"WHY DID I GET IN?"

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I request that great care and discrimination be exercised in admitting as students only those whose previous records show the character, determination and application evincing a wholesome and real ambition for life. -Mr. J. B. Duke, *The Indenture of Trust*

From Mr. Duke's quote, it is evident that grades are not the sole factor in the admissions process at such an institution as Duke University. Dating from the establishment of Duke University, emphasis has been placed on more than just grades, standardized tests and an exhaustive list of extra-curricular activities. Then what exactly gets you into a school like Duke? Obviously the Board is looking for "a wholesome and real ambition for life," but how can this be exemplified on an application? Simply, it cannot be. Because of this fact, admissions policies have adapted a fluid construct, allowing for changes that suit the upcoming academic year. This paper will describe the changing admissions policies that characterized the 1930s and the 1970s, looking specifically at the changes associated with The Woman's College and later, the changes made during the merge of The Woman's College and Trinity College. The overlying question from which each aspect of the paper is constructed is "Why did I get in?"

At first glance, this seems like an easy question, but further inquiry proves that there is a multitude of factors that contribute to the acceptance of an applicant. Everything from hometown to last names to the amount of money in the bank account can influence the decision of the Admissions Board. The question of "Why did I get in?" is an important one and needs to be answered because the college admissions process and ultimately, this one question plague the majority of high school seniors. The countless forms and personal essays, along with the teacher recommendations and interviews, combine to form the "application" that a select group of individuals analyze and assess. But what exactly are *they* looking for? Obviously, the set of criteria, or rather the level of quality of the criteria changes from school to school. Each institution of higher education assesses applicants based on grade point average, standardized

test scores, extra-curricular activities, but what differs among these institutions is the quality of the applicant. A local community college may look for the same requirements as a large university, but the quality of the applicants differs. Duke University is one such school that seeks a higher level of quality. Quality, however, may be in the eye of the beholder. What one admissions board member might consider an extraordinary applicant, another could view as merely average. Admissions is not solely based on the analysis of the standard criteria; other factors, including residency, lineage, and extraordinariness may also contribute to the Board's decision.

Why did I get in? I had an exceptional grade point average, but not from a reputable high school. I had decent, but not extraordinary SAT scores. I was fairly involved with school activities, such as sports, student government, and honor council. I played the piano since I was four. I lived in Japan for three years of my life. I never lived in one place for longer than three years. I claimed residency in North Carolina. The list can go on, but there is no need; the admissions board saw something in me and my application that they believed would be beneficial to Duke's culture. All of the research conducted to write this paper has led to a somewhat unified answer to my original question of "Why did I get in?" This simple answer would be because I was unique.

> Duke University is an institution of national prominence, and the undergraduate student body should be a direct reflection of this inherent quality. Duke is seeking more than just the academically superior student; rather, it desires young people also possessing the talents, in addition to academic achievement, that our society holds in esteem in fields ranging from music to science to writing to leadership. (*Report of the University Planning Committee,* Duke University, September 27, 1972)

Materials that led to the final conclusions.

Usually researchers face problems with not having enough information, but I have concluded that too much information may be just as torturous. Narrowing of the topic and

attempting to highlight key figures and dates helped to ease the search, but a plethora of information was still readily available. The Woman's College Records lent a lot of valuable information pertaining to the admissions and what the college was seeking during the thirties. Box one specifically chronicled the admissions policies and highlighted the history and trends seen between the years of 1930 and 1954. The University Registrar Records covered a broader spectrum, revealing information about both The Woman's College and Trinity College. Boxes 30-32 were filled with statistics from 1853 to 2000. These statistics include the amount of students admitted to each school, the average grades possessed by each year (i.e. freshman, sophomore, etc.), the average grades for each sorority and fraternity, etc. Because of the sheer volume of folders included in these boxes, it was beneficial to look at folders in five or ten year increments. This allowed for the discovery of large changes over more expansive periods of time. The Admissions Office Records provided more recent documents pertaining to different academic matters. Box 3 of these records contains brochures, sample applications, demographics, class size, average grades, average SAT scores, etc. Information provided in this box generally consisted of statistics dating from 1962-1989. This allowed for analysis of the years following the merge of The Woman's College and Trinity College. Further review of the college bulletins proved beneficial in reinforcing the actual admissions requirements, as well as statistics according to each individual school. Freedman's text *No Turning Back* provided historical context, which aided in making inferences about the data collected that pertained to the 1930s.

Unfortunately there is no way to find out what each member of the Admissions Board was thinking when reviewing each application; there are no tapes, recordings, written documents chronicling the every move of the admissions officers. However, many papers written by Alice

Baldwin proved extremely helpful in obtaining a larger scope of the happenings surrounding the 1930s. In the Alice Baldwin Papers, Box 11, a paper entitled *The Woman's College: Admissions 1930-54*, highlighted many key events and the changes in thought processes when establishing the admissions policy of The Woman's College. Two other papers written by Alice Baldwin captured other aspects, along with admissions, that were present during Dean Baldwin's time at Duke: *The Woman's College, As I Remember It* and *Twenty-Five Years of the Woman's College at Duke University.* The papers and boxes associated with Alice Baldwin were extremely helpful in obtaining statistics and making inferences for happenings during the 1930s.

Secondary sources proved beneficial for content associated with the 1970s as well. The microfilms containing *The Chronicle of Higher Education* provided several articles capturing the societal thought during the mid-1970s and provided a context from which inferences about the primary sources were made. The Office of the Registrar Records contained a booklet entitled *College Enrichment in the 1980s: Projections and Possibilities*, which briefly highlighted statistics from the 1970s and potential reasons for these statistics. Sifting through the correspondence letters of past deans indicated the level of informality that existed between the administration and alumni, which also inevitably highlighted the emphasis on legacy admissions.

Information pertaining to admissions based upon athletics and minority issues has been excluded from this paper due to the vastness of these two topics. The significance of these two issues would warrant them their own distinct paper. To simplify them and include them in this paper would ultimately belittle their importance. For this reason, I am acknowledging them as issues that have had a significant impact on admissions policies, but that deserve more attention that would be allowed for in the confines of this paper.

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Society's view of higher education.

In 1930, 714 women filled the classrooms of Duke University, while 2,354 men filled separate classrooms (*School and Society*, Registrar 30:1). In the year 1957, the number of women increased to about 1,190 while the male population stayed consistent with 2,274 men (*Registrar's Statistics Registration-1957*, Registrar 31). By 1977, on a more national level, women were representing 48.8 percent of the student body. Society was seeing a shift in thought in regards to higher education for women and the accepted role of the woman in the household. Because of this shift, the number of women enrolled in universities was increasing rapidly.

Creating The Women's College: The benefits of a coordinate college.

Before analyzing the factors that generally grant admission into the colleges associated with Duke University, it is beneficial to know the context of the period in an effort to show how the societal opinions influenced the early admissions trends of the thirties. The major starting point of women's higher education started with the emergence of The Women's College, a coordinate college of Duke University. The establishment of such a college enabled many of the young girls to have a safe and separate environment in which to learn—free from the distraction of boys living next door. Although the College was separate in many respects, the following measures were taken to assure that the College was equal with respects to Trinity College:

> First, every opportunity offered by the university must be open to qualified women; courses, libraries, laboratories, etc. Second, the women on the faculty must have full recognition. Third, the College must be administered on a democratic basis; staff, faculty, and student cooperating in its development. And lastly, administrative officers must always realize that the College was a part of the larger whole and that the interests of the University might at times supersede those of any one college or school. (*Twenty-Five Years of the Woman's College at Duke University.* Alice Baldwin Papers, Box 20, pg. 2)

The insurance of the services offered, the legitimacy of the faculty, and the recognition of the College were all imperative when forming the separate school. The College wanted to be

certain that the education being received by the women was of the same caliber as the men. In keeping with the selectivity and quality of the school, which was "one of the special wishes of Mr. Duke in the indenture establishing the University (*Twenty-Five Years of The Woman's College at Duke University,* pg. 6)," all aspects of The Woman's College had to either match or exceed those of Trinity College.

The decision to open The Woman's College as a coordinate college, as opposed to either a coeducational or completely separate college, was due to the benefits that the College would receive. A coeducational college would not have provided the women with many leadership opportunities, due to the overshadowing men that would have attended the same college. Women would not be found in leadership positions in which men were of lesser authority—the times would not allow for this. Establishing a new and separate college would not be accompanied with the flourishing reputation that Duke University was gaining. Therefore, The Woman's College would not have immediate prestige due to its association with Duke University. Thus, the most beneficial structure for The Woman's College was that of a coordinate college; this structure "resulted in a specially able and responsible body of students and alumnae whose ability and initiative [were] of significant value in the development of the University (*Twenty-Five Years of The Woman's College at Duke University,* pg. 9)." Dean Alice Baldwin, one of the driving forces behind the establishment of The Woman's College, felt strongly about the advantages afforded to the institution by becoming a coordinate college. According to Dean Baldwin,

> The opportunity to develop initiative, responsibility, power, all the qualities of leadership, through editing their own papers and journals and managing their own separate activities, can be found only in such a college. To have the sense of solidarity that comes from working in and for their own college and yet to realize that they are only a part of the larger whole whose interests they must consider is valuable to students and alumnae. (*The Development and Place of the Co-Ordinate College,* p. 18)

Were early gender discrepancies in admissions rate due to the perceived role of women?

The Woman's College was successfully established and women began sending in their applications. The numbers at The Woman's College and at Trinity College did not match, however. The noticeable distribution of men and women attending Trinity College and The Woman's College implies that women were not encouraged to attend college. But for what reason? Women were expected to stay home to raise the family. They had the unofficial job of housekeeper, which entitled women to more responsibility and more hours-on-the-job than any blue-collar job ever could. A common saying captures this idea by stating "'man must toil from sun to sun but a woman's work is never done (Freedman, 124).'" This idea of endless work somehow was lost in the minds of many people over time. The woman's work in the household became invisible, becoming something that should be a part of a woman's normal daily routine. Freedman's text, *No Turning Back,* emphasizes why women were unable to go into the workforce, but these same reasons apply to not being able to receive higher education as well. If the woman was expected to raise the children, wash the clothes, clean the house, cook dinner and sew her husband's pants, how was she expected to go to school? The "double day" that she would be living would be quickly tiresome and inevitably almost impossible. A woman in such a situation would have to find a nonexistent balance between mother and student. (Freedman, 124)

Freedman focuses on the responsibility of a married woman and granted, most of the women that would be applying to college would be single. However, the concept is still relevant. What would be the purpose of a woman attending college if later in life she was expected to stay home to fulfill her womanly duties? The accepted (and expected) image of a woman as a solely maternal figure deterred women from going to college to become an

intellectual. The feminist movement attempted to drive society's accepted image from one of maternity to one of intellect. In the 1870s, conservatives honestly believed that "higher education drained women's reproductive energies and reduced fertility (Freedman, 214)." Some scholarly women disproved this by successfully reproducing and raising families. But it is incredible that the notion existed in the first place. Infertility does not exactly motivate women to receive an education. Although there are some women who found the time to form a family, analysis of many great female writers shows quite the opposite. Freedman comments that Tillie Olsen, a feminist writer herself, identified many authors of the nineteenth century who never had children, regardless of being married or not. Towards the late twentieth century, more women were attempting and succeeding at balancing the two careers of creative writing and motherhood, but by this time the cultural shift away from the homely body of the women had already begun.

Women could hold respectable jobs, right?

Although writing was perhaps a somewhat respectable profession for women, many of the other jobs women were forced to do were not as reputable. Again, adhering to the maternal figure, women were thought to be well suited for teaching because of the close interactions with children. Many jobs, such as teaching, nursing, sales, clerical jobs, etc. were "feminized," meaning two things: they paid a lot less and status was extremely sub par. If the amount of women employed by a certain profession exceeded the amount of men in the same profession, the position was considered less prestigious and thus pay and status dropped. (Freedman, 157) With women being forced into such low paying jobs, the daunting tuition of colleges such as Duke University would have been out of the question. It seemed disadvantageous for a woman to spend some of her prime years in college, delaying the start of her family, to only be able to earn meager wages. The culmination of low wages, fear of infertility, endless duties needing to

be accomplished in the household, and the general unaccepted view of women as intellectuals makes the trend of low admission rates anything but shocking.

Jaunita Kreps, yet another influential power in The Woman's College history, composed a list in late 1972 of goals for women to accomplish, which would help to correct the imbalance seen in previous years, associated with pay and prestige. Her suggestions include:

1. Entering the physical sciences, engineering, and some of the social sciences more frequently.
2. Choosing education and the humanities less frequently.
3. Completing their doctorates more frequently than in the past.
4. Investing more time in research.
5. Moving from colleges into universities where salaries tend to be higher and research potential greater.
6. Moving more often from one institution to another.
7. Requesting administrative posts provided they do not preclude the research and writing necessary to ensure full professorships.

("Where Women Work in Academia: 'A Poor Allocation of Talent.'" pg. 7)

By directly encouraging women to choose these types of jobs, Juanita Kreps is indirectly encouraging female students to follow different paths—ones in which more prestigious jobs would be made available later in their careers. This idea of empowering oneself and equipping oneself with the knowledge to pursue different areas of work coincided with the new image of women that enabled them to achieve larger, more substantial goals in life.

A new wave of thought became apparent in the 1970's.

By the1970s, the number of women in attendance had greatly increased from the start of the college. This increase is reflective of the large shift in social thought, which served as a great opportunity for change in women's lives. Initially The Woman's College, however, did not seem to appreciate such a large increase in the number of women trying to attain higher education. *The Report Concerning Optimum Enrollment in The Woman's College* specifically addressed the most effective ratio of men to women. According to the report, when Duke

University opened its doors, an initial ratio of two to one was established. Many of the coordinate colleges, like Duke, adhered to this same ratio. Why must the ratio be two to one? Granted, it is better than a ratio of three to one existing or some other arbitrary number being set. Because of women fighting for equality, it would seem reasonable to think that women would want the idea of a ratio eliminated or at least the ratio one to one. However, this report suggests that women did not necessarily want more women. Focusing on "optimum enrollment" for the college, the staff realized that by continuing to grow at the current rate, the College would "lose those tangibles and intangibles which over a long period of time have been significant factors in the development of women graduates of whom the University as a whole is justly proud (*Report Concerning Optimum Enrollment*, p.2)." The overcrowding was seen in the dorms, the library, gymnasium, and cafeteria and was posing a problem for student body meetings. The tight-knit community that had been founded and was cherished was facing termination. In previous years, the societal views were causing a shortage of students, while in later years the shift was causing an overabundance.

The applications continued to increase, new housing was needed, and societal thought was making huge shifts. Consequently, the 1970s marked a time of major structural change for Duke University. In 1972 The Woman's College and Trinity College decided that it would be most beneficial to both colleges to merge. The deans of each college had decided to resign, and it seemed appropriate to make a substantial change like this while transitioning a new dean. Because technical admission policies had been the same at both colleges, the system did not need to change significantly. When comparing the admissions process of The Woman's College in the 1930's and the admission process at Trinity College in the 1970's, one major difference is evident: the people responsible for reviewing the applications. The Woman's College of the

1930's was blessed with relatively few applicants and therefore, Dean Baldwin had the luxury of being able to interview many of the applicants herself. Dean Baldwin personally reviewed each application and decided, with the help of a very select few, which girls were accepted. (ABP, *As I Remember It,* 20, p46). In the 1970's, upwards of 10,000 applications were being submitted. Obviously, the time and effort that was being put into each application could not compare to the system employed by Dean Baldwin, but an effective system was imperative to ensure equality during admissions.

Besides a 40-year gap, what were the differences in the 1930s and 1970s?

One marked difference between the campus of 1935 and 1975 was the ratio of men to women. In the 1930s, a two to one ratio would have been normal, but by the 1970s, all gender ratios had been eliminated and equal amounts of men and women were being admitted. The only differences were seen when housing became an issue. Initially, more dorms were constructed for male residents and therefore, more male students could be accepted. As the number of applicants kept rising, the University saw the need for more residential space on campus. This allowed for an increase in the number of women to be accepted and therefore, the sex ratio slowly began to even itself out.

The increased number of applicants also resulted in the decreased likelihood of having an interview. This interview, however, could significantly help an applicant's case, especially when the applicant did not present well on paper. Although these interviews "cannot provide a comprehensive analysis of character or motivation in an applicant," they are beneficial in providing "indications of these qualities in a prospective student" (*Profile: Class of 1971,* AOR 3). Interviews are also helpful for the Committee, in that the interviewer can see the true character of the applicant and be the judge of whether she could acclimate herself to campus life

effectively. An applicant may look great on paper, but have no personality and may be willing to offer nothing to the University. The attempt of an interview was to "gain insight into the candidate's level of perseverance, initiative, imagination and citizenship" (ORR 24; *Reports '76-'79).*

The actual admissions process. .

The application itself went through a rigorous process, while the worried applicant twiddled her thumbs at home, anxiously awaiting the thick or thin envelope. The most efficient system agreed upon by the admission committee is as follows:

> Each application begins its journey when it is read by two people—a staff member representing the applicant's geographic region and a paid reader. The paid readers are frequently professors' spouses and are extensively trained.
>
> These two readers score the application on a numerical scale based on essays, activities, courses, high school, class rank and grades, but not necessarily in that order. The criteria ranking of the student depends on the student—it's an individual process. These scores are then averaged in with the SAT scores to gain a final numerical number…
>
> The application is then reread and placed on a scale of A through G with A ranking at the top. This time the criterion for the judgments are academics, extracurricular activities, and SAT score, again not necessarily in that order…
>
> Next the soul-searching begins…usually, the A's and B's are set aside as almost definite acceptances and the F's and G's, unless it's an outstanding case, are set aside as rejections. Admissions people say 'the little things count' as the staffer reads through the C's, D's and E's trying to gain an insight as to weather or not the individual will enhance Duke and Duke will enhance him.
>
> The regional staffer then takes his decisions before a final committee. This final committee consists of the director of undergraduate admission, three professors, and usually more than one admissions staff member. Here the regional staffer presents his or her case and tries 'to sell' the students to the group…
>
> The committee reads the applications and discusses the pros and cons, comparing the applicant to past experiences. It may or may not work out that an equal number of applicants is accepted from each geographic region; there is no quota to meet, the committee just wants the strongest applicants (Walker, *Peeking at Undergraduate Admissions,* Admissions Office, 3).

As evident by the lengthy process, the committee's goal was to be as thorough as possible so that the best applicants were admitted. According to Dr. Scott, the Director of the Office of

Undergraduate Admissions, the most weight is given to "the quality of the courses a student has taken in high school and the student's grades in those courses" (Wefing, "Picking Freshmen," *Durham Morning Herald,* 1983, Admissions Office, 3). The secondary school reports are seen "as the soundest indicator[s] of academic ability, potential, [and] motivation" (*Profile: Class of 1974,* AOR 3). Of next importance would be recommendations, followed by standardized test scores, and finally the well-roundedness of the applicant. Although the Committee placed a significant amount of emphasis on academic factors, a certain test score or a certain GPA would not guarantee admission. It was the idea of the University to admit "the 'spear-shaped' student, the student with strong interest and ability in a student area. [They were not] eliminating the well-rounded individual, but rather altering the type of student [they] take to attempt to stimulate the student body with a variety of interest and socio-economic backgrounds" (Brinkley, *Spotlight: Admissions*, AOR 3)

They *decide who gets in. But who are* they?

Although briefly touched on before, a further analysis of the people behind the decisions is always important, for personal preferences and opinions can skew a decision if enough people are not involved in making the ultimate decision of "accepted" or "rejected." The admissions decisions in the 1930s were made solely by Dean Baldwin. Dean Baldwin, along with the help Mrs. Smith (specific title unknown), reviewed each application and conducted each interview. Dean Baldwin "made yearly trips to Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York" (ABP 11, *The Woman's College: Admissions,* 6), interviewing and recruiting women she viewed as acceptable. As the amount of applicants increased, alumnae were recruited to help in the interview process. Another consequence of the increasing application pool, was the need for a committee. When first constructed, Dr. Green (specific title unknown) was the sole man on the

Council on Admissions for The Woman's College. However, by 1940, "no man served on this Council" (*As I Remember It,* 47). Around this same time, a broader group, the University Admissions Committee, was formed to address issues with admissions from both The Woman's College and Trinity College. By developing these various committees, it emphasizes the University's desire to establish conservative criteria for admission; each applicant is held to the same standard and is evaluated by more than one person, ensuring the avoidance of personal biases.

Throughout the years, Duke continued to modify the structure of the Admissions Committee, in order to ensure fairness and proper analysis. By the 1970s the Committee was extremely structured, with persons hired for different positions, such as "Admissions Counselor." Eight members constituted the Committee in 1971, which created great opportunities for checks and balances, which might not have been so apparent during the '30s. This formulaic system was very different from the unstructured decisions made by Dean Baldwin, but each in their own way provided Duke with some of the best students. As will become evident, what the reviewers are looking for and what Dean Baldwin was looking for are pretty similar. Although the importance of some of the criteria is weighted differently throughout the years, the overall general desire is the same—a student "of intellectual, social, and ethical responsibility and maturity" (*As I Remember It,* 27).

Above and beyond what is written on paper.

So say an applicant did not excel in some of the academic areas mentioned above. Automatic rejection? Not quite. There was always that "outstanding case" that defies the rules of admissions and consequently, the student with a relatively low GPA and minimal extracurricular activities got accepted. But how did they get in? A few factors can help a

struggling students' case: being a legacy, being from the South, having the money to get in, or even having an odd interest. Having these qualities did not in any way guarantee admission, but they allow the application to be put aside for further review.

Excuse me, but do you know who my father is?

Getting into college may ultimately be about who you know, or more specifically, who your father knows (or who he is). Legacy admission is always a controversial issue and has been for some time. Accepting legacies is beneficial for the College because alumni are more likely to make donations if their children also attend the same school. But like geographical quotas, admitting legacies can affect the quality of student being admitted. The admissions board may feel some pressure to admit a student, despite lesser achievements by the applicant. According to a report in 1960, which highlighted the admissions for the past few decades, by Roberta Brinkley, the Dean of The Woman's College, "men [were] being admitted if they [stood] a reasonable chance of academic success." A total of forty-six female legacies were rejected, while a mere sixteen male legacies were rejected. Quality points are awarded to each applicant based on high school grades, standardized tests, and high school achievements. On a scale of 0 to 4, most applicants in the range of less than 1.5 and 1.5 to 2.0 were not admitted. From a score of 2.0 to 2.5, there is a large discrepancy in the number of rejected when comparing men and women; ten women were rejected, while only one male applicant was rejected. It was "presumed that there were other factors than academic which influenced these decisions (*The Admissions of Sons and Daughters of Alumni,* LRPC 2:A&E)." However, it is curious that ten times more women were not eligible for admission as opposed to men. The significantly lower amount of rejected male legacies suggests that the College was willing to take a chance on more

males. Because women have proved throughout the years that they perform better academically, it would seem beneficial to the College to take a chance on women, as opposed to men.

The unofficial, yet official letters mean a lot.

The idea of legacy admissions had not changed much by the time students were applying in the 1970s. There are countless letters found in old dean correspondence folders, dictating a father's request for his son's interview or a lunch date with the man who happened to be the father's long lost buddy and the College's admissions director. More interesting, however, is the sex ratio when analyzing the letters; the number of letters about the sons of legacies far outweigh the number of letters written for the daughters of legacies. As evident in the 1930s, more male legacies were admitted and this same pattern seemed to follow into the 1970s. Analysis of a few letters found in the Office of the Registrar Records Correspondence files shows the preference for legacy admission. The letter below was sent from Clark Cahow, who was the Director of Admissions.

> I have received a phone call from Mr. Burt Moore, father of Lee Burt Moore, Greenville, S.C., inquiring about his son's application for next September. I referred Mr. Moore to you since he talked about an interview. Mr. Moore was referred to me by a Duke alum (Charlie Boon) and I believe Mr. Moore is "one of ours" also.

The use of the phrase and quotations around the words "one of ours" places emphasis on the connection to Duke and the importance that this connection represents. The fact that the father is inquiring about the application is also significant. The father knows that having connections to Duke is beneficial for his son, so he makes it a point to contact the school in an effort to make this connection known. The letter was written in mid December and as the letter indicates, the son is applying for the following school year. This is quite early to be a standard inquiry of the application. If the father did not have these ties to Duke, would he be calling the Admissions Office? Doubtful.

Another letter found in the same records also highlights the enthusiastic nature of Clark Cahow in reference to Duke alumni. The letter reads:

> Dear Frank:
>
> It was certainly was good to see you on Monday. I checked with the Admissions Office today, and their feeling is that the chance of admission is just as good in February as in April. Sarah may do just as well leaving her application as it stands. You know, of course, that no admissions office is willing to commit itself absolutely at this stage of the game, but I am assured that the review of Sarah's application will be the same whether it is for the February or for the April admission date.
>
> Right after you left, my morning mail was delivered and it contained a letter from Fred. Now I'll have to try to get a letter off to him before the next six months go by! Pat and I send our regards to the whole family, and we wish you a very happy Christmas and a good year.
>
> Sincerely,
> Clark R. Cahow

When the father, Frank in this case, is such close friends with Dr. Cahow, it is extremely unlikely that his daughter is going to be rejected. Dr. Cahow would have too much explaining to do if Sarah were rejected. It is always a possibility that Sarah has the grades, activities and charisma to be accepted on her own, but her father's status and involvement is definitely advantageous. During the admissions process, the letters A-G are assigned to each application, based on the excellence of the application. All of the applicants with A or B applications whose parent was an alumni was automatically accepted. Children of non-alumni were admitted 84.7% and 59.15% of the time, respectively. Applications at the C level whose parents were alumni were admitted 92.5% of the time, while those of non-alumni were admitted 39.51% of the time. Even as low as D level applications were admitted 85.7% of the time if a parent was an alumnus. (ORR, Chancellor's Advisory Committee, 23) The disparities between the acceptance levels of these two groups are quite shocking. Keeping an allegiance to Duke alumni is somewhat understandable, but the degree to which it is observed in the actual statistics is astonishing.

One last letter highlights again the caliber of fathers that had children submitting

applications. Dr. Cahow was writing to inform Terry Sanford of an important figure on campus.

> You may already be aware of this fact, but in case youa re not, I think you will want to know that Senator Schweiker and his daughter, Lani, will be on campus November 11 for an appointment to see me in the Admissions office at 3:00 p.m..

Could Dr. Cahow and the admissions team reject the Senator's daughter? Even if she did not meet any of the requirements of attending Duke, she would most likely get in. There would be too many repercussions for rejecting someone with a father who was this prestigious. The main factor that drives legacy admissions, as with almost every other aspect of life, is money. Many alumni donate money in an effort to keep ties and to help the University. The rejection of an alumnus' daughter or son would not bode well with the alumnus and would inevitably forfeit these donations. Trinity College would be losing significant amounts of money if these donations ceased. In the case of one applicant, his grandfather had been a member of the faculty at Duke for many years, and has "made significant gifts to the University over the years, especially through several large life income trust arrangements" (Letter to Dr. Jean Scott, 1982, Chancellor Pye Correspondence, ORR, 42). In order to secure such donations as these, the alumni are kept content and great measures are taken to insure that these happy sentiments are maintained. The College cannot afford to break the significant ties with alumni; their monetary contributions are too great.

G.R.I.T.S. please!

It is evident from the letters that being a legacy could be the reason why an applicant was accepted, but what if the applicant's father or mother did not attend Trinity or The Woman's College? There was still hope for a struggling application trying to survive the admissions process. What if the applicant were from North Carolina? Could an applicant be admitted for merely being from North Carolina? A huge aspect of admissions into Trinity College and The

Woman's College was, and still is, where the applicant is from. Although Duke University is a private school, preference is still given to students of the Southeast region, and more specifically to North Carolina residents. In the past, The Woman's College admissions were hampered by geographical quotas created by the Undergraduate Admissions Policy Committee. The rationale for such quotas was to ensure the idea that the "roots should be deep at home (*Geographical Distribution,* Brinkley, 1960)." Surprisingly, the men were held to no such quota. Brinkley's report entitled *A Look at the Geographical Distribution of Entering Freshman and Its Implications* implied that the lack of quota was "an indication that good candidates from these areas [were] accepted with no difficulty." In 1948, a special committee was formed to analyze the admissions policy, putting an emphasis on the quotas for geographical admissions. The committee found it of utmost importance to avoid lowering standards in accordance with the quotas. At the time it was considered more advantageous to "hold to the same high standards for North Carolina girls and to be content with fewer for the present time in order to build up a respect for [the college's] standards (Women's College Records, 1:History and Trends)." The committee wanted to ensure that they were admitting students that would be able to succeed in college, not merely admitting students in order to meet quota. In order to eliminate this possibility of having to lower standards in order to accommodate the quota, it would have been simple to totally disregard the quota. Alumni and trustees would have favored this decision; however, the original quotas from 1940 were kept and 65 to 70 percent of all enrolled students were Southerners (Women's College Records, 1: History and Trends).

The high quota set for admitting Southerners presented yet another problem. One of the requirements for admission was that the applicant be from an accredited high school. In the south, many of the secondary schools were not considered members of their regional

associations. Because of Duke's want for students only from accredited secondary schools, it was made a requirement that students came from schools in the South that the State Department of Education approved. If a student applied from schools outside of the South that were not recognized by regional associations, then they were required to take an assortment of examinations. (Women's College Records, 1: History and Trends) The established quota of admitting students from the South brought with it numerous problems, which appeared avoidable by the quota's removal.

Of some interest is the preference that was actually given to girls attending school in Durham. Girls from Durham High School were required to be in the upper half of their class, which as stated on the policy form that this was giving an advantage to the local students. Normally, the College only admits the upper one-quarter. From the "best college preparatory schools" applicants must also be in the top half of the class. Applicants from private schools that are considered "average" must be in the upper third of their class. Any transfer students must have a C minimum from accredited four-year colleges and a C+ average from junior colleges. (*Policy in the Admission of Durham Girls to The Woman's College,* WCR 1: H&T) Those students not from the Durham area were required to have a B average in order to be considered for admission. (WCR 1:H&T) In the 1930s, transportation and moving away from home was presented as a larger issue for women than it was in later years. It was because of these issues that The Woman's College offered preference to Durham girls. If not accepted at Duke, many of the women would not move away to attend another school and would inevitably forfeit their opportunity to receive a higher education. In efforts to promote higher education among women, the standards were lowered and more locals were allowed admission into The Woman's College.

An attempt to increase diversity.

Starting in the 1950s, the University was attempting to shift away from the strong emphasis on Southern enrollment. Dr. Gross, the Vice President of Trinity College in 1956, was an active member of the Admissions Policy Committee and in a set of minutes from this Committee's meetings, he commented on the regional distribution seen at the College. Dr. Gross stated that "Duke University must be national in flavor" and that while, there were many students from many countries, "this did not necessarily imply a good national distribution percentage-wise" (*Minutes*, 1956, ORR, 19). On the issues of actual North Carolina residents, Dr. Gross claimed the University "may well have reached its maximum, and might soon approach the point of diminishing returns, if indeed [they] had not already reached that point" (*Minutes,* 1956, ORR, 19). Yearly policy changes were suggested by Dr. Gross as a way to constantly be assessing the pool of applicants applying and being accepted each year.

In the 1970s, the College was moving up the excellence scale nationally, and one measure of this excellence was seen in the diversity; "'Duke's reputation [had] caught up with its excellence'" (*Duke Admissions: 'image-making' program,* 1981, AOR, 3). This improvement in reputation may be contributed to "Duke graduates and current students bringing a positive image of the school around the nation, the excellent faculty reputation, the quality of the graduate schools, national media coverage in athletics and the increased efforts of the admissions office" (*Duke Admissions*, 1981, AOR, 3). Duke prided itself on being one of the top five geographically diverse university, but at the same time "North Carolina residents [were] given a slight edge in the admissions process" (*Duke Admissions,* 1981, AOR, 3).

In a report on admissions written in the late 1970's, it is stated that the goal of the University is "to select the best students from the available pool in order to maintain the enrollment level of NC students at Duke between sixteen and eighteen percent… In the past, this

goal has been achieved Dr. Cahow states, 'without compromising the guidelines of academic quality'" (ORR, 24, *Reports* '76-'79).

Compared to the 65-70% of Southerners and about one-third of the student body beings composed of North Carolina residents seen in the 1930's, Trinity College in the 1970's only consisted of 13-18% North Carolina residents. Although there is a huge decline in the percentage of residents from North Carolina, it would still be advantageous to an applicant if they claimed North Carolina residency. The mere fact of being a North Carolina resident does not guarantee admission, but if a person with mediocre test school and average extracurriculars was accepted, this could answer the looming question of why they got in.

Your parents make HOW much?!

The "Our Philosophy" section of Duke University Admissions' website on financial aid and costs reads:

> We admit U.S. citizens and permanent residents without regard to their financial circumstances or aid eligibility, and we meet 100 percent of demonstrated need for these students throughout their undergraduate enrollment. We also meet the full demonstrated financial need for a limited number of foreign citizens, but applying for financial aid does affect the admissions decision for these students because financial resources available to foreign citizens are limited.

This idea, which seems to be working today due to sufficient amounts of endowments, donations, and other contributions, was being reconsidered in the late 1970's. Chancellor Pye was quoted in an article for *The Chronicle* entitled "University may drop blind admissions policy," which states that Duke was considering eliminating the blind policy in some cases, in an effort to reduce the amount of money being allotted for financial need. This article, published in 1979, stated that the University spent $1,471,000.00 to cover the financial needs of its students. The exorbitant amount of money could be reduced if the admissions process assessed the financial situation of the applicant. Two suggestions were made on how to handle the situation.

The first, by Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Edward Lingenheld suggested to admit three-quarters of the total accepted class on the basis of financially blind acceptance. The last twenty-five percent of the class would consist of students that were financially capable of accepting. Dr. Cahow proposed a different plan, in which all students were admitted under the blind admission policy. All students, however, would be told beforehand that enough financial aid would not be available to assist everyone. (Maroon, 1979, AOR, 3 *Clippings)*

You have to have the money to pay the tuition.

In an article in *The Chronicle for Higher Education*, statistics calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau were shown indicating that the higher the income of the family, the more likely it is that the children will go to college. According to statistics from 1971, 59% of families with incomes of $15,000 or more have children enrolled in college. If the family only earns $3,000 per year, then only 14% of these families had enrolled college students. (*CHE,* 1973, VII 24:5) These statistics make sense for several reasons. First, families with larger incomes are of two sorts: one of privilege, i.e. family money, and one of hard work, i.e. the parents went to college to make a decent earning. In both situations, the children would be expected to become high achievers and college would be highly encouraged. Second, these statistics could be in support of the abolition of the blind admissions policy. If Duke, for instance dropped the blind admissions, many of the lower income families could not have children enrolled. With the rapid increasing tuition seen at Duke, difficulties would be seen when trying to finance a child's education. Third, the statistics might be relating to the general acceptance among lower income families that tuition for college is too high in general. The lower income families might adopt this mentality of not being able to afford college in general, and therefore, the children simply would not apply. Duke's high tuition could definitely be seen as a deterrent for many families.

Tuition in the 1930s for Duke was relatively high, but because primarily only upper-class families were sending children to college, these prices were not so inhibiting. Higher education was typically a trend in the elite during this time, but as the years progressed, the opportunity to attend college was being offered to families displaying more diverse socially-economic characteristics. This change reflected the increase in alumni donations and other various contributions made to the University over the years. Some of the lower income applicants of the 1970's were reaping the benefits from the donations, but due, still to limited funds, completely blind admissions was not feasible.

I lived in Japan, can speak 5 languages, and started my own business at the age of nine.

If an applicant does not have a father who attended Duke, is not from the South, and does not have the money to finance an entire college career, is there is hope? What could get such an applicant admitted? Just like in the 1930's, the Admissions Committee of the 1970's was looking for unique, interesting kids with that extra "something." In the *Summary Report of the University Planning Committee*, part G.4. under "Admissions" recommends that talented, not necessarily academic students should comprise 23% of the accepted class. The Committee would be looking for individuals who have excelled in "leadership, art, social service, writing, editing, dramatic arts, music, science, athletics, or employment" (AOR, 3). The students would be evaluated based on the range of interests and the depth of involvement in these interests. Some environments, such as a boarding school or a financially debilitating situation in which a job is required, are not conducive for creating a long list of extracurriculars. The "non-acadmic rating system for the 1978-79 admissions year [changed] from a very codified, 'pigeon-hole' scale, to a more subjective instinctive evaluation" (*Non-Academic Rating System for Freshman Applications,* ORR, 42; *Admissions '79-'80).* The following include the basis for evaluation:

1. The range of interests in non-school areas such as work, religious life, scouting, the arts, etc.
2. The commitment to these interests and the student's role in them.
3. The quality of the student's application essays in content, effort and style. For the past two year we have required two essays of all candidates in an effort to assist the student in expressing his or her own thoughts and to give the Committee an indication of the student's writing ability and sense of purpose as a potential university student.
4. The subjective reaction of the reader to the non-academic factors presented in the application. (ORR, 24, *Reports '76-'79*)

Based on these factors, an applicant would be rated an "extraordinary contributor," meaning she has a strong leadership background, has unique talents in various areas, was a high achiever in high school, and has recommendations expressing enthusiasm about the applicant. If all these factors were not present, the applicant would be classified in descending order as an excellent, solid, occasional or minimal contributor.

These factors lend to the self-motivation, productivity, and creativity of the applicant, which allows for less emphasis to be placed on the quantitative factors, like GPA, SAT scores, etc. The quantitative scores allow for assessment of potential success in the academic realm of college, but fitting in socially and offering something more to Duke is also of dire importance when seeking new students. Were evaluations of non-academic factors not conducted, it is highly likely that an acceptable applicant would be overlooked. This system exists as a "built-in quality control factor that provides the Committee an opportunity to make a special review of specific cases" (ORR, 24, *Reports '76-'79).* An applicant could be admitted primarily for non-academic excellence, "provided that prior academic achievement indicates a capability of doing the minimum work required for graduation from Duke" (*A Report to the Duke University Trustees Biennial summary 1970-1972,* URR—Reference 3). It would not be advantageous to admit someone who would not be able to handle the workload and ultimately fail out.

Basically, it's impossible to tell if you're going to get accepted.

By factoring into the admissions process this "other" aspect, which includes non-academic endeavors, the whole process is fairly unpredictable. The Committee was told to be "more creative and imaginative in its selections" (*Memorandum to Alumni Admissions Advisory Committee Members*, 1972, AOR 3; Stats and Profiles). Although a sense of pliability surrounds this new process, it is still more formulaic than the process developed in the 1930's. The 1930's consisted of (at least in the case of The Woman's College) a smaller committee, each reading all of the applications and interviews were conducted with more frequency. The transition to a quantitative system is the result of increasing application numbers. With thousands of applications being turned in each year, it would be impossible for each committee member to read each one and to conduct interviews with all applicants. This implementation of this more flexible system enabled the emphasis to be put back on the actual individual, rather than on a set of numbers. The 1930's admissions committee was far more interested in the type of applicant being admitted—the focus being on individuality, uniqueness, and sense of responsibility. At a time when only academic factors were of interest, many applicants that were poor standardized test takers would have been rejected. The inclusion of this system allowed for the diversity that was greatly wanted and needed at Duke.

Why did I get in?

Apparent by the sheer volume of papers, letters, pamphlets, and articles pertaining to the issue of admissions, so many factors play into the critical decision. As was true of every college, whether in the 1930s or 1970s or now, grades and extracurriculars were important, but other factors could mask a few flaws that marred an application. Some of these factors were more prevalent in the 1930s, while different ones more so in the 1970s. Other factors were more prevalent in males than in females. The significance of this data pertains to its relevance today.

By seeing the changes made over the five decades, spanning from 1930 to 1980, it can be implied that even more changes have been made in the three decades that have passed since the 1980s. Although the policy itself has not remained constant, the fluidity of the admissions policy is consistent throughout the decades. The admissions process is not clear cut, which means loop-holes and exceptions can always be found. The benefit of analyzing past data is to find such trends of accepting exceptions, which gives hope to today's applicants.

The admissions policies from the 1930s and 1970s both indicate that the policy, especially when pertaining to the acceptance of women, was affected by public opinion. When society viewed women as inferior and unworthy of higher education, the admissions rates were low. In the 1970s, society had already begun to view women as more capable and worthy of possessing "real" jobs. Consequently, admissions rates rose. From this information, by analysis of society's view of women, admissions rates can be predicted. In almost every professional sector, women have excelled equally as well as men and therefore, are no longer seen as inferior. Individuals may still be biased about female power, but society as a whole lends a more accepting view. With this in mind, it can be predicted that the rates of admissions for men and women should be relatively equal and indeed, this is the observed statistic.

Although the culmination of all this material may seem useless for college students because the admissions process is already complete, acceptance into medical school, law school, graduate school, business school, or any other school in which applications are due will depend on the aforementioned factors. Even getting a job will rely on these same factors. When applying for any position, whether as a student or future employee, it is essential to know the criteria on which the decision is being based. Because various factors were similar throughout all of the decades, it can be inferred that such factors are essential today as well. Colleges,

graduate schools, and companies are looking for people who will offer something new to the community of people that the applicant would be joining. Ultimately, it is still impossible to know why someone gets accepted while another person is rejected, but by identifying the overarching values and factors that admissions boards assess, it is easier to rationalize the admissions decisions.

After all of this, some questions still remain unanswered. It is easy for the Admissions Board to look at the extracurriculars and the grades once they have been submitted, but whose job is it to get those applicants to apply? The Admissions Board knows what is acceptable and specifically, what they are looking for in an applicant. As a result, is it the Board's responsibility to seek out these applicants? Because of the reputation that Duke University has established, a sufficient amount of applicants apply each year, without prodding from recruiters. However, getting ample amounts of applicants should not be the goal of the Admissions Board. Instead, the quality of each applicant should be of interest. Ultimately, the Admissions Board should compile a team, who would focus on recruitment. They would seek out the top achievers in different areas and persuade them to come to Duke; they should be responsible for selling Duke. And because the Admissions Board is making the ultimate admissions decisions and knows what characteristics are deemed acceptable, it would be easiest for them to be the recruiters.

The establishment of The Woman's College and the success that it saw during its years of operation also lead to the question concerning the establishment of such colleges now. All-girls colleges have acquired a reputation that might not appeal to all females. The potential of having a reduced social life due to the absence of boys or the threat of being called a "lesbian" might deter many applicants. However, after the advantages were presented by Dean Baldwin in her papers, it is obvious how beneficial these colleges actually are. As a woman trying to succeed, a

college of this nature would suit perfectly. The increase in opportunities presented to each female, without the distraction of men in the classroom or on the campus, would enhance a woman's education in some many different ways. In no way would it be acceptable to segregate school again, but it is important for applicants to realize such bonuses, or extra opportunities by attending such a school. Women's colleges today do not recruit and advertise these benefits and therefore, lose a number of very qualified applicants.

Although the analysis of the admissions process has left questions unanswered or have brought up new questions, it has been helpful in answering the question "Why did I get in?" Being able to understand why people got in does not mean that this analysis can be used to help get someone *into* college; just by knowing the criteria, it is not any easier to formulate an acceptable application. However, college admissions boards are looking for the overachievers, the go-getters, the students who have a bright and promising future in front of them. Keeping this in mind, all high school students should be encouraged to pursue their passions and not spend so much time worrying about grades. Yes, grades are important, but the research has shown that the decision concerning acceptance exceeds far past any set of numbers typed on a page.

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