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REQUIESCAT: The Graduate Studies Program at Savannah State College, 1968-1971

—James A. Eaton

FOREWORD

At the beginning of the summer quarter in 1968, a promising, new graduate studies program at Savannah State College, duly approved by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, opened its doors to its first classes. At the end of the summer quarter 1971, that same graduate studies program, by action of the same Board of Regents, closed its doors as an independent program upon its last classes. As of September 1, 1971, it was to become part of the then-called "Savannah Graduate Center", sponsored jointly by Armstrong State College and Savannah State College, both located in Savannah. Armstrong was originally created to be a "predominantly white" college; Savannah State was created to be a "black" college. The lure of offering graduate courses had led to a marriage, which, at least in the South, was so unusual as to be worthy of a few raised eyebrows.

The thirteen quarters of operation through which the Savannah State College program existed had been momentous ones from any angle one wished to look. But if one wanted to be objective, there were statistics—cold, hard numbers—that indicated soothing, warm thoughts of success and acceptance, even social change brought about by the program. Three classes of graduates had had the degrees of Master of Science in Elementary Education conferred upon them. Both the Southern Association of Colleges and the Georgia State Department of Education had approved the program. Although offered at a predominantly black college, the program had never been a totally black program. Transient students had been able to take courses through the program to transfer to other colleges and universities, not only in Georgia but in other states as well. Students were satisfied, as shown by their responses to a survey, that they were in an academically respectable program. Alumni from the program looked back and said it was good to have been there.

Thirteen quarters of growth and freedom. And then it was no more. Let this last study of the cold, objective facts about admission during the last four quarters stand as a memorial to a thirteen quarter program that was perhaps too successful for its own good.

REQUIESCAT: THE GRADUATE STUDIES PROGRAM AT SAVANNAH STATE COLLEGE, 1968-1971

Careful attention has been given to the accepted applicants for the graduate program at Savannah State College since its commencement in the summer quarter of 1968, because it has been felt that these admissions concealed a great wealth of information (1) about the present and the future of the graduate program, (2) about the types of teachers and academic quality of teachers in the local public schools (since the program has been up to now geared to in-service teachers), and, finally, in an indirect manner, (3) about some facets of social change in the Savannah area. Data from the accepted applicants during the 1970-71 school year — the third full year of operation of the graduate program — seem to point out the value of this rather careful attention and of its revelations relative to the above-mentioned three points.

For purposes of this paper, the 1970-71 school year is defined to include the fall quarter of 1970 and the winter, spring and summer quarters of 1971.

Number of Admissions

During the four quarters of the 1970-71 school year, a total of 165 persons were admitted to the graduate program in one category or the other. The fall quarter saw 50 admissions; the winter quarter, 29; the spring quarter, 17; and the summer quarter, 69. These figures are closely related to those of the 1969-70 school year, but they take on additional significance when compared to the admissions of the 1968-69 school year when a total of 123 persons were admitted — 13 in the fall, 12 in the winter, 17 in the spring, and 81 in the summer. (See Table 1 which follows.)

Table 1

Comparison on Admissions — 1968-1969 and 1970-71

	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	Total
1968-69	13	12	17	81	123
1970-71	50	29	17	69	165

Sexual Distribution of Admitted Applicants

In addition to mere numbers, attention has been given to the ratio of males to females entering the program. This is a concern for several reasons, but the greatest is to see if the program is making a substantial contribution to increasing the number of men going into the elementary school classrooms.

Of the 165 admissions during 1970-71, 33, or 20%, were men. The largest number were admitted during the spring quarter. (See Table 2.)

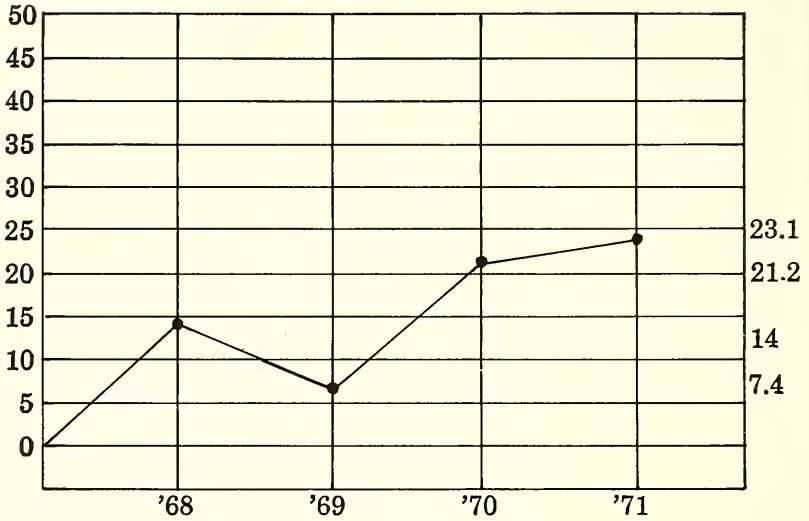
Table 2
Admissions by Sex

	MEN		WOMEN	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Fall, 1970	7	14	43	86
Winter, 1971	3	10.3	26	89.7
Spring, 1971	7	41.1	10	58.8
Summer, 1971	16	23.1	53	76.9
Total for Year	33	20	132	80

While women continue to have a sizeable major of the graduate admissions, the percentage (as well as the number) of men students has been increasing. For example, the number of students entering during the summer is always larger than any other. Table 3 indicates that the percentage of men, included in the summer admissions during the four summers from 1968 through 1971, has shown a significant increase.

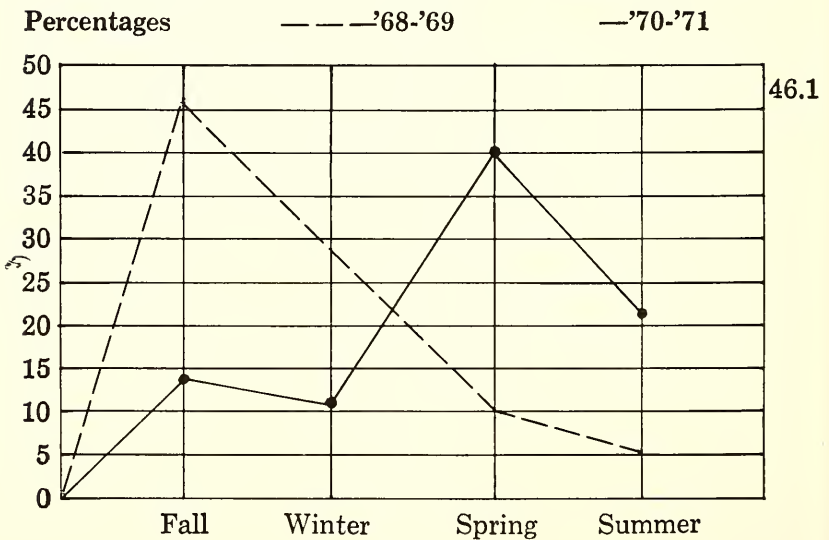
Table 3

Male Admissions by Percentages (Summers)



A comparison of male admissions during 1968-69 with 1970-71 makes an interesting chart when looked at percentage-wise, yet it still indicates an increase in the number of men entering the program. (See Table 4.) One is left wondering what factors account for the differences in quarters of peak percentages.

Table 4: Male Admissions — 1968-69 Compared to 1970-71



Racial Distribution

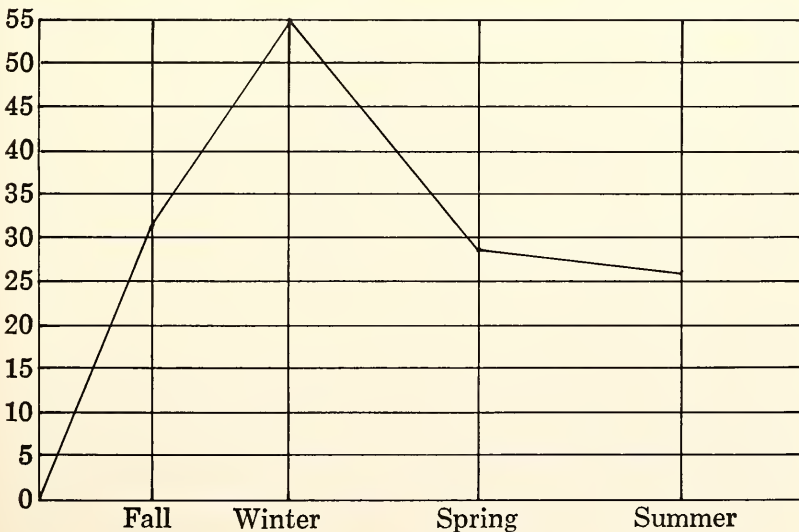
There is a saying that the graduate program at Savannah State is the most truly integrated program in the public supported colleges of the State. Be that true or only partially true, the program has from the beginning had a racial mixture of both faculty members and students. Consider first of all that Savannah State was a totally black school less than ten years ago. Yet, for the three years the graduate program has been in existence, never has the "graduate faculty" been less than 30 percent white. During some quarters, it has actually been 60 percent white (based upon the instructors actually teaching courses during that quarter.)

The number of white students in the program has been steadily increasing since the program began. During the 1970-71 school year, 5.5 percent of the total admissions were white men and 28.4 percent were white women, giving a 33.9 percent total admissions to whites for the year. (What predominantly white graduate program in Georgia can boast today of a 30 percent black faculty and a 33.9 percent black student body?**) Table 5 indicates the percentage of whites admitted during each quarter of the 1970-71 school year. The 55% admission in the winter quarter indicates another trend that reached a new peak that quarter: the growing tendency of students working for masters degrees at other colleges to take courses at Savannah State to be transferred elsewhere. Most of the transfer students this quarter came from the University of Georgia and Georgia Southern College, although a few black students transferred courses to a number of other colleges including well-known universities both on the East coast and the West coast. (See Table 5.)

Table 5

Percentages

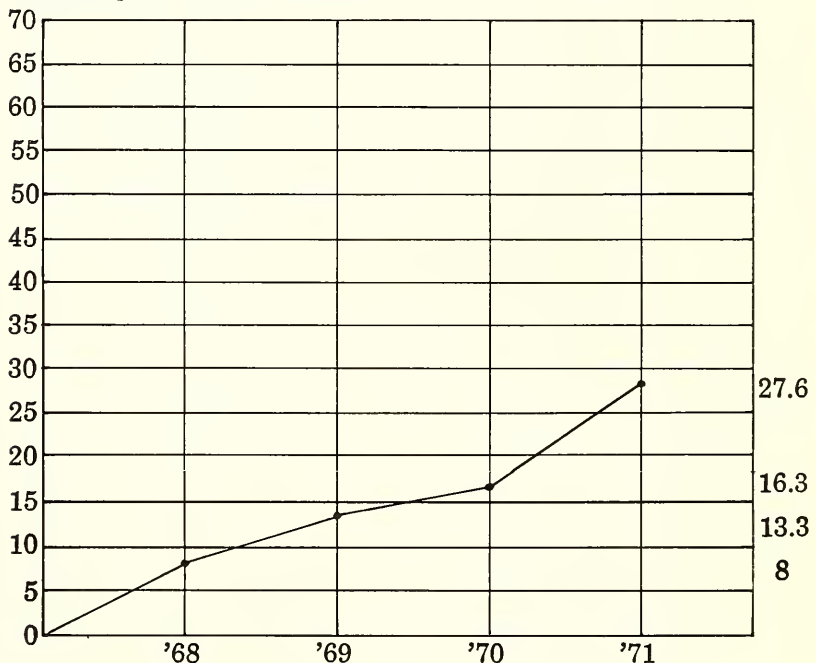
White Admissions 1970-71



Once again a look at the summer admissions gives an interesting, graphic picture of how white admissions climbed from 8 percent in the summer of '68 to 27.6 percent in the summer of '71. (See Table 6.) This is a significant indication that the program offered both academically and socially something the whites wanted and could accept. It is very seriously doubted that any of them could honestly say they found a program that compromised its academic integrity. A survey of graduate student opinions made in 1969, including both black and white students, indicated that most of them considered the atmosphere of the graduate program was of such a nature as to motivate scholarly work. A total of 31.03 percent rated it "very highly conducive"; 55.17 percent rated it "highly conducive"; and 13.79 percent rated it "moderately conducive." No student rated it as "weak" or "poor". White students participate in all activities and one of the two student-elected student representatives to the Graduate Council is white. (See Table 6.)

Table 6

Percentage Summer Admissions By Race (White)



Cumulative Averages

The undergraduate cumulative average is one, but not the sole, basis for admission to graduate study. Like most state institutions in Georgia, a 2.50 (C+) minimum is expected, although an occasional exception is made until the student has completed fifteen hours, (the requirement being waived if a 3.0 average or better is made). These "exceptions" are classi-

fied as graduate students — conditional rather than graduate students — regular. “Conditional” students also include secondary majors, seeking to transfer to elementary education, who must qualify for elementary certification.

Special students include transient students and people studying for reasons other than seeking a degree. Table 7 shows the number and percentage of admissions in each of those categories during '70-'71. (See Table 7.)

Table 7: Status of Admissions

	Regular		Cond.		Special		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Fall, '70	17	34.0	19	38.0	14	28.0	50
Winter, '71	3	10.3	8	27.6	18	62.1	29
Spring, '71	3	17.7	8	47.0	6	35.3	17
Summer, '71	12	17.4	34	49.3	23	33.3	69
Total for Year	35	21.2	69	41.8	61	37.0	165

Cumulative averages are not computed for special students, but a study of the cumulative averages for the regular and conditional students show some interesting means. Over the entire year, regular degree-seeking students had a mean of 2.93 and conditionals, 2.49, indicating that the 2.50 norm is usually rather close to the minimum for all students. However, this is not always true with conditional students, as one might well expect. Table 8 shows the variations during 1970-71.

Table 8
Mean Cumulative Averages

	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	Year
Regular	2.90	3.17	2.90	2.75	2.93
Conditional	2.07	2.59	2.72	2.59	2.49
Mean	2.48	2.88	2.81	2.67	2.71

Throughout the program, the cumulative averages for regular and conditional students have been fairly consistent. During 1968-69, the overall mean for regular students was 2.97, with a range from 2.84 to 3.21. Conditional students had a mean of 2.65, ranging from 2.55 to 2.82. During 1969-70, the statistics were pretty much in line with the summer '70 figures: a mean of 2.86 for regulars and 2.54 for conditionals. (See Table 9.)

Table 9

Mean Cumulative Averages, '68-'69 to '70-'71

	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71
Regular	2.97	2.86	2.93
Conditional	2.65	2.54	2.49

One is left to conclude that the academic quality of the background of students who have been accepted into the graduate program has been equal or better than that anticipated by other state colleges in Georgia.

NTE Scores

Another factor which has been taken into consideration in admitting students has been the NTE score on the Common Examinations. A 450 minimum is required.

The group admitted during the 1968-69 school year had an overall mean of 509 on the Commons. During 1970-71, the overall mean was 506. The reason for this drop in mean score between these two periods is pointed out more vividly when the scores are compared, quarter by quarter.

Table 10
Mean NTE Scores, 1970-71

Classification	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	Total
Regular	509	539	497	505	512
Conditional	480	476	508	537	500
Total	494	507	501	521	506

As Table 10 indicates, during the fall and winter quarters the mean scores for the conditionally admitted students dropped to 480 and 476 respectively, bringing the mean for the year slightly lower than during the first year. However, when one considers that 450 is the minimum accepted for degree-seeking status, these scores indicate no need for alarm, as indeed they never have during the operation of the program.

Speaking of the controversial NTE score, a look at the summer quarter NTE scores and cumulative averages of black and white applicants shows an interesting trend and again raises questions long ago raised in this program and still unanswered. Both black men and women had a mean undergraduate cumulative average on par with or above the white students, yet the blacks. Please note that reference is made to mean scores, not mean NTE scores of the whites out-distanced those of the individual scores.

Negro men, regular students, had a mean cumulative average of 2.80 (there were no white men in this category) and a mean NTE of 464. Negro women had a mean cumulative average of 2.74 and a mean NTE of 488, while white women had a mean cumulative average of 2.72, and a mean NTE of 563.

Among the conditional students, black men had a mean cumulative average of 2.60 and an mean NTE score of 493, while white men had a mean cumulative average of 2.41 and a mean NTE score of 558. Black women conditional students had a mean cumulative average of 2.67 and a mean NTE score of 455. White women, on the other hand, had a mean cumulative average of 2.71 and a mean NTE score of 642.

These figures above refer only to the summer quarter of 1971, but they are not entirely out of line with the findings of several other quarters. Yet, through the end of the spring quarter, only two white women and no white men had made the required 3.7 cumulative average during residency as a graduate student to be invited into membership of the Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society in Education. At least a dozen black women (and one black man) had made the required average and were members. (However, three white women were to be pledged during the fall quarter.)

CONCLUSIONS

Statistics indicate that during the thirteen months of independent operation, the Savannah State graduate program had a tremendous growth in numbers that averaged out to over 100% increase in attendance each school year. This growth indicated, among other things, that the students felt they were getting what they should have been getting or they would not have continued to attend.

The program made a great contribution to improving race relations. In 1968 (and 1971) few black and white teachers in Savannah had ever studied together and had the chance to explore each other's thoughts, not to mention to work together or to work competitively in an academic situation. At first there was fear on both sides. Both students and faculty worked together to eliminate this. Racial friction never existed among the graduate students and better understanding both of teachers and students resulted.

Quality education was stressed and statistics on cumulative averages and NTE scores indicate that these indices of admission criteria did not drop below accepted levels.

The experience and the success of the Savannah State College graduate program should form a good basis for operating the new Savannah Graduate Center.

But as for the program of thirteen quarters, it is to be remembered as another successful creation of a black, state supported college that has fallen a victim to "integration." Surely, there must have been some other alternative! !