

ceived the highest possible score on both tests. Among this group of 453 high scorers on the SAT were 288 whites and 101 Asian Americans.

In 1997, 110,462 black students took the SAT. Forty-three black students scored an 800 on the verbal portion of the SAT and 24 scored an 800 on the math section of the test. Only 3 of the 110,462 black students who took the SAT in 1997 scored 800 on both the math and verbal portions. This is less than three hundredths of a percent of all black SAT test takers.

Therefore, there were nearly 100 times as many white students as black students who scored 1600 on the SAT. Overall, blacks made up 9.8 percent of all students who took the SAT but only 0.6 percent of all students who received the highest possible score of 1600.

SAT scores among the most elite test takers tell us little about the serious obstacles facing large numbers of African Americans who aspire to enter America's most selective institutions. However, these test scores do suggest that a new system of race-blind admissions will cut a major swath through the relatively large and growing cohort of African Americans who are entering and making their way through America's most rigorous institutions of higher learning.

Explaining the Black-White SAT Gap

In 1997 black students had a mean score of 423 on the math portion of the Scholastic Assessment Test. These test scores, along with scores on the verbal portion of the test, are commonly used in deciding academic qualifications for college. The 1997 mean score for blacks on the math test was 103 points below the mean score of white students. Clearly one of the reasons black students score so low is that they are not tracked into college preparatory classes where they will master the math skills necessary to achieve success on the math SAT.

Percentage of White and Minority Students in Certain Urban School Districts Who Have Taken and Passed Introductory Algebra by the End of Tenth Grade

School District	White	Minorities
Birmingham, Alabama	90%	45%
Fresno, California	70	57
Bridgeport, Connecticut	62	40
Broward County, Florida	71	51
Minneapolis, Minnesota	80	58
Clark County, Nevada	60	39
Rochester, New York	73	48
Cleveland, Ohio	42	32
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	58	43

Source: Unpublished data from a survey conducted by Education Week.

CalTech: The Whitest of the Nation's 25 Highest-Ranked Universities

CalTech is one of the most academically rigorous and at the same time the whitest of the nation's 25 highest-ranked universities. Despite the administration's lip service to the goal of further student and faculty diversity, the results are insignificant.

The California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, California, ranks close to the top among the nation's most selective and prestigious institutions of higher learning. It occupies position 10 in this year's *U.S. News & World Report* ratings of academic standing. Because of its superior educational resources and generous offerings of financial aid, CalTech also was rated as the

"There are 18 full-time black faculty members at MIT, nine times the number at CalTech. Princeton University has two black faculty members in its mathematics department alone, the same number of black professors on the entire CalTech faculty."

1997 "Best College Buy" by *Money* magazine. Yet measured by standard statistics CalTech has been unable, or unwilling, to take steps to diversify its faculty and student body. Today, black students make up only 0.9 percent of the student body at CalTech. In 1995 there were no black students in the freshman class. For the current freshman class there were 30 black applicants to CalTech, 9 of whom were accepted. Two black students enrolled. There are only 2 African Americans on CalTech's 285-member faculty. This is by far the lowest total number and lowest percentage of black faculty at any of the nation's 25 highest-ranked universities. There is indeed a host of reasons why blacks in America have a tough time qualifying for admission at an extremely rigorous school such as CalTech. Yet even when these forces are taken into account, the CalTech record is wholly unacceptable.

CalTech maintains that it is working to increase student and faculty diversity. Zaragoza Guerra, assistant dean of admissions at CalTech, notes that the university has initiated several programs that target minority students. For example, CalTech declares that it targets high schools with a large concentration of black students and invites these students to participate in a Saturday acade-

CalTech Is by Far the Whitest of the Nation's Highest-Ranked Universities

Black Enrollments as a Percentage of Total Enrollments, 1995

California Institute of Technology	0.9 %
University of Notre Dame	2.9
Cornell University	3.6
Tufts University	3.6
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	3.7
University of Chicago	3.8
Carnegie Mellon University	4.0
Rice University	4.7
Vanderbilt University	4.8

Source: U.S. Department of Education.

my, a college-preparatory tutorial program. In addition, through direct mail, CalTech contacts black tenth-graders with a strong interest and performance background in math and science. Prospective applicants are sent a "search piece" which invites them to find out more about the school. Despite these efforts, it appears that almost nothing has been accomplished.

Dean Guerra concedes that a major problem in recruiting black students is the extremely low number of African-American faculty members. Stephen L. Mayo, assistant professor of biology, is one of only two black professors at CalTech. He attributes the scarcity of black applicants and enrollees to what he calls "a tiny pool" of qualified African Americans. Mayo, who is a member of the biology department's graduate school admissions committee, says that the committee receives between two and four applications a year from black students. He suggests that the key to increasing black applicants at CalTech lies in generating an interest in math and science among black students at the primary school level and by improving the state of public primary and high school education.

The MIT Comparison

But the CalTech story is not entirely credible. The record of CalTech in diversifying its faculty and student body must be viewed in sharp contrast to its East Coast peer institution, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. There are more than 300 black students at MIT making up nearly 4 percent of the student body. This is

more than three times the percentage of black students at CalTech. This year the black freshman class at MIT is nearly 6 percent black. Other less prestigious, but still academically strong, universities that concentrate in technology such as Georgia Tech, Carnegie Mellon, and the Rochester Institute of Technology have even higher percentages of blacks in their student bodies than MIT.

There are 18 full-time black faculty members at MIT, nine times the number that are at CalTech. Princeton University has two black faculty members in its mathematics department alone, the same number as black professors on the entire CalTech faculty. Clearly CalTech takes pride in its academic selectivity. Off the record, many faculty members will declare that black people just can't cut the academic mustard at CalTech. But the strong results at highly selective MIT and Princeton University clearly refute this position. The MIT results particularly demonstrate that the "tiny pool of applicants" argument is pretty much a red herring obscuring a half hearted commitment at CalTech to racial diversification.

CalTech is one of the great educational institutions in the nation. But it appears to have a cocky self-assurance that it is the best and it need not bother with such soft social issues as racial diversity. The question is whether under its present racial policies this great institution of higher learning can retain its superb academic presence in American society in which non-Hispanic white people will become a racial minority by the year 2050.

