

PRESS ADVISORY

The Virginia State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights will hold a press conference, Wednesday, July 21, at 3 p.m. at the Holiday Inn of Fairfax City, 3535 Chain Bridge Rd., to release its report, "George Mason College: For All The People?". Committee Chairman Dr. David W. Sprunt will preside.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

Carlos D. Conde
Director of Information and Publications
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
1121 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20425

Telephone: (202) 254-6600

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
JULY 21, 1971 - 3 P.M.

FAIRFAX, VA. --- The Virginia State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights charged in a report released today that "George Mason College was conceived of, by, and for the white community of Northern Virginia and not for the entire Northern Virginia population."

The report, "George Mason College: For All the People?" said the college's traditionalist view of higher education and of the population it serves "...ignores the fact that the traditional values and standards...are those of an all-white society which traditionally excluded blacks."

"The college's official posture of color blindness only perpetuates the injustice of the past", added Committee Chairman David W. Sprunt of Lexington. "We feel that it must take affirmative steps to undo that injustice."

The findings and recommendations of the Committee are based on an open meeting in April at which students, faculty, college officials and community leaders participated. The inquiry dealt with recruitment and admissions policies, entrance requirements, student financial aid and placement, curricula and social life at the college.

Opened in 1957 with 17 students, George Mason College, a division of the University of Virginia, became a community college in 1960 and a degree-granting institution in 1966. Sixteen of its 2,400 students and two of its 164 member faculty were black during the 1970-71 academic year.

At its open meeting, the Committee learned that the black community has not been represented or considered in the development of the college despite Chancellor Lorin A. Thompson's statement that "In developing a college, it is essential to study and analyze the constituency to be served..."

Although 6 percent of the residents in the area served by George Mason are black, no black person has ever sat on a planning committee or advisory board for the college.

When asked about the relationship between the college and the black community of Northern Virginia, Edward A. Pritchard, an early benefactor of the school, told the Committee: "As far as I know, there is no relationship as such."

The report cited a number of policies that, while not designed to exclude minority students, have nevertheless discouraged participation by the black community and aggravated racial tensions at George Mason. Among them are:

- * Little, if any, affirmative action to recruit minority students despite official statements supporting such a program.
- * Stiff admission criteria, including a two year foreign language requirement and heavy emphasis on College Board scores, which tend to hurt the potential black applicant.
- * The absence of course materials which deal with the contributions of minorities to society.
- * The less than half-hearted support by the school's administration for its own proposal for an Upward Bound program to assist educationally "disadvantaged" students.

The Committee also suggested that George Mason College missed another opportunity to increase the number of minority and low income students by not following the lead of the University of Virginia in actively encouraging

enrollment by students of all economic and racial backgrounds. That course was charted by the Rotch Report (1969) which urged the University to commit itself strongly to meet the needs of black students.

To make George Mason College fully serve all the residents of Northern Virginia, the Committee report recommended that the University of Virginia:

- * Require the college "to establish performance standards relative to serving the black community of Northern Virginia in the areas of recruitment, admissions, financial aid...and curriculum content..."
- * Appoint a black resident of Virginia to the college's board of advisors when the next vacancy occurs.
- * Urge the college "to establish as a first priority the development of a fully open educational institution..." and direct it to adopt the recommendations of the Rotch Report.

The Committee also proposed the college immediately hire a coordinator of minority affairs and an admissions officer from a minority group. It suggested the college expand scholarship aid for minority students, seek to establish an Upward Bound program, begin construction of dormitory facilities, and develop multi-cultural curriculum materials.

The Virginia State Advisory Committee is one of 51 such units whose members serve without compensation to provide the Commission with information concerning civil rights activities in their communities and to disseminate information about Federal laws and programs.

In addition to the Chairman, members of the Committee are Rev. Curtis W. Harris of Hopewell, Vice Chairman; Dr. Philip Y. Wyatt of Fredericksburg, Secretary; J. Donald Anderson, Mrs. Zoe H. Carrigan, and Victor W. Maerki, Alexandria; David H. Scull, Annandale; Mrs. Rosetta L. Miller, Dale City; Mrs. Ruth Harvey Charity, Danville; Calvin M. Miller, Ettrick; Carl E. Auvil and Mrs. Minerva R. Fisher, Falls Church; Enoch C. Copeland, Holland;

Dr. Louis W. Hodges, Lexington; William B. Muse, Martinsville; Dr. Milton A. Reid, Norfolk; Dr. Harry L. Jenkins and Rev. Gordon W. Slaterbeck, Portsmouth; Charles L. McLeod and Dr. J. Rupert Picott, Richmond; and Lawrence D. Billups, Springfield.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan, factfinding agency created by Congress in 1957. Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President of the University of Notre Dame, is Chairman of the Commission. Howard A. Glickstein is Staff Director.

July 16, 1971