Engineering Lures Top Talent

256 Blacks In Carnegie-Mellon Action Project

Three times more blacks are engineering students at Carnegie-Mellon University than at most other engineering schools throughout the country, according to a recent study by Engineering Manpower Bulletin. While black students make up only 3.6% of the nation's engineering undergraduates (5.1% for freshmen), at CMU 10.5% of the engineering students are black (15.8% for freshmen).

"We earned our leadership in providing quality, technical education for minorities by developing an engineering program that works," says Marion Oliver, director of the nine-year-old Carnegie-Mellon Action Project (C-MAP). Since C-MAP recruited the first 24 black students to its summer program in 1968, the focus of its recruiting efforts has shifted to increase the number of minority engineering students with satisfying results.

Today, there are 256 C-MAP students at CMU. Of those students, 141 are studying engineering and 25, science. "We are living in an age of technology," notes Dr. Oliver, who believes that a technological background is the key to getting into the middle and upper socio-economic classes. "We expect our students to take advantage of the top notch facilities at CMU and develop marketable technical skills."

Black students are competing effectively and making the grade. In 1974, Leonard Bell, a chemical engineering student from Cleveland, now working with General Foods, accepted the symbolic degree for the graduating engineering class.

During that same year, Keith McDonald, now C-MAP's research director, was named the outstanding junior in the Civil Engineering Department. The leading student in this year's sophomore class, with a perfect 4.0 average, is Michael Alston, an electrical engineering major from Baltimore. His girlfriend, Angela Hordatt, chemical engineering student from Roosevelt, New York, is also among the top ten students in the class, with a 3.6 average.

CMU faculty and staff attribute much of the program's success to a tight organizational structure which enables black students to receive the best opportunity to graduate with an engineering or science degree.

Every year entering C-MAP freshmen and selected high school juniors are put through an intensive summer academic program designed to increase their mathematical and communicative skills before they begin the fall term. High school juniors are included to give these minority students an early introduction to the various fields of engineering.

A novel aspect of this program is that one course, Introduction to Engineering, is taught entirely by volunteers from some of the nation's leading firms. ALCOA, Gulf Oil Corporation, Koppers and United States Steel each supplying a volunteer to teach for one week.

Although C-MAP students come from as far away as California and Texas, as well as New York, Ohio, West Virginia, New Jersey and Maryland, most come from an all-black environment and rarely attended school with white students before. Therefore, the pressure of adjustment is added to the stringent academic demands.

"It's a big change being thrown into a totally different culture," Dr. Oliver points out. "Black students are different from most white students who usually come from better schools and living environments." Perhaps a more significant problem is voiced by graduating senior Nadine "Joy" Turner of Cleveland: "A number of black students have family pressures.

"In most cases, they are the only person in the family doing well or going to college. They are told at home that they are going to make it for the whole family."

According to Dr. Norman Johnson, C-MAP's first director and now associate dean of the university's Graduate School of Urban and Public Affairs (SUPA), similar minority education programs at other schools aren't doing well because they have not learned to use the retention model developed by predominately black colleges and universities.

"The model is a very simple one," explains Dr. Johnson. "When you don't attend class, study, and work hard, we tell you to leave. Psychological games do not work here. We put the word out to the CMU faculty: don't take any foolishness from a black student."

C-MAP provides support services aimed at meeting the students' needs for help when the going gets tough. In addition to academic and personal counseling, the staff has developed a faculty network which monitors student progress and alerts the C-MAP office if students are doing poorly. "Black students have neither the opportunity nor the luxury to shirk their responsibility," says Dr. Cordell Richardson, the program's Director of Student Services. "The students simply cannot afford it."

University response to the program is positive. "The C-MAP program has been an extremely successful one," says university President Richard M. Cyert, "because it has greatly increased the number of blacks at CMU without compromising our academic standards. Much of this success is due to the intensive summer program which aids black students in adapting to the pace necessary for effective work at this university."

Herbert L. Toor, dean of

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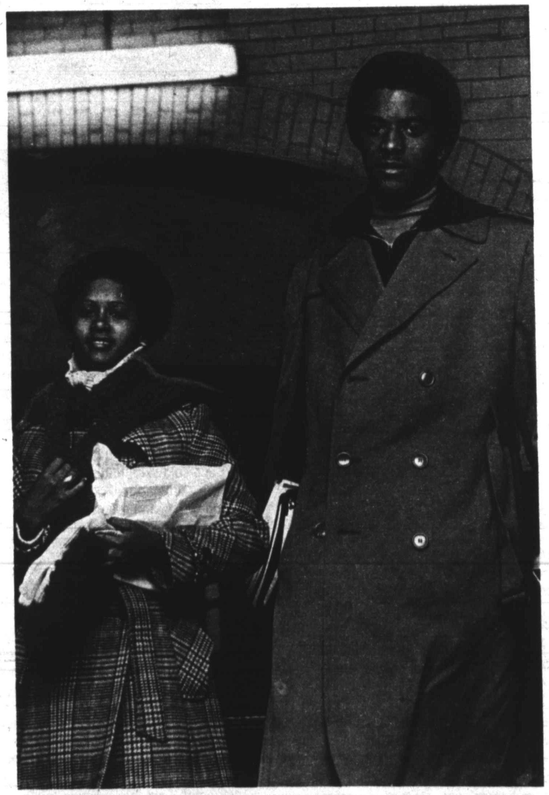

Michael Alston of Baltimore and Angela Hordatt of Roosevelt, New York have much in common. The sophomores are not only sweethearts at Pittsburgh's Carnegie-Mellon University, they also rank among their class's top engineering students. Michael's 4.0 average in electrical engineering is first in the class and Angela, with a 3.6 average in chemical engineering, is fourth.

General Motors Salutes BLACK NEWSPAPERS 150 Years of Achievement

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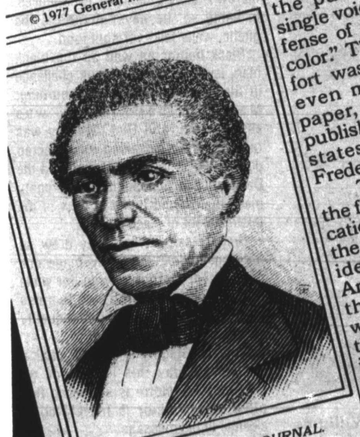

John B. Russwurm, co-founder of FREEDOM'S JOURNAL.

It is with great pride that we salute the 150th anniversary of Black newspapers in America. Throughout much of America's history, it was against the law for Black people to learn to read, write, and more importantly, to express opinions concerning their own destiny.

On Friday, March 16, 1827, FREEDOM'S JOURNAL, the first Black newspaper was published. It was created by Samuel E. Cornish, a Black minister, and John B. Russwurm, one of America's first Black college graduates. They were two men whose firm belief was that, "there ought to be some channel of communication between us and the public through which a single voice may be heard in defense of 500,000 free people of color." This great pioneering effort was then followed by the even more celebrated newspaper, THE NORTH STAR, published by the great Black statesman and abolitionist, Frederick Douglass.

These newspapers provided the first means of real communication between Black people and the only unified voice of Black ideas and opinion to white America. The Black press told the story when no one else would, and served as an inspiration to those dedicated to equality and freedom in the United States of America.

Today, more than 200 Black newspapers with over two million circulation are still expressing those key issues. We salute their achievements and their strong contribution toward maintaining the free exchange of ideas among all people living in America today.

Frederick Douglass, abolitionist and founder of THE NORTH STAR.

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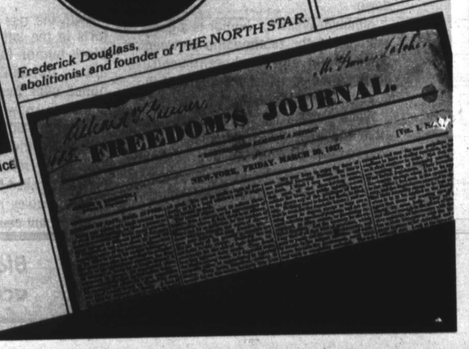

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MARK OF EXCELLENCE