the total student population.⁶¹ Though not considerably different from national numbers, in comparison to other Mennonite institutions, recruitment efforts at Goshen College proved successful during this period. Throughout the 1970s, Goshen enrolled a considerably higher number of Black students than Hesston or Eastern Mennonite College.⁶²

⁵⁷ Encyclopedia of African-American Education. Ed. Faustine C. Jones-Wilson, Charles A. Asbury, Margo Okazawa-Rey, D. Kamili Anderson, Sylvia M. Jacobs, and Michael Fultz. Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.: Westport, CT. 1996, 96.

⁵⁸ Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk*, 59.

⁵⁹ Number of students identified by photographs and corresponding hometown given in each edition of the Maple Leaf for the years 1943-1967.

⁶⁰ "GCCG and Afro-Americans...Senate Role, Black Enrollment Issues In Human Rights Stand"

⁶¹ Fisher Miller, *Culture for Service*, 229.

⁶² "Minority Students at Mennonite Colleges Fall Enrollments, 1971-78," JLLEP 1976-1979 (folder), V-4-39.3, Goshen College Urban Ministries Program, 1976-85, Box #4, Mennonite Historical Archives, Goshen, IN.

LATE 1960s-EARLY 1970s

Black College Students

Black Student Unity

Aware of their minority status on campus, Black students entering white colleges and universities in the late 1960s and 1970s were brought together by the need for solidarity and identity with one another. African American students at postsecondary institutions began to create informal and formal social groups in response to the isolation they experienced on a predominantly white campus.⁶³ Black students at Goshen also found personal strength in their unity. Goshen College African American alumni, Everette Ersery, recalled the formation of a strong Black voice on campus as a part of the significant influx of Black students during this period. Ersery remembered:

“When I arrived there was a community of African Americans on campus who were doing many of the things that African Americans were doing at most colleges and universities at the time. They were organizing around racial identity and attempting to provide a forum for consciousness raising for the larger community and ourselves.”⁶⁴

One of the first established organizations for Black unity found on Goshen’s campus was Adrian Powell, Inc. (A.P., Inc.). The organization was formed in 1968 by African American student Adrian Powell.⁶⁵ Powell created A.P. Inc., to serve as an organization in Elkhart County that would address the concerns of the “New Negro Left,” a term Powell said was defined by a leading member of the national Black consciousness movement, Stockley Carmichael.⁶⁶

⁶³ Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk*, 55.

⁶⁴ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

⁶⁵ “Negro Group Forms on Campus,” *Record*, April 26, 1968, 1.

⁶⁶ “More Negro Power,” *Record*, January 12, 1968, 5.

The ongoing need for Goshen's African American students to develop an official organization for building group identity and expressing their common concerns materialized by the end of the decade. In the spring of 1968, approximately one dozen Black students began meeting weekly on Goshen's campus. Acting as president over these gatherings, Oliver Hardaway reported that the meetings were formed in response to the sense of rejection and need for self-identity felt among Black students on campus. White students were also encouraged to attend the meetings as a way of increasing their own understanding of the experiences of their Black peers.⁶⁷ In 1969, these informal meetings led to the creation of the Goshen College Afro-American Society.⁶⁸ This organization would stand as a precursor to the Black Student Union (BSU), launched in 1971. Black student Don Desaussure expressed his appreciation for the BSU in a 1975 *Record* stating, "I'm very glad for the Black Student Union [...] Without it I wouldn't feel at home."⁶⁹

Effects of Increased Black Student Enrollment

The substantial increase of African Americans enrolling at Goshen College in the late 1960s and 1970s evidenced the college's efforts to follow through on the goals expressed by the administration. Yet these efforts were little more than those carried out by many white colleges and universities elsewhere in the country at the time. Mimicking these patterns brought about identical results for Goshen as they did for other postsecondary institutions in the United States. Goshen College was like so many other institutions at the time who according to Allen Ballard in his book *The Education of Black Folk* "expected that the mere act of admission would show their goodwill, and

⁶⁷ "Negro Group Forms on Campus," *Record*, April 26, 1968, 1.

⁶⁸ "Small Clubs: Struggle for existence," *Record*, February 14, 1969, 4.

⁶⁹ "Freshman Don Desaussure Recalls UFW Experience," *Record*, November 14, 1975, 5.

made efforts to carry on business as usual.”⁷⁰ For Goshen College and other white colleges and universities, these efforts were not all that would be required to include a significant number of African Americans within its student population. In 1968, Goshen College administrator, J.B. Shenk noted:

“Active recruitment of Blacks cannot help but make a difference in school policy. Sixty students from a basically Black cultural background are bound to change campus outlook somewhat. The school cannot ask this many people to come to campus without allowances for their cultural differences.”⁷¹

As the number of African Americans at white colleges and universities in the United States increased during the 1960s and 1970s, institutions found themselves confronted by a single central issue. Ballard concluded that Black students entering college in the mid to late 1960s were often met by “troubled” campuses that were “in a state of instability” which reflected the surrounding political and social upheavals found throughout the country.⁷² With a formally established group on campus, African Americans at Goshen College began to publicly express their specific concerns to the rest of the campus. The overwhelming issue underlying many of the concerns and complaints centered on the tensions, brought on by a clash of cultures that surfaced between Blacks and whites on campus.

In addition to white colleges elsewhere, Goshen did not seek to make the necessary adjustments for their newcomers. Neither Goshen College nor the new population of incoming students was prepared for the challenges brought on by the arrival of a demographic group with whom the college had had little experience.

⁷⁰ Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk*, 80.

⁷¹ “GCCG and Afro-Americans...Senate Role, Black Enrollment Issues In Human Rights Stand,” *Record*, May 17, 1968, 2.

⁷² Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk*, 64-65.

Examining the general trend of Black students entering predominantly white institutions in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Ballard noted:

“...no one had created a blueprint that began with the needs of the Black urban masses and moved from that condition to a serious appraisal of the way in which the lives of Black people could be improved by the entrance of Afro-American students in previously all-white colleges.”⁷³

African American students at Goshen College in the late 1960s and 1970s, largely came from an inner city, lower socioeconomic, non-Mennonite environment. Alumni Arvis Dawson, having grown up in an insulated African American community in Southside Chicago, said he came to rural Goshen, “straight up out the ghetto.”⁷⁴ Like Dawson, many Black students were met by the very different ethos of the majority white, middle class, rural, “ethnically” Mennonite culture found at Goshen College. Ersery, also from Southside Chicago, described his initial impressions of Goshen as being, “...totally different from the environment I was used to.”⁷⁵

Concerns Raised by Increased Black Student Enrollment

Racism

Allen Ballard wrote that white colleges and universities in the United States during the 1960s were perceived by Blacks as white and racist.⁷⁶ African American students attending Goshen in the late 1960s and early 1970s recognized the college’s genuine desires to welcome African Americans into its campus community. Dawson felt that the people he engaged with at Goshen were good people. He sensed a lot of friendliness and believed that a lot of people went out of their way to try and help him.⁷⁷

Ersery described the people he encountered at Goshen as generally helpful and

⁷³ Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk*, 75.

⁷⁴ Arvis Dawson, interview by author, tape recording, Elkhart, In., 13 March 2006.

⁷⁵ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

⁷⁶ Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk*, 59.

⁷⁷ Arvis Dawson, interview by author, tape recording, Elkhart, In., 13 March 2006.

remembered that there was, “an atmosphere of support and acceptance.”⁷⁸ Alumni, Artrelle Spicely also felt personally welcomed by many at Goshen and did not sense that people’s interactions with her were insincere.⁷⁹

While sincere intentions to receive Black students at Goshen College were there, they were not enough to eliminate the racism experienced on campus. Black students at Goshen often said that even while being treated fairly by students and faculty, they sensed a superficial friendliness.⁸⁰ Adrian Powell posted several articles on the Goshen College opinion board in 1967 voicing his outrage with the racism he experienced on campus. Powell informed the campus that he had been treated like an “animal,” after asking several white women for dates.⁸¹ Several students in the following years also shared some of the difficulties they encountered on campus while being involved in interracial dating relationships.⁸²

Aside from these few reported instances, it appeared that most of the racism experienced by Goshen’s African American students operated in more covert forms. Black students often expressed feeling stereotyped and misjudged. Some felt as if whites were failing to understand the depth of their feelings. However, the offenses felt by Black students at GC often seemed unintended and a result of honest mistakes. Many times, the presence of racism on campus was much more a product of ignorance than of any conscious intention on the part of whites to offend. Because many whites at Goshen came from rural areas, some had little to no experience in interacting with people of color. As one example, Everette Ersery said that was the first Black person his first year

⁷⁸ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

⁷⁹ Artrelle Spicely, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 9 March 2006.

⁸⁰ “A Nation Divided—Will There Be a Sane Answer,” *Record*, April 12, 1968, 4.

⁸¹ “More Negro Power,” *Record*, January 12, 1968, 5.

⁸² “A Nation Divided—Will There Be a Sane Answer,” *Record*, April 12, 1968, 4.

roommate had ever spoken to.⁸³ Spicely said she was confronted at the college with people who questioned her about her cultural differences. She added, however, that she developed ways to respond to these inquires, recognizing them as curiosity more than as intentional attempts to offend.⁸⁴ Alumni Tony Brown saw a challenge for many Black students in having to educate Goshen College about who they were and what they were about. He felt like Black students were doing a lot of the educating and that they were the ones taking all of the initiatives.⁸⁵

Black students enrolled at white postsecondary education institutions also experienced racism from faculty members. This served as a reflection of the attitudes of whites elsewhere in the United States in the 1960s. Allen Ballard remarked, faculty members at other white colleges were, “products of a racist society and found it difficult to adjust to the presence of Black faces in their classrooms—particularly when those students...would appear actively disdainful and skeptical.”⁸⁶ Tony Brown sensed that at Goshen too, some white faculty were seemingly “inconvenienced” or “frightened” by the large number of Black students that had entered the campus. Brown remembered that there were some instances in which faculty members offended their Black students.⁸⁷ Ersery summarized his own perception of the situation of racism found at Goshen College:

“...the overt racism prevalent in the dominant culture was overshadowed at Goshen by an intellectual and cultural divide and that inevitable lack of understanding on the part of the faculty of the people they had recruited. Put another way, I think they had good intentions, but they had no frame of reference for the support necessary, both academic and social, to succeed in this circumstance.”⁸⁸

⁸³ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

⁸⁴ Artrelle Spicely, interview by author, tape recording, phone , 9 March 2006.

⁸⁵ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone , 10 March 2006.

⁸⁶ Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk*, 71.

⁸⁷ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

⁸⁸ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

Both Black and white Goshen students voiced their discomfort with the experience of racial tension on campus and communicated their frustration with the difficulties of relating to one another. Ersery remarked that even though many positive relationships did exist between Blacks and whites on campus, there was still, “an undercurrent of mistrust among whites and Blacks in social settings.”⁸⁹ Students hoped for a way to find common ground to work at their differences, though this would be challenged by the fact that many white students found it difficult to relate to Black people because of their lack of interactions with African Americans prior to attending Goshen College. Blacks themselves often came from insulated communities and did not experience their first real interactions with whites until entering Goshen College. As Dawson identified, this led to race prejudice being carried out on the sides of both Black and white students.⁹⁰ A 1971 *Record* article referenced the concern of Black and white students. The article noted that the campus had failed to adequately address race relationships on campus. Furthermore, the article held that it was up to everyone in the campus community to increase the level of interaction and communication between Blacks and whites, in an effort to improve the standard for the experience of everyone at Goshen College.⁹¹

Identity

At colleges everywhere in this period, Black’s experienced a sense of identity crisis. Black students often felt invisible at the institutions where they were enrolled. White colleges in turn had trouble realizing that the social and cultural needs of Black

⁸⁹ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

⁹⁰ Arvis Dawson, interview by author, tape recording, Elkhart, In., 13 March 2006.

⁹¹ “Cultural differences separate Black and white,” *Record*, November 19, 1971, 2.

students differed from that of their white peers.⁹² Black students at Goshen also shared their frustrations over the college's insufficient efforts to try and create a "space" for them where their individual identity could be maintained as a part of a collective cultural identity. In a 1972 *Record* article, African American student, Pleas Broaddus, stated his belief that the lose of his Black self-identity was a direct result of being on a Mennonite campus which he said, "...divorce[d] a Black from his own culture."⁹³ Black students pointed to the need for courses in Black history and Black culture, and for Black faculty to serve as mentors and role models for African Americans at Goshen College. As a student at Goshen being taught only about the role of whites in history and society, Taylor-Myers said she questioned if Blacks had ever done anything significant. She said that she would have liked to see more attention given to Black culture to, "make me feel welcome, make me feel worthy, that my people did something too."⁹⁴

Goshen College's African American students wanted to see their Black culture made more visible throughout the campus. In their manifesto, the Afro American Society expressed a need for a Black Student Union paper, a Black library, a Black art workshop, time on the campus radio station for Black music, office space, and an "Afro-house" as a form of Black student community housing.⁹⁵ African American students often complained over the lack of social activities and programs conducive to their own cultural values. Accustomed to the variety of social activities available to them in the cities from which many of them came, Black Goshen students found a lack of appealing options to occupy their time in a small, white, rural community. In 1973, Black Student

⁹² Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk*, 151.

⁹³ "Broaddus to pilot *Record*," *Record*, July 14, 1972, 2.

⁹⁴ Mildred Taylor-Myers, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 7 March 2006.

⁹⁵ "BSU active over last six years," *Record*, November 14, 1975, p.4.

Union president Greg Tate cited the lack of opportunity for social life on and off campus as the greatest problem for Black Goshen College students. Tate expressed his concerns that Black students were in danger of “social extinction.”⁹⁶ Goshen College’s rule against dancing stood as one example in particular of how the institution was not taking into account some of the cultural values of African American students. Several Black students in 1968 identified the school’s policy against dancing as, “depriving them of an inherent part of their cultural heritage.”⁹⁷ Goshen College was not just experienced as socially, but also spiritually confining for Black students. Many were especially bothered by the irrelevance that mandatory chapels had for the spiritual expressions of Black culture. Dawson remembered Black students often contesting chapel requirements because they were not directed at any of their interests.⁹⁸

Many Black students at Goshen expressed difficulty in their ability to conform to the institution’s standards, which they felt were largely defined by a cultural ethos that did not seek to embrace African American culture. Black Goshen alumni Tony Brown shared his belief that the college seemed much more willing to accommodate the needs of international students.⁹⁹ Arvis Dawson sensed that, while Goshen did give Black students a lot of freedom, they still held them in the realm of their own expectations.¹⁰⁰ Ersery noted assimilation as a big challenge to his own experience at Goshen.¹⁰¹ Taylor-Myers said that Goshen needed to allow all of its students to, “work within their identity,” in order to be Black even at a Mennonite college. She did not believe that students should be expected to adopt all Mennonite values just because they wanted a

⁹⁶ “Black Student Union takes ‘wait and watch’ attitude,” *Record*, October 5, 1973, 4.

⁹⁷ “Does GC meet needs of students?,” *Record*, October 11, 1968, 2.

⁹⁸ Arvis Dawson, interview by author, tape recording, Elkhart, In., 13 March 2006.

⁹⁹ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

¹⁰⁰ Arvis Dawson, interview by author, tape recording, Elkhart, In., 13 March 2006..

¹⁰¹ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

good education. Describing it as confining for all students to be held to a Mennonite standard, Taylor-Myers suggested that Goshen should have done a little, “give and take,” not fully giving up their Mennonite identity, but being open to embracing that of others.¹⁰²

Academic Challenges

Many Black students felt inadequately prepared by their previous schooling for the academic expectations they were met with at white colleges and universities in the 1960s and 70s. Ballard said of Black students who entered white postsecondary institutions, “Nothing has prepared them for the academic demands, the rigor of thought and concentration, that awaited them on the campus where they have been accepted as special-admissions students.”¹⁰³ The picture was much the same at Goshen. Taylor-Myers commented on the need for study assistance to help Black students adjust to Goshen’s academic expectations. Goshen College African American faculty member Lee Roy Berry believed that many of the Black students who were confronted by the academically rigorous environment at Goshen did so without appropriate academic training. He suspected that this, in addition to the fact that most of the academically successful students around them were white, only served to heighten the insecurities already experienced by Black students on a majority white campus.¹⁰⁴ Illustrating this conclusion, Ersery was told upon his arrival at the college that he lacked an appropriate college vocabulary and said he was, “saddled with this stigma from the beginning.” He mentioned the difficulty he encountered in trying to overcome this perception of faculty members even after his vocabulary had become more proficient. While he appreciated the

¹⁰² Mildred Taylor-Myers, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 7 March 2006.

¹⁰³ Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk*, 78.

¹⁰⁴ Lee Roy Berry, interview by author, tape recording, Goshen, In., 10 March, 2006.

benefits gained from the work that was required of him, he also felt that it, “exaggerated the separation between the Black and white students.”¹⁰⁵

Several Black students believed that some white faculty at Goshen as having underestimated or were being unable to adequately evaluate their abilities. Identifying with this, one Black student in a 1971 *Record* article criticized Goshen’s evaluation system for catering much more to white standards than to those of Black students.¹⁰⁶ Speaking as an alumni of Goshen College, Hubert Brown also felt that there were, “negative beliefs about the academic readiness of African American students.”¹⁰⁷ Taylor-Myers recalled an experience where she suspected that racism was involved when one of her white classmates received a higher grade than her, even though Taylor-Myers remembered having been more qualified than her peer.¹⁰⁸ In another instance in 1972, three Black students were denied participation in the Study Service Term (SST) program. The SST screening committee ensured those who argued about the potential prejudice involved that the students were excluded for “individual reasons” not directly related to the race of the students. The committee pointed to the past participation of minority students in the SST program as evidence that their decision was not intended to be discriminatory.¹⁰⁹

The controversy over the exclusion of these students from the SST program, raised a larger question in the minds of some Black students. A *Record* article in response to the event asked why white students, who were unwilling to engage their fellow Black students on campus, were allowed to interact with those of another culture

¹⁰⁵ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

¹⁰⁶ “Black Menos get together at GC,” *Record*, March 18, 1971, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Hubert Brown, interview by author, tape recording, email, 22 March, 2006.

¹⁰⁸ Mildred Taylor-Myers, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 7 March 2006.

¹⁰⁹ “Three Blacks Denied SST,” *Record*, December 15, 1972, 1.

abroad. The article questioned the legitimacy of the argument made by the SST screening committee that the three Black students were not well-suited for the program. Believing that Black students at Goshen College were in a constant state of SST, the article contended that this actually provided them with a greater potential for cultural adjustment than most white students.¹¹⁰ Hearing the implicit need identified by the suggestions of several Black students, the BSU in 1973 urged the development of an urban/ghetto SST unit for white students.¹¹¹ Spicely also suggested that Goshen College could have created opportunities for many of the students to become more exposed, by immersion, to the cultural differences found within the urban environment.¹¹²

GC Responds

Black students recognized campus-wide efforts to respond to some of the issues raised during this period of high Black student enrollment at Goshen. Tony Brown remembered positively that Goshen was willing to engage in dialogue with Black students and noted that this dialogue was quite constructive. He stated that Black concerns were at the very least put on the agenda of Goshen College and that Black students were given the opportunity to use diplomatic channels to express their concerns.¹¹³

White Student Response

In the late 1960s, white students at Goshen College sought to discover the part they could play in improving the experience of Blacks, not only on campus, but nation wide. The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the ensuing race riots in April

¹¹⁰ "Goshen Students to Confront Issue of 'Subtle Racism,'" *Record*, December 15, 1972, 3.

¹¹¹ "Black Student Union takes 'wait and watch' attitude," *Record*, October 15, 1973, 4.

¹¹² Artrelle Spicely, interview by author, tape recording, phone , 9 March 2006.

¹¹³ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone , 10 March 2006.

1968 yielded a strong reaction throughout the nation, including at Goshen. Classes were canceled in memory of Dr. King and in the following days a student and faculty led march to the Goshen courthouse took place.¹¹⁴ Students raised the question of what role, if any, white Americans and particularly Mennonites and the church, could play in the movement of the late 1960s. Goshen College student Ray Funk described Mennonites awakened by the Civil Rights Movement as, “jolted from our comfortable pews and isolated study-carrels...baffled and on unknown ground.” Cognizant of this fact, Funk asked if the Mennonite community was qualified to provide answers, “from the cornfields, sociology classes and MYF [Mennonite Youth Fellowship],” that would be relevant to the questions now faced by the country.¹¹⁵ In a 1968 *Record* editorial, white Goshen student Dan Kauffman, challenged campus student leadership organizations to hold the campus community accountable to addressing the reality of racism both on campus and in the local community.¹¹⁶

Some white students found ways to do their part at an individual level. One of these students was Eli Hochstedler who, in 1968, hoped to challenge his own limited perspective by participating in a student exchange program between Goshen College and Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi. Following his experience in the South, Hochstedler criticized young Mennonites as being too apathetic. When Hochstedler returned to campus, he expressed the importance of creating an integrated Goshen College curriculum by, “adding a proper Black perspective to the courses,” and establishing a Study Service Term (SST) in the South.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ “GCCG and ‘Moral Leadership,’” *Record*, May 17, 1968, 2.

¹¹⁵ “Goshen Students to Confront Issue of ‘Subtle Racism,’” *Record*, March 20, 1968, 3.

¹¹⁶ Dan Kauffman, “On Black and White,” *Record*, April 12, 1968, 2.

¹¹⁷ “Eli Hochstedler...,” *Record*, June 21, 1968, 4.

Black Student Response

In the early 1970s, Goshen's Black students, developed some of their own responses to the concerns brought up by the experience of African American students on campus. Spicely noted the strong sense of unity, support, and camaraderie that formed among Black students on campus.¹¹⁸ "We referred to one another as 'Brother and Sister,'" Ersery said commenting on this same sense of connection. He remembered Black students offering academic support to one another and added that this was particularly evidenced by junior and senior nursing students who tutored incoming students.¹¹⁹

Black students also sought to address the realities found on their campus through more organized means. Some of the first stated goals of the BSU were to increase understanding between Black-white and Black-Black relationships on campus. As a means to achieve these goals, the BSU planned a number of activities, such as visiting the Black Expo in Chicago, establishing relationships with individuals of the Black community in Elkhart, and engaging in tutoring and mentoring relationships with underprivileged children in the local community.¹²⁰ Hoping to tackle the lack of communication and understanding that took place between Black and white students, the BSU began in the mid-1970s to organize a number of annual chapel and convocations to correspond with Black history week in early February. The BSU also sought to increase awareness of African American history and culture through these presentations.¹²¹ The

¹¹⁸ Artrelle Spicely, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 9 March 2006.

¹¹⁹ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

¹²⁰ "BSU Plans active year," *Record*, October 1, 1971, 1.

¹²¹ "'White Minority can overcome negative feelings,'" *Record*, February 6, 1976, 2.

organization continued to advertise that its doors were open for all those interested and it did not seek to be exclusive.¹²²

Collective Student Response

Goshen students of all races collectively organized a number of efforts to address campus race relations. The Goshen College Senate in late spring 1968 adopted a document entitled “The Racial Crisis and Human Rights: A Statement of Position.” Recommendations in the document called for African American course material, Black faculty members, and an increase in the percentage of Black students.¹²³ As a further development of the human rights document, a Human Rights Commission, consisting of student and faculty members, was established by the Goshen College Community Government in 1969. This group hoped to examine and address issues of prejudice and discrimination affecting members of the campus community.¹²⁴ The commission was especially noted for having assisted a Black student in obtaining housing in the local Goshen community.¹²⁵ Finally, a student forum was held in 1970 to open a space for Black and white students to discuss some of their feelings about campus race relations.¹²⁶

Students at Goshen College also found less formal ways of improving the race relations at the college. As an informal social outlet, Black students would often visit the “psychedelic shack,” an off campus house of Black and white Goshen College students, for gatherings and dances.¹²⁷ Ersery recalled being at an integrated party where everyone was singing along with James Brown, “say it loud I’m Black and I’m proud.” A ritual

¹²² “BSU active over last six years,” *Record*, November 14, 1975, 4.

¹²³ “GCCG and ‘Moral Leadership,’” *Record*, May 17, 1968, 2.

¹²⁴ “Rights Commission Formed,” *Record*, November 7, 1969, 6.

¹²⁵ “Minorities: Ten Years After,” *Record*, November 14, 1975, 4-5.

¹²⁶ “Berry Reacts to Student Forum,” *Record*, December 10, 1970, 2.

¹²⁷ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

also began involving Black and white students meeting to play games and eat together at “Ire’s,” a local truck stop.¹²⁸

White Faculty Response

A number of Goshen’s white faculty took it upon themselves to meet some of the requests made by Black students. Ersery commented on the genuine attempts made by several white faculty to both, “educate and connect with the Black student population...”¹²⁹ Hubert Brown referenced interactions with faculty who valued cultural diversity and those who sought to assist students of color as one of his most positive experiences at Goshen.¹³⁰ One such faculty member was Vernon Schertz, who developed himself as a bridge for building understanding between the white campus, local community, and Black students.¹³¹ In addition to welcoming Black students into his home, Schertz began organizing field trips, educational tours, and even took some students to a Black Panther meeting in Chicago. Schertz made attempts to connect Black students with the local African American community and also mentioned efforts he made to connect students to people, programs, and churches in the local area outside the African American community to offer them such “immersion experiences,” as farming for the first time.¹³² Schertz found that Black students expressed in various ways that they had a level of trust in him.¹³³ He was clearly remembered by Taylor-Myers as being the white “go-between” professor who Black students felt they could talk to.¹³⁴ Tony Brown also recognized Schertz as one of a number of white faculty members that

¹²⁸ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

¹²⁹ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

¹³⁰ Hubert Brown, interview by author, email, 23 March 2006

¹³¹ “Prof. Schertz: The Parachute,” *Record*, October 22, 1970, 4.

¹³³ Vernon Schertz, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 15 March 2006.

¹³⁴ Mildred Taylor-Myers, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 7 March 2006.

took an interest in relating to Black students.¹³⁵ The efforts made by Schertz to improve the experience of Black students at Goshen were recognized by many on campus. He often found that professors would consult him about how they could relate better to minority students. The administration also recognized his abilities and asked Schertz to lead a variety of programs targeted at minority students.¹³⁶

Administrative Response

Goshen College's administration also acted in response to the concerns raised by the increasing presence of Black students. Spicely thought the administration almost went out of its way to ensure that everyone had a voice on campus.¹³⁷ Dawson especially noted the college's support of Black student initiatives and programs.¹³⁸ As a way of showing a more serious institutional commitment to addressing the issues brought up by Black students on campus, several committees were created. Initially a subcommittee of the International Education Committee addressed the interests of American minority students. The primary task of this committee was to aid minority students in adjusting to the academic demands they would encounter at the college. Part of this task included the initiation of a summer program in 1969 that worked with helping students adjust to the demands of the transition from high school to college, as well as the cultural differences many would be met by at Goshen.¹³⁹ Vernon Schertz was asked to teach several of these summer preparatory programs and to develop a "Diagnostic Seminar," which would aid minority students in developing stronger study skills.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

¹³⁶ Vernon Schertz., interview by author, tape recording, phone, 15 March, 2006

¹³⁷ Artrelle Spicely, interview by author, tape recording, phone, March 9, 2006.

¹³⁸ Arvis Dawson, interview by author, tape recording, Elkhart, In., 13 March 2006.

¹³⁹ "Minorities: Ten Years After," *Record*, November 14, 1975, 4-5.

¹⁴⁰ Vernon Schertz, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 15 March 2006.

The development of an academic preparatory program was shown to be quite effective for at least some Black students. Dawson remembered his own need to take part in the summer prep program¹⁴¹ and Spicely also confirmed that enrolling in the summer program had prepared her adequately for the academic expectations at Goshen College.¹⁴² Schertz believed that for the students who became involved, the program really made a difference. To attest to this perception, he mentioned several success stories of Black alumni whose progress he had followed. He referred to a number of Black students who attended Goshen in the late 1960s and 1970s, who were very much challenged by the high academic standards of Goshen College, and became involved in the academic assistance programs. In later years these Black students successfully obtained a variety of graduate level academic honors and were employed in highly regarded professional positions.¹⁴³

In subsequent years, the administration continued to respond more directly to the specific needs of Black students. A sub-committee of the Student Personnel Policy, the Black Education Study Committee, was created in 1969 to evaluate the academic and social life of Black students enrolled at Goshen. Acting as executive secretary of this committee, Schertz, based upon the committee's evaluations, offered several recommendations. Schertz suggested the need for Black faculty and staff members, a Black student center, inclusion of Black culture in the curriculum, and tutorial programs.¹⁴⁴ As a way of sensitizing white faculty members to the demographic shift

¹⁴¹ Arvis Dawson, interview by author, tape recording, Elkhart, In., 13 March 2006.

¹⁴² Artrelle Spicely, interview by author, tape recording, phone, March 9, 2006.

¹⁴³ Vernon Schertz, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 15 March, 2006.

¹⁴⁴ "40 Blacks at GC, Program Evaluated," *Record*, May 17, 1969, 3.

taking place on the campus, recommendations were also made for a faculty exchange program with a Historically Black College.¹⁴⁵

Goshen College's administration attempted to follow through on several suggestions of the Black Education Study committee. One of the first responses involved hiring Lee Roy Berry in 1969 as the college's first African American faculty member.¹⁴⁶ The inclusion of Black culture studies within the curriculum, a tutorial program, directed group study sessions, allowance for students to re-take courses in which they received a D or F, and development of a five-year normal option for degree completion were all part of an active response to the assessed needs. The administration also continued the summer program to help better prepare incoming minority students for the social and educational atmosphere they would enter at Goshen College.¹⁴⁷

Actions were taken by the college to heighten awareness of Black culture and society as well. In 1970, the college hosted Dr. Curtis Burrell, pastor of Woodlawn Mennonite Church in Chicago, to speak at a convocation about his involvement with Chicago gangs.¹⁴⁸ Another example was found in the spring of 1971 when a Black Arts focus was designed for the Goshen College Study Week. The week included activities such as convocations, lectures, and seminars that served as affirmations of the contributions made by Blacks to American society.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, courses about Black culture were first offered in the 1970s such as African American Literature, African Arts, African Culture and Society, Black Theology, and Black American History.¹⁵⁰ In 1974, in response to requests for students to have the opportunity to experience an urban SST

¹⁴⁵ "GCCG and Afro-Americans...Senate Role, Black Enrollment Issues In Human Rights Stand"

¹⁴⁶ Lee Roy Berry, interview by author, tape recording, Goshen, In., 10 March 2006.

¹⁴⁷ "GC seeks to satisfy student minority needs," *Record*, 19 Sept., 1969, 3.

¹⁴⁸ "Convo to feature Burrell, Ebony Voices, Dr. K. Lutze," *Record*, November 5, 1970, 1.

¹⁴⁹ "Black Arts," *Record*, 11 March, 1971, 3.

¹⁵⁰ According to course offerings listed in Goshen College catalogs, 1971-1979.

culture, Goshen College began to establish formal relations with the Chicago Urban Life Center. The program offered at the Urban Life Center provided students with exposure to urban environments and allowed them to gain practical experience outside the classroom.¹⁵¹

The administration also showed its support for Black student's need for more "space" on campus. Black students were allowed a "soul hour" on the college radio station.¹⁵² In addition, Howell House was established as "Black House" in 1972, for Black students to live together in small group community housing. Howell House served as a space for Black students to hold dances and several other aspects of their culture that were less accepted by the norms of the college's majority culture.¹⁵³ To provide additional outlets for Black student identity and expression, a gospel choir that would come to be named "Ebony Voices" formed during the summer of 1970. Arivs Dawson remembered a strong sense of unity between Black students involved in Ebony Voices. He recalled that through the choir, "We stuck together spiritually."¹⁵⁴ Tony Brown said he felt very much at home through his involvement with the choir.¹⁵⁵ Other members of the group hoped that Ebony Voices would serve as a mechanism for furthering understanding in the majority white Mennonite campus community of Black culture and, in particular, of forms of Black spiritual expression.¹⁵⁶

As a final administrative response, a variety of events were planned that served to confront the issue of race relations at Goshen College. In the spring of 1968, an all-

¹⁵¹ "Proposed Urban Life Studies Approved," *Record*, October 11, 1974, 1.

¹⁵² Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

¹⁵³ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

¹⁵⁴ Arvis Dawson, interview by author, tape recording, Elkhart, In., 13 March 2006.

¹⁵⁵ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

¹⁵⁶ "Birth of the Ebony Voices," *Record*, November 12, 1970, 4.

school Study Day centered on the topic of “Race Relations in America” was held.¹⁵⁷

The all-school Study Day attended to the “roots” of contemporary race relations in America. All students were required to attend several of the events which featured Dr. C. Eric Lincoln, a Union Theological Seminary professor heavily involved in the Civil Rights Movement, and Ed Riddick, a General Conference Mennonite involved with the Operation Breadbasket program in Chicago. Additionally, the study day featured a panel of Mennonites discussing their inner city work in a variety of locations.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, in 1973, a nine-week “Human Relations Training Seminar” was conducted to promote inter-racial understanding on campus. Sponsored by the faculty-student Black Education Study Committee and funded by the Danforth Foundation, the seminar was carried out by the director of education at Oaklawn Center and a representative from Elkhart Community Schools. Participation was limited to a total of sixteen Black and white faculty and students.¹⁵⁹ Participants in the seminar described it as quite effective and successful.¹⁶⁰

MID-LATE 1970s

Decline in Black Student Enrollment

Despite the efforts made by Goshen College in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the success in their Black student enrollment numbers would not last through the decade. With another shift in the demographics of their student population, Goshen seemed, again to, merely embody a national trend. The quick jump and ensuing decrease in Black

¹⁵⁷ “Goshen Students to Confront Issue of ‘Subtle Racism,’” *Record*, March 20, 1968, 3.

¹⁵⁸ “All School Study Day Focuses on American Race Riots,” *Record*, April 12, 1963, 1.

¹⁵⁹ “Seminar studies racial tensions,” *Record*, January 12, 1973, 3.

¹⁶⁰ “Racial Seminar Report: ‘A Long Way to Go,’” *Record*, February 16, 1973, 5.

student enrollment that occurred at Goshen in the 1970s took place on college and universities campuses across the United States. Following a high period in the country for Black student college enrollment in 1976, a nationwide decline took place.¹⁶¹ As one student speculated in a *Record* article in later years, the higher numbers of Black students enrolled at Goshen in the late 1960s was because Black issues were more “in vogue” during the height of the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁶² Tony Brown also stated his belief that Goshen was not unique, and the only reason that such a large number of Black students could be found at Goshen College in the late 1960s was because it mirrored larger events already taking place throughout the nation.”¹⁶³ By 1974, Black student enrollment at Goshen College had fallen from 64 in 1971, to 35 (less than 3% of the total student population).¹⁶⁴ One student described the Goshen College Black student as, “...dying at a much faster rate than ever.”¹⁶⁵ Throughout the 1970s, the average enrollment numbers for Black students at Goshen College was 36.¹⁶⁶ Goshen’s registrar office held that the decrease was not due to a lack of retention, but to a reduced number of Blacks entering in the incoming classes.¹⁶⁷ Yet, in the years following 1971-72, the number of Black students not returning after one year at Goshen was 20 percent or more. 64 percent of Black students did not return after one year at the college in 1975-76.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶¹ Jackson, *African American Education*, 256.

¹⁶² “Campus to celebrate Black history week,” *Record*, February 11, 1983, 1.

¹⁶³ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

¹⁶⁴ “Black enrollment down; less active recruiting charged,” *Record*, November 1, 1974, 7.

¹⁶⁵ “Black Recruitment Policies: Should they be changed?,” *Record*, November 15, 1974, 7.

¹⁶⁶ Report on Minority Students at Goshen College, JLLE Program Planning (folder), V-4-39.3, Goshen College Urban Ministries Program, 1976-85, Box #4, Mennonite Historical Archives, Goshen, IN.

¹⁶⁷ “Black enrollment down; less active recruiting charged,” *Record*, November 1, 1974, 7.

¹⁶⁸ Report on Minority Students at Goshen College, JLLE Program Planning (folder), V-4-39.3, Goshen College Urban Ministries Program, 1976-85, Box #4, Mennonite Historical Archives, Goshen, IN.

Explanation: Failure of Colleges to Fully Accommodate

One explanation for the nationwide decline in Black student interest to enroll at white colleges was the unwillingness on the part of those in power at the schools to consider making real institutional transformations on behalf of Black students. Allen Ballard said of white colleges in this period:

“...most institutions have absorbed the Black students’ initial thrust for change by creating ‘autonomous E.O.P [Equal Opportunity Programs] and ethnic studies programs. Yet few colleges have moved beyond that point to a true empowerment of Blacks within white institutions. Power over the control of monies, personnel, and curricula still rests in the hands of assorted white deans, department chairmen, and faculty committees. White colleges have made little effort to put Blacks into such ‘regular’ positions. Moreover, the content of the traditional curriculum still reflects an almost totally white view of America.”¹⁶⁹

Ed Herr, Goshen College Director of Admissions, stated in the mid-1970s that perhaps if Black students at Goshen were made to feel more at home on campus, they would have more reason to recruit their friends and families.¹⁷⁰

White colleges of the 1970s fell short of engaging in actions that displayed a full pledge to increase Black student enrollment. Reflecting on the national trend, Ballard concluded, “If white colleges wish to bring about some type of coexistence on campuses, their first and foremost act should be recognition of the institutionalized racism built into their structure.” He added that for white colleges needed to give Black students the sense that an institutional commitment had been made to racial equality.¹⁷¹ Taylor-Myers felt that Goshen College was blind to the fact that their recruitment efforts were not enough, but that they needed to consider the responsibility they had to the students they

¹⁶⁹ Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk*, 153.

¹⁷⁰ “Black Recruitment Policies: Should they be changed?,” *Record*, November 15, 1974, 7.

¹⁷¹ Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk*, 154.

were inviting to their campus.¹⁷² Ersery explained that the decrease in Black student enrollment was a result of the following:

“It’s not clear that GC had a strategy for recruiting and retaining inner city African American students. The attempt to merely assimilate the Black students into the overall student population failed in my opinion for several reasons. First, GC reflects a middle class rural white Mennonite perspective. Many of the Black students were recruited with the idea that their admission into GC was an opportunity, a gift if you will, a chance to get an education and improve their station in life...it was not diversity that we had at GC...The mentality was that GC had everything to offer and nothing to gain...The African American students were frustrated that they were not seen as offering anything valuable in who they were and what they represented.”¹⁷³

Goshen College, though responding to some of the challenges brought about by the arrival of Black students on their campus, hesitated to fully engage the challenges. An article in a 1978 *Record* questioned whether the Goshen College administration feared admitting students that would challenge the dominant culture of its institution.¹⁷⁴ Tony Brown believed that Goshen, like many colleges at the time, wanted to do the right thing, but was naïve and ill-prepared for some of the challenges that would result from bringing a significant number of Black students to its campus.¹⁷⁵ Ersery noted that while some changes were made by the Goshen College administration, few, if any, were made in the campus environment to specifically accommodate African American students. He sensed that the administration and greater student body felt that many African American students were ungrateful for the experience Goshen had provided them and were frustrated by the students’ unwillingness to adjust.¹⁷⁶ Thus, as one African American student, Leomon Sowell contended, Goshen, like other colleges in the country, adopted “the philosophy of ‘benign neglect’” toward Black students.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Mildred Taylor-Myers, interview by author, phone, 7 March 2006.

¹⁷³ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

¹⁷⁴ “Minority stats re-examined,” *Record*, October 6, 1978, 2.

¹⁷⁵ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

¹⁷⁶ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

¹⁷⁷ “Minorities deserve a place at Goshen,” *Record*, February, 1977, 6.

Some believed that it was beyond Goshen College's own abilities to do anymore than it had already done to attract and retain more Black students. Ersery thought that the administration had made serious attempts to respond to the requests of Black students and did what they thought was right.¹⁷⁸ Vernon Schertz also noted, "In light of the circumstances that Goshen College was a white college in a white town...considering where they came from I think they did pretty good...I think we did pretty good."¹⁷⁹ Ersery speculated that attempts to respond to the requests of Black students caused considerable tension within the administration as, "the administration was not in unanimous agreement on many of the decisions."¹⁸⁰ Tony Brown also identified a tension between those in the administration who felt that Black students who elected to come to Goshen would have to adjust to the majority culture, and those who believed that in deciding to welcome Black students to its campus, the institution had to make some of its own adjustments.¹⁸¹ Identifying more with one side of that tension, Spicely said, "When you came you knew that that was going to be the expectation," and concluded that Black students would have to make their own individual decisions about how much they were willing to deal with that reality.¹⁸²

Change in Recruitment Practices

Hoping to ease some of the difficulties raised by the high enrollment of Black students, white colleges and universities in the United States adopted new recruitment policies in the mid-1970s, designed to attract African American students who might be a better "fit" for their institutions. Goshen College reacted similarly by working to attract

¹⁷⁸ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

¹⁷⁹ Vernon Schertz, interview by author, phone, 15 March 2006.

¹⁸⁰ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

¹⁸¹ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

¹⁸² Artrelle Spicely, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 9 March 2006.

more Mennonite and Christian Blacks to its campus. Many colleges chose to focus their attention on bringing Black students who were more experienced with, and therefore more willing to adjust to, the standards of white North American culture.¹⁸³ A student comment in a 1975 issue of the *Record* identified that Goshen discriminated in who and where it chose to recruit.¹⁸⁴ As a student enrolled during the mid-1970s, Artrelle Spicely remembered that a lot of Black students at Goshen College were already affiliated with the Mennonite church.¹⁸⁵ Yet Brown said that he did not see the college making sufficient efforts to attract Black Mennonite students either.¹⁸⁶ Faculty member Lee Roy Berry noted in a 1978 *Record* article that Goshen College did not know how to confront the problems that arose with increased Black student enrollment. Berry believed that after the college concluded Black student needs could not be met, it decided to decrease its efforts in recruiting minority students.¹⁸⁷ Tony Brown stated his observation, as a faculty member of Goshen College in the mid-1970s, that the institution had weakened its previously aggressive attempts to recruit Black students.¹⁸⁸ Mildred Taylor-Myers also guessed that the previously high period of Black student enrollment had been connected to recruiting methods whereby Goshen College went out to places where there was a significant Black community.¹⁸⁹ Former, Goshen College registrar John Nyce echoed this belief that the college had been more intentional in earlier years about its efforts to recruit a variety of minority students.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸³ Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk*, 68.

¹⁸⁴ "Yes, GC discriminates," *Record*, November 21, 1975, 2-3.

¹⁸⁵ Artrelle Spicely, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 9 March 2006.

¹⁸⁶ "Black enrollment down; less active recruiting charged," *Record*, November 1, 1974, 7.

¹⁸⁷ "Effort increases minority enrollment," *Record*, September 29, 1978.

¹⁸⁸ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

¹⁸⁹ Mildred Taylor-Myers, interview by author, phone, 7 March 2006.

¹⁹⁰ "Effort Increases Minority Enrollment," *Record*, September 29, 1978.

Still others contested the attitude held by many that Goshen College had decreased in its recruitment efforts. Director of admissions, Ed Herr, reported in 1978 that Goshen's recruitment policies had not changed in the previous six years, but did recognize that an effort to attract more Black students might call for some changes to be made. Herr hypothesized that part of the difficulty may have been connected to the fact that less Blacks were recruiting other Blacks.¹⁹¹ While in previous years Black students had been encouraged to recruit Blacks, less of an emphasis was being placed on this expectation for current African American students.¹⁹²

Black GC students may have been reluctant to encourage other Black students to attend based on their unsatisfactory experiences at Goshen. Vernon Schertz said that some Black graduates expressed in later years that one of the problems they encountered after leaving Goshen College was that, "they couldn't quite fit back into the Black community."¹⁹³ African American student Art Griffin believed that preparing Black students for Black communities would make the institution more attractive for them.¹⁹⁴ Concerns voiced by African American students in earlier years at Goshen College were echoed by Black students of the mid-1970s as well. A lack of cultural understanding between Mennonite students from rural communities and Black students from urban environments was again named as the major source of tension for Goshen's campus. As a faculty member in the mid-1970s, Tony Brown said that one of the major concerns of Black students was still the lack of a more visible Black presence on campus. As a student at Goshen in the early 1970s, he gave attention to the fact that only one Black

¹⁹¹ "Black Recruitment Policies: Should they be changed?," *Record*, November 15, 1974, 7.

¹⁹² "Black enrollment down; less active recruiting charged," *Record*, November 1, 1974,.7.

¹⁹³ Vernon Schertz, interview by author, tape recorder, phone, 15 March 2006. ©

¹⁹⁴ "Black Recruitment Policies: Should they be changed?," *Record*, November 15, 1974, 7.

faculty member was employed on a campus where 5% of the student population was Black. He criticized the expectation that one Black faculty member was implicitly expected to be the one that all Black students on campus related to.¹⁹⁵

Goshen also seemed less dedicated to committing the material resources to back up its vision for increasing Black student enrollment. A *Record* article from 1968 said that a decreased level of funding would be available for Black student scholarships in later years.¹⁹⁶ However, this claim prompted some to question whether Goshen had a lack of funding for minority student aid or if it made a conscious choice to channel its finances elsewhere. A student in 1978 critically questioned, “Would it be too ungracious to suggest a subconscious trade-off was made between an increase in minority relations and the new Umble Center?”¹⁹⁷ Another Goshen student, in a 1975 *Record* article, accused the college of practicing discrimination against those without financial access to pay for college expenses.¹⁹⁸ Though these speculations hoped to offer some explanation, the reality remained unchanged, and reduction in available scholarships decreased the opportunity for many Black students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to attend Goshen College.¹⁹⁹ As Ersery said, the financial aid package made available to him as a student in the late 1960s played a significant role in his choice to attend Goshen versus other colleges.²⁰⁰

GC’s Renewed Responses

Various groups and individuals across campus in the late 1970s again deemed it important to actively respond to the college’s problems concerning Black student

¹⁹⁵ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, Phone , 10 March 2006.

¹⁹⁶ “GCCG and Afro-Americans...Senate Role, Black Enrollment Issues in Human Rights Stand”

¹⁹⁷ “Minority stats re-examined,” *Record*, October 6, 1978, 2.

¹⁹⁸ “Yes, GC discriminates,” *Record*, November 21, 1975, 2-3.

¹⁹⁹ “Black enrollment down; less active recruiting charged,” 7.

²⁰⁰ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

enrollment. To aid the efforts of the college in recruiting more Black students, in 1973 the BSU began to host annual 24-hour basketball (and in later years volleyball) marathons to raise funds for Black student scholarships.²⁰¹ The BSU also hoped that the funds raised could be later used to organize a Black student recruitment program.²⁰² As a Black faculty member, Tony Brown sought ways to do his part. Brown actively built relationships of trust with Goshen College's administration. In doing so he hoped to advocate and educate them about some of the ongoing concerns of Black students. Yet, Brown felt that while there were people who took his insight and suggestions seriously, others did not and instead saw his position as a "token" that helped validate their efforts. Brown generally felt respected by fellow faculty members; however he also remarked that some students saw him as "selling out" in his decision to work for an institution that was not concerned with the interests of Blacks.²⁰³

The administration continued to seek out ways of confronting the reality of Black students' presence on campus. In the persistent attempt not to neglect the needs and interests of Black students, Goshen College president, J.L. Burkholder created the "Task Force on Minority Students" in 1975. Acting as Executive Director of this committee was Goshen College faculty member Vernon Schertz. This group consisted of Mennonite church administrators, faculty members, and students.²⁰⁴ The primary task of this committee in identifying the concerns of minority students was to examine necessary steps to admit more minorities at Goshen College.²⁰⁵ In response to their findings, the Mutual Development Laboratory (MDL) was formed to act on several of the task force's

²⁰¹ "Newshorts: BSU Sponsors matches," *Record*, October 4, 1974, 7.

²⁰² "BSU to sponsor marathon," *Record*, October 15, 1976, 9.

²⁰³ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

²⁰⁴ "GC Reviews Service for Minorities," *Record*, February 4, 1977, 6.

²⁰⁵ "Minorities: Ten Years After," *Record*, November 14, 1975, 4-5.

proposals. Unfortunately, the task force eventually ended up failing due to a lack of leadership that was linked to inadequate funding of the program.²⁰⁶

Despite the obstacles, Goshen persisted in its attempts to establish an effective program to address minority student needs. In response to the failure of the MDL in 1976, Burkholder established the Cross Cultural Relations Center in 1977. Part of the Center's task was to investigate ways in which the institution could develop minorities for its faculty and staff positions.²⁰⁷ Another intention during its formation was for the Center to be directed by a minority person. In the fall of 1977, a recent African American GC graduate was hired part-time to direct the center. At this time, the primary task of the Center was to provide academic counseling, promote campus sensitivity to the needs of minority students, provide "economically viable" programs for minority students, and raise awareness about minority cultures on campus. Unfortunately, insufficient funding of the center did not allow for a director to be employed full-time, which left practical steps ill-defined and ultimately posed a major challenge to actualizing some of the program's major goals.²⁰⁸ Vernon Schertz stated his belief in late 1977 that the program was suffering because, "We, as Mennos, have trouble trusting someone not of us to do the job."²⁰⁹ Not yet willing to give up on the potential of the program, in 1978 Goshen College was able to hire African American Sylvia Dyson as the first full-time director of the Cross Cultural Relations Center.²¹⁰

Identifying the low number of Black student enrollment as a problem, Goshen College decided to give birth to some new recruitment strategies. Beginning in 1978, a

²⁰⁶ "GC Reviews Service for minorities," *Record*, February 4, 1977, 6.

²⁰⁷ "JLB issues annual college report," *Record*, October 15, 1976, 9.

²⁰⁸ "Cross-Cultural Relations Center going in action," *Record*, October 7, 1977, 1.

²⁰⁹ "Shared Mennonite Rootstock: Will it be grafted or hybrid?," *Record*, February 4, 1977, 6.

²¹⁰ "More Faculty and Staff introduced," *Record*, September 22, 1978, 3.

minority student open house was held. This event took place over a weekend, consisting of a program for prospective minority students as well as workshops offered to high school guidance counselors on counseling minority students. To recruit students for this event, Goshen College contacted Mennonite high schools and pastors and asked them to advertise the event to minority students. Minority students already enrolled at the institution were also asked to invite other minorities.²¹¹

Results of GC Efforts

The results of Goshen's re-established active commitment to recruiting minority students proved effective. The number of Black students enrolled had increased to thirty-three in 1978, an impressive leap toward progress considering the previous year's enrollment of eighteen. Of the total African American population found at Goshen in 1978, seventeen of these were incoming first year students.²¹² In 1978, approximately 67 percent of the incoming minority students were Mennonite.²¹³ Part of Goshen's renewed efforts was to focus on attracting Black students who the administration thought would feel comfortable at Goshen College--those whose lifestyle might align closer with that of the majority culture of the college. This included minority students who were already Mennonite, those from the mid-West and especially the local area, as well as those who already knew a minority student attending Goshen. The combined efforts of the BSU, Mennonite churches, and the Cross Cultural Relations Center were recognized as the primary reason for the success of increased minority enrollment.²¹⁴

²¹¹ "Minority Students' Open House," *Record*, March 3, 1978, 5.

²¹² "Effort Increases Minority Enrollment," *Record*, September 29, 1978, 5.

²¹³ "Effort Increases Minority Enrollment," *Record*, September 29, 1978, 5.

²¹⁴ "Effort Increases Minority Enrollment," *Record*, September 29, 1978, 5.

EARLY 1980s**Decline in Black Student Enrollment**

After its slight upturn in the late 1970s, at the turn of the decade, the number of Black students enrolled at Goshen again decreased. A Minority Student Retention Report revealed several facts about the circumstances involving minority student enrollment at GC in the late 1970s. According to the report, in the fall of 1979 a high number of minority students were withdrawing from Goshen College. The minority student dropout rate was thirty percent, compared to the white student dropout rate of six percent. Furthermore, low numbers of minority students were graduating within four years. From 1976-1980, fifty-eight percent of students dismissed from the college due to academic reasons were minority students.²¹⁵

Some explanation for this decline was related to changes made at the federal level in the early 1980s. In 1981 President Ronald Reagan called for a 25 percent cut in federal funds to education. Minority students were especially affected by the resulting rise in tuition costs and dropping financial aid. The cutbacks decreased funding to poor students and were detrimental to the future of many Black colleges.²¹⁶ It was estimated that at Goshen College too, while one third of whites who were affected by these changes, as many as two thirds of minority students were severely affected.²¹⁷

The main problems affecting Black student enrollment at Goshen College in the previous decade, remained significant throughout the 1980s. In a meeting held with the

²¹⁵ Minority Student Retention Report, Winter 1981, Goshen College Urban Ministries Program, 1976-85, Box #4, V-4-39.3, Cross Cultural (folder), Goshen, IN.

²¹⁶ Jackson, *African American Education*, 55.

²¹⁷ "Recruiting process undergoes face-lift," *Record*, January 22, 1982, 4.

administration in late 1981, a number of Black students shared their frustrations with the decreased level of financial aid, social and cultural activities, and the lack of Black students on campus.²¹⁸ The overarching conflict between the cultural values and practices of Black students and those of many whites on campus was still central. Wilma Bailey, a faculty member of Goshen College in the early 1980s, identified the two most significant cultural gaps existing between the members of the college community as racial-ethnic and urban-rural differences.²¹⁹ Many of the students coming to Goshen College in the early 1980s still arrived from inner-city environments and were often brought to the campus through prior involvements with Mennonite urban ministry efforts. Alumni James Logan was drawn to Goshen by the opportunity to escape some of the pressure he had faced at his home in the Bronx. Though having had prior experience with Mennonites, Logan found the Mennonites at Goshen to be quite different from the ones he had been involved with in New York. He described those at Goshen as being more conservative and noted that they ascribed very much to an all-white ethos. He observed the lack of racial and ethnic diversity as one of the first major differences he experienced at Goshen College and remembered going through a degree of culture shock.²²⁰ Another GC alumnus of the early 1980s, Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, arrived to Goshen having grown up in a mixed, interdenominational church started by Mennonites in Cleveland, Ohio. Though she had plenty of experience with Mennonites, Shands-Stoltzfus remarked that her experience of the Mennonite environment at Goshen College was quite different. She was shocked to encounter students that had had no prior interactions with Blacks. Coming from a background rich in cross-cultural experiences,

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Wilma Bailey, interview by author, email, 27 February 2006.

²²⁰ James Logan, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 7 March 2006.

Shands-Stoltzfus felt her yearning to continue in such an environment stifled at Goshen. Her previous impression of Mennonites was what she had experienced in the inner city and she found a great deal of hypocrisy within the Mennonite church through her experiences at Goshen College.²²¹

Experience of Black Students at GC

Racism

The issue of racism on Goshen's campus, as expressed in earlier years, was again voiced by Black students of the early 1980s. A 1979 *Record* article reported that an incoming white student was "warned" that she had been assigned a Black roommate. The Black student however did not receive a "warning," and the white student was permitted to refuse rooming with the Black student.²²² Yet, as indicated in a 1984 *Record* article, African American students enrolled in the early 1980s continued to agree that most of the racism found on GC's campus was subtle.²²³ Shands-Stoltzfus sensed that much of the racism experienced on campus was due to a lack of exposure, to or interaction between students from insulated communities who were encountering students different from themselves. She did not believe that there were any "evil intents" on the part of the college against Blacks. Wilma Bailey stated that while most students got along well across racial boundaries, there were problems that arose occasionally which indicated that racial minorities first rather than as individuals. She also sensed that there was less respect for Blacks.²²⁴ One of the biggest challenges Shands-Stoltzfus faced were the assumptions made about who she was and where she came from because

²²¹ Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, interview by author, notes, Goshen, In., 15 March 2006

²²² "Blacks find campus alien," *Record*, December 7, 1979, 2.

²²³ "Student panel agrees racism is still present," *Record*, March 11, 1984, 4.

²²⁴ Wilma Bailey, interview by author, email, 27 February 2006.

she was African American.²²⁵ In regards to race relations in general, Logan remembered that there was racism among white students and race prejudice among Black students. While Logan had many positive experiences, such as his roommate's willingness to guide him through the adjustment of entering a white-Mennonite culture, he generally found the environment he encountered at Goshen College to be somewhat hostile. One of the biggest challenges he faced was the ignorance of those students unfamiliar with Black culture and lifestyle. He felt that some whites believed that Black culture was inferior to their own and sensed many white students thought he was odd. Logan mentioned a fight he was involved in during his first few weeks at Goshen which was sparked when a white student made fun of him for being from the Bronx.²²⁶ Mirroring the sentiment expressed almost a decade earlier, a student in the *Record* commented on the irony in Goshen's cross-cultural emphasis through study abroad programs and its inability to give much attention to the issues between racial and ethnic minorities and whites on campus.²²⁷ Shands-Stoltzfus saw the administration work toward addressing race relations on campus. Yet she would have liked to see more people aware of the obvious Black-white separation that existed. She thought it was especially up to faculty and administrators to take leadership in naming this reality.²²⁸

Identity

In the early 1980s, Black students at Goshen felt, as had been expressed by students in the 1960s and 1970s, that their African American identity was threatened on campus. Black students seemed to still be confronted by a personal identity crisis when

²²⁵ Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, interview by author, notes, Goshen, In., 15 March 2006

²²⁶ James Logan, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 7 March 2006.

²²⁷ "Quiet racism making an imprint on college," *Record*, November 13, 1981, 2.

²²⁸ Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, interview by author, notes, Goshen, In., 15 March 2006.

they arrived at Goshen's predominantly white campus. Though the information could not be confirmed because the background information of students was not recorded, a report issued by the North Central Accreditation (NCA) in 1985 noted the impression that more Black and minority students were using the campus counseling services.²²⁹ Logan said he felt a real pressure from the institution to "re-describe" himself in the white-Mennonite image.²³⁰ Shands-Stoltzfus did not think that African Americans at Goshen College were being taken seriously. She felt that there was too much emphasis on "equality," which essentially meant everyone becoming "white," rather than on recognizing the differences of students and the legitimate issues faced by some because of that.²³¹ Both Logan and Shands-Stoltzfus confirmed that a lack of appealing social activities was one of the biggest complaints of African American students.²³² Shands-Stoltzfus remembered many Black students complaining about chapel because they felt it was a "cultural trapping" and radically different from their own experience of religious life.²³³

Many Black students again felt "invisible" on Goshen's campus. One of the major concerns of African American faculty was the need to increase the number of African American students at Goshen and the desire to see those students who were enrolled treated fairly and respectfully.²³⁴ Students also wanted to see a greater integration of race issues into curriculum in an effort to increase knowledge base to the

²²⁹ Report of a visit to Goshen College, February 4-6, 1985, 21.

²³⁰ James Logan, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 7 March 2006.

²³¹ Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, interview by author, notes, Goshen, In., 15 March 2006

²³² Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, interview by author, notes, Goshen, In., 15 March 2006 and James Logan, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 7 March 2006.

²³³ Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, interview by author, notes, Goshen, In., 15 March 2006

²³⁴ Wilma Bailey, interview by author, email, 27 February 2006.

whole campus community.²³⁵ Black students in a late 1979 *Record* article voiced the isolation they felt on campus and noted the lack of Black faculty who could serve as role models as a significant concern. One student in the article suspected that if many of these trends continued, the level of Goshen's Black student enrollment would continue to decrease.²³⁶ In 1983, only one Black faculty member had been given tenure, as a faculty member, Tony Brown assessed Goshen College was not doing all it could to seek out employing more minority faculty members.²³⁷ A 1985 North Central Association (NCA) report also identified the lack of minority faculty as exacerbating the difficulties faced by minority students on campus.²³⁸ They recommended that efforts be made to examine the conditions of employment, create a climate conducive to the retention of minorities, and develop a program to aggressively recruit minorities.²³⁹

GC Responds

Black students at Goshen College in the early 1980s responded in similar ways as those of earlier years to the reality of their minority presence on campus. African Americans at Goshen still formed their closest relationships with other Blacks to create a space for solidarity, support, and individual expression. Shands-Stoltzfus described the racial division at Goshen in the early 1980s as “two separate worlds.” For the most part, Black and white groups did not cross over and her own primary social groups were with fellow African Americans. She felt that this was based on the need for the familiar and to bond with others like herself.²⁴⁰

²³⁵ Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, interview by author, notes, Goshen, In., 15 March 2006

²³⁶ “Blacks find campus alien,” *Record*, December 7, 1979, 2.

²³⁷ “Ending racism requires acknowledging,” *Record*, March 11, 1983, 5.

²³⁸ Report of a visit to Goshen College February 4-6, 1985, 3.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁴⁰ Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, interview by author, notes, Goshen, In., 15 March 2006

Faculty members at Goshen had not given up on responding to Black students specific concerns. Logan remarked that some faculty members were quite helpful and willing to work with students like him who found themselves academically challenged once they arrived at Goshen.²⁴¹ Shands-Stoltzfus also commented on the willingness of Black faculty in particular to go above and beyond in recognition of some of the challenges faced by many African American students at Goshen.²⁴²

At the administrative level, active responses were also made to show an ongoing interest in increasing the number of Black students at Goshen College. Retention of minority students was regarded as the main responsibility of the Cross Cultural Relations Office in 1980-81.²⁴³ Collective efforts were also made with institutions related to Goshen College. Aware of the increasing number of Mennonite congregations in urban areas, the Mennonite church found it necessary to develop leadership in these churches. To meet these growing needs, a program was developed in 1979 to train Black and Latino leaders in the Mennonite church. Named in honor of James Lark, the program resulted as a collaborative effort of the Black Caucus of the Mennonite Church, Goshen College, and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. A significant resulting action included the creation of the James Lark Leadership Education Program. Designed to develop African American Mennonite lay and professional leadership, the program combined general studies with specialized studies in leadership.²⁴⁴ Students were recruited for the James Lark Leadership Education Program by their congregations, the Goshen College admissions office, and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. The program was

²⁴¹ James Logan, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 7 March 2006.

²⁴² Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, interview by author, notes, Goshen, In., 15 March 2006

²⁴³ Minority Student Retention Report, Winter 1981, Goshen College Urban Ministries Program, 1976-85, Box #4, V-4-39.3, Cross Cultural (folder), Goshen, IN.

²⁴⁴ "Program to train minority leaders," *Record*, March 16, 1979, 1.

intended to initially enroll five students with a goal of having twenty students enrolled by its fourth year. Students admitted to the program were expected to pay regular tuition and fees, but were also eligible to apply for scholarships and financial aid. A 1979 *Record* article reported that Goshen College would suffer a deficit from the inability for tuition fees to cover the full costs of the program. To cover some of these inherent losses, Goshen hoped to ensure contributions from various church agencies and federal funds.²⁴⁵

The James Lark Leadership Program was then implemented at Goshen College in 1979. Darrell Broaddus, a 1973 Goshen College graduate, was hired to direct the program. From the funding made available by the program, a new major was created at Goshen that was designed to meet the needs of urban church leaders. The courses available under the major were designed to be open to all students. One particular expectation of the new major was a cultural immersion internship in an urban congregation.²⁴⁶ Affirming the program's efforts, one student said, "I think the white students benefit from the program because it gives them a chance to come into contact with the Black experience and culture in a way they might not otherwise be able to."²⁴⁷ However, the Black and Urban Ministries major, as it was named, faced a variety of difficulties in its execution. It had recognizably low enrollment numbers which were partially attributed to the misleading title of the major, which some believe suggested that it was only open to Black students. Lack of funding was recognized by the 1985 NCA report as a major problem of the program. According to the report, the funding for 1983-1984 and 1984-1985 was limited to three students in Urban and Black Ministries.²⁴⁸ The

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ "Broaddus to organize James Lark program," *Record*, October 12, 1979, 7.

²⁴⁷ *Maple Leaf* 1984, 88.

²⁴⁸ "Urban ministers needed," *Record*, October 8, 1982, 3.

NCA observed that while seemingly profiting from the program, Goshen College had not made any financial commitment to it.²⁴⁹ The program ended in 1986.²⁵⁰

Explanation for Low Black Enrollment at GC

The low enrollment of Black students at Goshen College in the early 1980s could again be most clearly explained by the lack of full institutional commitment to recruiting and retaining African American students. A 1981 *Record* article questioned again whether the decrease was related to a conscious effort of the college to enroll less Black students in order to, “maintain comfortable relations,” as one student framed it.²⁵¹ James Logan remembered the administration as willing to meet with Black students to discuss some of their concerns on a variety of occasions. He remarked feeling strongly supported by members of the administration in the leadership roles he held on campus. Yet he believed that their efforts were not strong enough.²⁵² Shands-Stoltzfus observed that one obstacle posed to recruitment efforts was the lack of a “critical mass” of Black students already enrolled at Goshen to attract more Black students. She did not see any real strategy for retention and said that as a result, when African American students left to return to their home communities, they often did not give Goshen a good word. “Cross-cultural clashes made everybody weary on all sides,” added Shands-Stoltzfus.²⁵³

²⁴⁹ Report of a visit to Goshen College February 4-6, 1985, 15.

²⁵⁰ Goshen College Self-Study Report 1994-1995, January 1995, Ed. Wayne Steffen, 57.

²⁵¹ “Cutback, elitism generates some concern,” *Record*, November 13, 1981, 1, 5.

²⁵² James Logan, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 7 March 2006.

²⁵³ Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, interview by author, notes, Goshen, In., 15 March 2006

MID 1980s-PRESENT**Ongoing GC Efforts**

Goshen College continued to remain actively engaged in its desire to increase minority student enrollment throughout the latter half of the 1980s and into the 1990s. The college acknowledged its need to give more careful consideration to minority students and appropriately expanded their programming to do so.²⁵⁴ Following the recommendations of the 1985 NCA report, Goshen approved a new Affirmative Action Plan to increase the diversity of employees. The college also set a goal to have 5 percent of the teaching faculty and administrators be people of color.²⁵⁵ As a part of its priority set in 1994-1995 to prepare Goshen students “more effectively for the realities of the 21st century,” the college aimed to improve campus receptivity to underrepresented students, faculty, and staff.²⁵⁶ In a 1994-1995 self study, Goshen College reported that its number of full-time minority faculty (three) had remained constant since the 1985 NCA visit, but that the number of part-time faculty increased by three.²⁵⁷ According to a Self-Study Report designed by Goshen College in 1994-1995, the Admissions Office had a separate action plan each year for the recruitment of racial/ethnic students. The study also reported that the Admissions department had become more active in its recruitment of American students of multicultural ethnic backgrounds.²⁵⁸ To further these efforts, the

²⁵⁴ Goshen College Self-Study Report 1994-1995, January 1995, Ed.Wayne Steffen, 229.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 15.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.,, 31.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 52.

²⁵⁸ Goshen College Self-Study Report 1994-1995, January 1995, Ed.Wayne Steffen, 47.

Multicultural Leadership Award for Underrepresented Students was created as a form of minority student financial aid.²⁵⁹

A number of other significant changes took place following the 1985 NCA visit. One of the most noted was at the administrative level, with the establishment of the position of Special Assistant to the President for Multicultural Affairs and the creation of the Multicultural Affairs Office (MAO) in 1992.²⁶⁰ The MAO was created in response to the college's acknowledgement of its lack of commitment to the recruitment and retention of minority students and employees. The office's stated mission was, "...to foster intercultural openness among faculty, staff, and students of Goshen College," and to be committed to, "...providing a campus wide environment that promotes an intergroup understanding and interracial friendship." Part of its purpose was also to provide direct focus on issues that would serve to "sensitize the majority of people to multicultural issues and concerns and to help bring about a true multicultural community," on campus. The office also served to assist in the implementation of the Affirmative Action policy.²⁶¹ Under the leadership of Zenebe Abebe the MAO wanted to assist minority students in becoming fully integrated on campus. A variety of programs such as the Alumni Scholars Forum, Martin Luther King Study Day, and course enrichment grants were implemented to strengthen the campus' level of multicultural awareness. In later years Goshen College President Shirley Showalter formed an evaluative committee known as the Multicultural Education Task Force

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 51.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 38.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 232.

(METF). The METF provided recommendations for institutional structures to aid in the advancement of diversity.²⁶²

Various current efforts are also in process and effect at Goshen College. Proposals for recruiting and retaining minority students at Goshen were recently outlined in a document entitled, “Diversity Plan: 2005-2010.” This proposal is being led by the Multicultural Affairs Committee and stands as a collaborative effort between representatives from Goshen College’s students, faculty, and administration. The Executive Summary of the document states that, “The Diversity Plan is an institution-wide effort to strengthen Goshen College’s commitment to racial and ethnic diversity and intercultural learning.”²⁶³ The committee seeks to implement its proposals through several existing bodies of the Goshen College community. These bodies include Academic and Student life, Alumni Affairs, and Community Affairs.²⁶⁴ Over a dozen organizations and programs have been or are in the process of being created in response to the planned proposal.²⁶⁵

Black Student Enrollment

While it is clear that many colleges, and certainly Goshen College included, have been involved with continuous efforts to increase the level of racial and ethnic minority diversity on their campuses, these efforts have not yielded high percentages for minority student enrollment. The 1980s showed a nationwide decline in African American college student enrollment figures. Since then, and into the late 1990s, the number of Black

²⁶²Background, Multicultural Affairs Office Handout, 2006.

²⁶³“Diversity Plan: 2005-2010, Executive Summary,” Nov.16, 2005. 2.

²⁶⁴Ibid., 3

²⁶⁵Ibid., 7.

students entering colleges has only slightly increased.²⁶⁶ This reality has also been continuously displayed in the past two decades at Goshen College. The percentage of Black students enrolled at Goshen College from the 1970s to the present has remained around 2 to 3 percent.²⁶⁷

THE FUTURE OF GC: BLACK=WHITE=MENNONITE?

An examination of the history of African American student enrollment at Goshen College from 1968-1983 offers significant insight into understanding the consistent struggle Goshen has had in recruiting and retaining a large number of Black students. The historical pattern reveals that Goshen was like many other institutions in its interests and efforts to increase diversity. However, the efforts of Goshen and other colleges were proved insufficient by their outcomes. Precisely because Goshen was not unlike most other institutions in this regard, the failure experienced by white colleges and universities in the United States to raise Black student enrollment significantly was also lived on Goshen's campus. In many ways, rhetoric fell short of action at Goshen College. The Anabaptist practice of resisting the norm was not upheld in Goshen College's relationship to African American student enrollment.

As evidenced in the history of white colleges around the country, more often, than not educational institutions are merely small representatives of a much larger system. Authors of *The Agony of Education: Black Students at White Colleges and Universities*, report "The predominantly white university is not an island of tolerance in an ocean of

²⁶⁶ Harvey, William B. *Minorities in Higher Education 2001-2002*. (American Council on Educating: Washington D.C., 2002), 27.

²⁶⁷ Percentages calculated according to student enrollment figures for each school year available in the Goshen College registrar's office from 1978-2005. Figures from 1980-2005 do not include part-time students.

intolerance, as it has often been pictured. From the Black perspective it is another major arena of everyday intolerance and racism.”²⁶⁸ The conundrum faced by Goshen College is certainly one faced by the Mennonite Church, the Christian church, America, and group identifies throughout the world. The essential question is whether any majority group is willing to give up some of the benefits of their privileged status in order to become a more inclusive group. Does this dominant group recognize that in broadening their group identity they will open themselves to the great variety of unique contributions that can be made by all individuals?

Goshen clearly values the need for building intercultural relationships and diversity, but their response to this desire has shown itself to be cyclical, always returning them to the place they started. Regina Shands-Stoltzfus questioned this ongoing pattern observed in minority student enrollment at Goshen College by asking, “How much of this is every generation having to deal with this and how much is a lack of progress?”²⁶⁹ Goshen’s history shows that the institution always stopped short of its efforts when it reached a point where actualizing its stated desire would require giving up or compromising some of its own identity which catered to its majority white, “ethnically” Mennonite, middle class culture. As Tony Brown observed, “Being politically correct is an important thing at Goshen...but taking that and operationalizing those ideas and taking specific steps that create change is another issue.”²⁷⁰ Bailey agreed that, “Goshen, like many Mennonite institutions, wanted diversity in race and ethnicity, but did not want to change its cultural climate or curriculum to meet the needs or interest areas of urban

²⁶⁸ Joe R. Feagin, Hernan Vera, and Nikitah Imani, *The Agony of Education*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), 47.

²⁶⁹ Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, interview by author, notes, Goshen, In., 15 March 2006

²⁷⁰ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

African American students.”²⁷¹ Brown assessed the institution’s attitude towards Blacks as being one of, “they can come here...but we’re a Mennonite college and they’re going to have to understand that.” He believed that as a result of that attitude, Goshen College didn’t provide the necessary infrastructure because they were unwilling to commit to all that it would mean to have African Americans at their institution. Brown also observed that Goshen had not yet made a full commitment to the African American Mennonite community or to the African American community at large. He guessed that if they did make a full commitment there would be an increased enrollment of Black students.²⁷²

After decades of evaluations, assessments, committees, and programs, Goshen should know what it needs to do. Perhaps the exceptional example offered by the University of Virginia in recent years can serve as a positive model for Goshen. The University of Virginia has been recognized nationally for its successful efforts in recruiting, retaining and graduating African Americans. This university, though in some ways different from a small private church-affiliated educational institution, can still be emulated by Goshen. Underlying the university’s success has been an “Afrocentered” approach to its recruitment and retention efforts. This “Afrocentered” approach was defined by:

...the importance of senior level administration’s commitment to institutional change, a seamless transition between recruitment and retention, the coexistence of Afrocentrism and Eurocentrism in student recruitment, the commitment of African Americans who view themselves as change agents, the cultivation of allies, students as “owners,” connecting the community to the university, and the need to communicate with “stewards of diversity” in the university community.²⁷³

²⁷¹ Wilma Bailey, interview by author, email, 27 February 2006.

²⁷² Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

²⁷³ Louis B. Gallien, Jr. and Marshalita Sims Peterson, *Instructing and Mentoring the African American College Student*, (Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005), 47-48.

It has been suggested that Goshen would never increase its number of minority faculty members until current faculty members were willing to give up some of their positions for them. This suggestion yields a larger question: Is the majority group found at Goshen College willing to give up something for the sake of the minority? Shands-Stoltzfus applauded Mennonites for being able to talk about difficult issues and build strategies to confront them, but she didn't think that the race issue could be properly addressed at Goshen or elsewhere in the Mennonite community without bumping into what she called, "white Mennonite guilt." This "guilt," she explained, arose out of Mennonites' long history of working for peace. Yet, because so much of their identity is invested in peace, it has created a blockade for them to really work at race issues. She concluded that it is difficult for Mennonites who are, "all about peace," to admit that they might be racist.²⁷⁴ With a similar assessment, Tony Brown maintained that, "The United States has had an ambivalent relationship with African Americans ever since they were free and if you put over top of that at Goshen a cultural lens of Germanic-Swiss heritage...then you've got that ambivalence." Lee Roy Berry also concluded that white Mennonites and African Americans have had a hard time understanding one another because of the historic division between Black and white in America. Furthermore, according to Berry, African Americans and white Mennonites have a hard time hearing one another's stories, because respecting the other's story of persecution seemingly demeans their own.²⁷⁵

Several African American alumni communicated their deep appreciation for all that Goshen College offered them, but the question remained whether the reverse was

²⁷⁴ Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, interview by author, notes, Goshen, In., 15 March 2006

²⁷⁵ Lee Roy Berry, interview by author, tape recording, Goshen, In., 10 March 2006.

true. Alumni Arvis Dawson said that attending Goshen provided him with the opportunity to, “achieve something and see some of the world.” He believed that a lot of the opportunities he had later in life were directly related to the opportunities he obtained at Goshen. He also stated, “If it weren’t for Goshen College I don’t know where I’d be now.”²⁷⁶ Yet, did Goshen believe that the African American community had something unique and important to offer it as well? Hubert Brown, in *Black and Mennonite*, quoted Irvin B. Horst as saying:

Frequently we (that is, the ethnic Mennonites) fail to appreciate the positive qualities of groups who are not of Swiss, German, or Dutch background.... Too seldom do we attract others from outside our circles and when we do, we rarely extend to them the full social privileges accorded an individual in our own group.²⁷⁷

Did the minimal hiring of Black faculty over several decades, despite the ongoing requests of students, serve as an implied response to this question? Hubert Brown poses a similar question in his book, arguing that the low number of African Americans found within Mennonite institutions gave support to the racist assumption that Blacks were unimportant.²⁷⁸ Since the first hiring of an African American faculty member at Goshen in 1969, the vast majority hired in subsequent years have only served as part time or adjuncts.²⁷⁹ Even Goshen’s first Black faculty member was brought to the institution by his own initiative rather than any active effort by the college to seek him out.²⁸⁰

As a former GC student, James Logan held that before Goshen College could really take active steps to combat its racism, it had to admit that it was an inherently racist

²⁷⁶ Arvis Dawson, interview by author, notes, Elkhart, In., 13 March 2006.

²⁷⁷ Brown, *Black and Mennonite*, 29.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁷⁹ David Janzen, interview by author, notes, 3 February, 2006

²⁸⁰ Lee Roy Berry, interview by author, tape recording, Goshen, In., 10 March 2006.

institution because of the power dynamics in the way that society is structured.²⁸¹ Tony Brown asserted that Goshen must confront an ongoing challenge to be, as he saw it, less exclusive, less ethnocentric, and more open to how African American students can enhance and bring strengths to the community.²⁸² Shands-Stoltzfus communicated her hope that Goshen would remain in a sustained, on-going effort to diversify, rather than only doing so when it was trend.²⁸³ Ersery also felt that in order to increase its percentage of African Americans, Goshen would have to embrace, cultivate, and encourage diversity based on the assumption that it would provide the institution with something positive.²⁸⁴ Authors of *The Agony of Education* maintain that assimilation will have to go two ways between African Americans and whites to achieve full integration at predominantly white colleges. They go on to describe what this process might look like:

Two-way integration means that white administrators, faculty members, staff, members, and students listen carefully to African American students and parents, individually and collectively, and make major adjustments in their own attitudes and perspectives, as well as alterations in discriminatory practices in all areas of campus life.²⁸⁵

Can Goshen College push its own envelope or will it continue to market to those willing to accommodate or assimilate to its pre-established majority culture? Lee Roy Berry believed that to African Americans, Mennonites are still white.²⁸⁶ Everette Ersery suspected that the low percentage of African Americans at Goshen was a part of its design.²⁸⁷ James Logan sensed during his time as a student at Goshen that African (non-American/international) students were being more embraced by the college community because they were seemingly more willing to accommodate to a white-Mennonite

²⁸¹ James Logan, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 7 March 2006.

²⁸² Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

²⁸³ Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, interview by author, notes, Goshen, In., 15 March 2006

²⁸⁴ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

²⁸⁵ Feagin, Vera, and Imani, *The Agony of Education*, 155-156.

²⁸⁶ Lee Roy Berry, interview by author, tape recording, Goshen, In., 10 March 2006.

²⁸⁷ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

expectation.²⁸⁸ Ersery agreed that Goshen as a Mennonite school seemed to have little to do with the experience of African Americans in the United States.²⁸⁹ Brown's book observed that the Anabaptist tradition should be made available to all people, not simply those with a European heritage.²⁹⁰ Tony Brown identified as a major problem the fact that there is still an understanding amongst Mennonites that being a Mennonite is linked to, "some historical, traditional, biological definition." He added that these causes of separation were based on quite superficial barriers.²⁹¹ Shands-Stoltzfus, who along with her family is still active in the Mennonite church, said that she wanted her children to own the church as much as she has. Can Goshen move beyond defining itself by "Menno-white" standards?

Efforts to increase racial diversity at Goshen would not force the institution to compromise any of the philosophical or theological pillars upon which it was founded. None of the institution's core values are in conflict with sacrificing the comforts of a Mennonite identity defined by a Euro-American, white, middle class ethos in order to construct a new Mennonite identity. Logan expressed his own belief that Goshen should not give up its Mennonite identity in its efforts to increase racial diversity.²⁹² As Hubert Brown clearly suggests, one can be Black *AND* Mennonite.²⁹³ This suggestion should apply not only at an individual, but also at an institutional level. Several alumni, such as James Logan, are still involved with the Mennonite church after leaving Goshen.²⁹⁴ Both Shands-Stoltzfus and Brown indicated that they felt as if they had something unique to

²⁸⁸ James Logan, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 7 March 2006.

²⁸⁹ Everette Ersery, interview by author, email, 7 March 2006.

²⁹⁰ Brown, *Black and Mennonite*, 10.

²⁹¹ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

²⁹² James Logan, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 7 March 2006.

²⁹³ Brown, *Black and Mennonite*, 116.

²⁹⁴ James Logan, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 7 March 2006.

contribute to Mennonite theology and culture. Because of this belief both have remained active with Mennonite churches, agencies, and institutions since departing from Goshen.²⁹⁵ Admiring the commitment of Mennonite theology to peace, justice, and reconciliation, Shands-Stoltzfus, saw it as a part of her own mission to help the church keep that commitment, particularly by addressing the reality of race relations in the church. Shands-Stoltzfus said that it must be the institutions of the church that, “grab hold and work out those issues in their individual contexts.”²⁹⁶

The Anabaptist tradition was centered on modeling the progressive ideal even when it was not practiced in the larger society. Can Goshen College, as a Mennonite institution, practice the Anabaptist model to which it is so deeply linked? As the early Anabaptists provided a reformed model for the church and secular society, can Goshen set a model both for the Mennonite church and the world at large? The essential priority of the Anabaptist vision was to put words into action. The cliché, “Practice what you preach,” echoes the sentiments of the early Anabaptists. Centuries later, Goshen College is left to decide how its own practices will reflect its stated institutional values. In response to learning about the current number of Black students enrolled at Goshen, Tony Brown felt the number should be significantly higher precisely because of the institution’s cross-cultural emphasis. He also remarked on the irony of the significant involvement of Mennonites abroad, while not taking time to form more meaningful relationships with African Americans and he criticized Goshen College for not being as strong in its abilities to relate cross-culturally with African American students as it did

²⁹⁵ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

²⁹⁶ Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, interview by author, notes, Goshen, In., 15 March 2006

with international students.²⁹⁷ The Anabaptist tradition calls for non-conformity to the ways of the world and complete conformity to Christ. Goshen should be willing to act on re-defining its Mennonitism beyond a limited social ethos, precisely because this too was the practice of Christ. Christ radically defined a religion to make it more inclusive, and with Christ at the center of its core values, Goshen must make it a priority to continue to act out this vision. As Shands-Stoltzfus concluded in regard to the Mennonite church's statements on increasing diversity, "If we're not actively involved in making this a true statement, we need to stop saying it."²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ Tony Brown, interview by author, tape recording, phone, 10 March 2006.

²⁹⁸ Regina Shands-Stoltzfus, interview by author, notes, Goshen, In., 15 March 2006

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