

Highlights of Annual Black Student, Faculty, and Administrator Report

The University of Alabama System recently filed its Annual Remedial Decree Report with the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, as required by the court in the *Knight v. Alabama* litigation. That lawsuit was initially brought in 1983 alleging that remnants of a segregated “system” of public, four-year higher education continued to exist in Alabama, and the suit produced remedial orders in 1991 and 1995. The case is now in a monitoring phase extending until 2005, and each year the reports from UAS and the other four-year institutions are combined by ACHE into a consolidated report that is then filed with the court. The annual report focuses on minority student, faculty, and upper-level administrator enrollment/employment at each institution as of the past year, which for this year’s report was Fall 2000.

For UAH, the enrollment of black students maintained a general positive trend since 1991, the first year for which reporting was mandated. Although enrollment of all students declined this past year, the percentage of black students remained essentially level at 13%. Since 1991, black enrollment has increased from 5.4% to its current level, and the number of black students has grown from 469 to 853, which represents an increase of over 80%. Recruitment efforts, minority scholarships, and the activities of the UAH Office of Multicultural Affairs have contributed significantly to the University’s success in attracting and retaining greater numbers of African-American students.

A combination of hires/promotions and departures occurred the past year with respect to UAH black faculty and upper-level administrators. The latter remained at 6, while full-time black faculty experienced a drop to 7 (from 9 the previous year). Since 1991, the number of black faculty has ranged from a low of 5 to a high of 9. The number of black administrators began at one in 1991, gradually increased to 8 in 1998, and then, with terminations due to resignation and retirement, has stood at 6 for the past three years.

The University of Alabama System institutions, viewed together, have demonstrated significant progress in enhancing black enrollment. While overall enrollment of all students declined by 3,552 for the UAS institutions from Fall 1991 through Fall 2000, black enrollment increased by 2,086 students and black representation grew from 11% to more than 17%. Nearly one-fourth of all African-American students enrolled in Alabama’s four year public institutions (including Alabama A&M University and Alabama State University) are presently attending a UAS institution. As of 1997, when considered among the 149 public research and doctoral institutions (excluding those that are historically black), UAB ranked 5th, UAH ranked 22nd, and UA ranked 27th in the percentage of black enrollment. African-American representation among full-time black faculty and upper-level administrators at UAS institutions increased by 56% over the period from 1991 through 2000, going from 95 to 148.

While this record is favorable, it is important that UAH and the other institutions continue and even augment efforts to attract black students and employees. The United States and a class of black citizens known as the “Knight class,” the two plaintiffs in the lawsuit, will be filing this Fall written comments on the extent of compliance by the historically white institutions (HWIs) with their duties under the court’s remedial orders. In the past, the Knight

class has been quite critical of the affirmative action efforts and results of the HWIs. UAH, along with several other institutions, was directed by the court in 1991 to show “material improvement” in the number of black upper-level administrators. While UAH was not placed under a similar duty with respect to black students and black faculty, those areas remain subject to general scrutiny. To insure that UAH will be judicially exonerated in 2005, the entire campus community will need to continue working to make UAH a place that is congenial to individuals of all races to work and to learn. In addition, it is critical that some progress be made each year between now and then to add black faculty and administrators and to maintain the institution’s current, positive momentum in attracting black students in greater numbers.