Book Reviews

Richardson (Richard C.) & Bender (Louis W.): *Fostering Minority Access and Achievement in Higher Education: The Role of Urban Community Colleges and Universities*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1987, 244 p. (£26.00)
ISBN 1-55542-053-2 (Cloth).

The Jossey-Bass Higher Education Series is a major United States publishing venture which generally produces two kinds of books: works of theory and analysis which examine various aspects of higher education, with or without specific recommendations; and handbooks for administrators which deal with specific problems, organizational issues, tactics, etc. *Fostering Minority Access and Achievement in Higher Education* falls into the second category; that is, it is most usefully characterized as a handbook for administrators in urban colleges and universities who are directly involved with the problem of minority under-representation in American higher education.

As the authors make clear, under-representation is a continuing problem that was first identified along with other aspects of disadvantage in the 1960s and which has not yet been solved by the 'war' on poverty, the 'great society' or any more recent programmes. Indeed, it would be fair to say that current educational policy at the federal level in the United States seems unconcerned with under-representation as being a problem at all. In some sense, then, the authors are stating a problem and offering specific assistance in an area which, while of direct concern to higher education institutions, is not at present taken very seriously by federal policy-makers.

The book begins with a discussion of the dimensions of under-representation and in particular relates it to the context of urban community colleges and universities. The second chapter explores some conflict between institutional cultures found in community colleges and universities and points to the problems for minority students transferring from college to university. Chapter three identifies the wide range of educational and student support practises found in colleges that are designed to deal with some of the problems identified in the previous chapter. In chapter four, university policies are treated a bit more critically and a number are identified that actually make the process of minority students transferring to, and succeeding in, universities more difficult. One general criticism of the book which this reviewer would like to identify is that it is less critical than it should be. The authors take every opportunity to praise, or at least describe very neutrally, too many institutional practises and policies. In some cases a sharper critique might have made their larger point more strongly and provided more interesting reading. The book goes on to offer suggestions about what state level policies could do given the fact that most community colleges and many urban universities are state institutions. Chapters six and seven provide both a profile of minority students from the faculty point of view and the students' own perspectives based on autobiographical essays. This is particularly important since this reviewer is reasonably certain that neither form of profile is voiced in membership of a minority group. These chapters provide important insights on actual students involved in real programmes and problems. The final three chapters make recommendations for administrators at the institutional level, answer research questions that organized the initial research on which the book is based, and finally recommend institutional and state policy.

Fostering Minority Access and Achievement in Higher Education, as I indicated above, is a handbook rather than a critical analysis of educational policy, which in some sense is unfortunate since the issue itself, the continued under-representation of minority students desperately needs a more fundamental analysis. Nevertheless, there are many useful ideas in the book and it should, I believe, be in the hands of every assistant dean charged with the responsibility for the admission of minority students in the United States.

For the non-US readers, the book may be somewhat less useful but it still provides an overview with significant data on the problem itself. The critical analysis of this issue still remains to be written.

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