

Minority enrollment drops at UCLA after Prop 209, numbers show

V. Dion Haynes
Chicago Tribune

LOS ANGELES - Leaning against a wall on the Bruin Walk, the main pedestrian thoroughfare at UCLA, Rachel Manning recalled the glory days in the not-too-distant past when African Americans were much more visible on campus.

Every week she'd look forward to "Black Wednesday" when African-American students would congregate on the Bruin Walk between noon and 2 p.m. to socialize and watch the fraternities dazzle them with fancy footwork in their step shows.

"People would skip class to come. Bruin Walk would be filled with a couple hundred" black students, said Manning, 19, a sophomore.

Now on Black Wednesday she said, "You only see spurts of black people - maybe five or six at a time. It's really sad."

On Monday UCLA released

figures indicating a noticeable decline in the number of black students who enrolled as freshmen this fall, the first class to be selected after the implementation of the 1996 anti-affirmative action law known as Proposition 209.

This year, 160 black freshmen enrolled, compared with 230 in 1997. African Americans account for 4.2 percent of the 3,775-member freshman class, down from 6.5 percent in 1997.

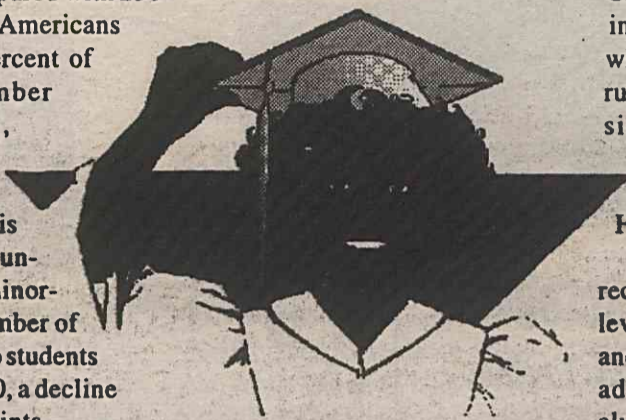
The dropoff is similar for other under-represented minority groups. The number of Chicano and Latino students fell to 485 from 590, a decline of 4 percentage points.

The American Indian enrollment fell to 15 from 40. American Indians make up 0.4 percent of the freshman class, compared with 1.1 percent last year.

The figures aren't surpris-

ing to Manning and UCLA officials, who have seen the tangible results of the law, which prohibits public universities throughout California from using race and gender as admissions factors.

"We are very disappointed that fewer under-represented minorities have enrolled as freshmen



this year, and we are determined to do what we can within the law to boost the number of these students attending the university," said Albert Carnesale, UCLA's chancellor.

"Students learn not only from their professors but from each other, and they benefit most when their classmates reflect many different backgrounds, experiences and cultures," he added.

The University of California has yet to release freshmen enrollment figures for its other campuses. The figures for Berkeley likely will mirror UCLA's, given that admissions of African-

American, Latino and American-Indian students plummeted by 66 percent, 52.6 percent and 60.9 percent, respectively.

Meanwhile, the enrollment of blacks and Hispanics at Boalt Hall, Berkeley's law school, has started to rebound.

In August, eight black students and 23 Hispanics enrolled in the first-year class. Last year, when the anti-affirmative action rules went into effect for University of California graduate schools, only one black and 14 Hispanics enrolled at Boalt Hall.

Still, Boalt Hall has not yet recovered its pre-Proposition 209 levels of 1996 when 26 Hispanics and 20 blacks enrolled. Berkeley administrators, students and alumni associations made concerted efforts to persuade candidates who had been accepted to attend Boalt Hall and not some other school. The candidates were even offered scholarships of \$5,000 by minority bar associations.

In addition, Boalt Hall officials amended the application process, giving less weight to graduates of elite institutions and more weight to candidates who come from poor backgrounds. Next year, admissions officials at the school plan to establish new criteria - an interview and another aptitude test - in an attempt to boost minority enrollment.

"We think that the kind of diversity we had when we were able to use affirmative action created a law school that maximized education because we had diverse

points of view," said Lujana Treadwell, assistant dean of the school. "We'd like to see that again."

Sentiment against Proposition 209 as well as opposition to a Board of Regents anti-affirmative action policy still runs high. Two weeks ago, hundreds of students and instructors throughout the university system protested Proposition 209 by walking out of classrooms and staging teach-ins.

UCLA officials are working to help improve instruction at several Los Angeles public schools and community colleges with high concentrations of black and Hispanic students, a long-range plan to help students better prepare for the university.

"We are trying to raise instruction and raise expectations for students so that we can get more eligible (blacks and Hispanics) into our applicant pool," said Jeff Cooper, assistant to the director of UCLA's academic advancement program.

In the meantime, older black students at UCLA have attempted to take the black freshmen under their wing, hoping to give them a sense of belonging while preparing them for being, in some cases, the only African-Americans in their classes.

"Last week we had a sleepover for the freshmen students to get to know them," said senior Michael Scates, 21, a psychology major.

"We're trying to develop a mentor-mentee relationship."

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