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Remarks by President James T. Laney to Students, Sunday Evening, April 22

Preface: We have been through some difficult days together, and we continue to share a sense of heartache about the deep pain experienced by one of your fellow students. Many of you have spent untold hours over the last few weeks trying to find effective ways to communicate to each other and to me some matters close to your heart. I want you to know that these energies and concerns have not been expended in vain. We have all learned from them. I have asked for this chance to talk with you in order to tell what I personally have learned from you over the past few weeks, and to tell you some of the things I think we need to do.

Over the weekend I have carefully reviewed various reports and recommendations that have been made concerning our racial climate on campus. I have reread the report of the President's Commission on the status of Minorities, so thoughtfully articulated last year by its Chairperson, Ms. Cynthia Shaw, and endorsed by the current chairperson, Dr. Mackie Norris. Though the McClain Report has not yet been officially communicated to me, I have read it carefully. I have reread the latest annual report of the Director of Equal Opportunity Programs. I have studied an advance draft of the report of the Task Force on Security and Responsibility which has been meeting in recent weeks. I have reread the report of the Committee on the Academic Priorities of the University. And I have reflected at length on my recent conversations with some distinguished black alumni of the university, with your elected president of the SGA Aldous McCrory, and with the leaders of the Students Against Racial Inequality.

What I have to say is a distillation and response to all those reports and plans that have been in progress for some time. To me all these reports and recommendations are saying a few relatively simple and important things, which I would like to set forth in the form of several basic propositions.

First: You are telling me that in spite of Emory's diversity, there is not yet an adequate multi-cultural presence at Emory, particularly not yet an adequate presence of the African-American heritage here -- neither in the numbers of minority faculty, nor in the curriculum, nor in our utilization of the unique cultural richness of the city of Atlanta.

Second: You are telling me that in spite of all our campus life programming in the dormitories and counselling center, we have not yet done enough to educate all our students, faculty and staff about matters of racial and, I would add, gender sensitivity.

Third: You are telling me what all of our students, black and white, are telling me, that the cost of an Emory education is high and that you need some more help.

Finally: You are telling me that in these matters you do not have enough access to me.

I would agree with you in every one of these propositions, and I'd like to talk about each one of them in turn.

Multicultural Presence, Especially African-American Heritage

Where we are now:

-- Emory has the oldest African-American and African Studies Program at any southern university, headed for last 15 years by Prof. Dolores Aldridge. You will be pleased to know that a panel of chairholders in the college last month recommended that Dr. Aldridge be named to an

endowed chair and I will be recommending to the trustees at their next meeting that she be named the Grace Towns Hamilton Professor of Sociology and African-American studies. Within this program, the university established the first national lectureship to be named after a black woman. Since 1979 the number of AAAS courses has tripled, from 10 to 30, with an additional 32 contributing courses in other departments.

-- Emory has produced more PhD's who specialize in African-American studies than any other university in the South.

-- Under the leadership of Candler Professor Richard Joseph we have established the Institute for African Studies in Emory College and the Institute for African Governance in the Carter Center. Professor Joseph has already staged several important national conferences through these institutes and they will increasingly draw major figures to campus.

-- Though the black faculty has not grown as fast as we would like, due to intense competition in recruitment by other universities, Emory's black faculty is larger than that at most research universities in the nation and our faculty is, without exception, very distinguished.

-- Four years ago, Emory lured away from UCLA the African Studies Association, the most distinguished scholarly society of African specialists. The executive director of the association is an Emory faculty member.

-- The university has invested substantial funds in setting up the BSA house, as well as helping established black fraternities and sororities on campus.

-- In addition to the African-American and African Studies Program, we have invested heavily in creating nationally respected area studies programs in Women's Studies, Soviet and Eastern European Studies, and Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Emory's basic philosophy is to build excellence through interdisciplinary linkages across disciplines. We are committed to

strengthening these and moving selectively into other areas of international study in the years ahead. Of course the Carter Center of Emory University is a prime instance of our commitment to a global vision for Emory.

-- Emory now has students from 90 nations, the most diverse student population in the state. 6.9% of the student body is black, giving us one of the largest such percentages of any major research university. What is more important, we have worked hard to make sure that our students graduate, and have as good a record on that score as any university in the nation.

-- Fully 30% of the annual programming budget for Campus Life is devoted to multicultural, international and human relations programs and services.

-- One final measure of the minority presence at Emory is your own success in achieving visibility on this campus. As you know, two of the highest elective offices on our campus are held by black students, and over the last 11 years, our university's highest student award has gone 3 times to a black student at commencement.

Ask any alumnus or alumna from the 1960's about these measures and they will tell you that Emory has made remarkable progress in growing into an increasingly multicultural university.

What we need to do: While we have worked hard to do these things, it is clear that many of them have not touched the lives of our undergraduate students in any meaningful sense. I believe we need to undertake the following additional measures.

-- Strengthen the AAAS Program, through continued efforts to appoint additional minority faculty to key departments throughout the university and through strengthening our partnerships with the traditionally black institutions.

-- Request the dean and faculty of each school to assess that division's minority presence and come up with a plan by December 1990 to enrich that faculty by additional appointments within the next few years. In addition to the expected effort to bring minority faculty through the normal recruiting process, we will make at least two special opportunity appointments each year to assist the schools of the university in achieving these aims.

-- Create a program of visiting fellows to be known as the Benjamin Mays Fellows at Emory University. The Mays Fellows would be distinguished black professional, business and political leaders who would spend several days on the Emory campus directly relating to students, teaching in classes and meeting seminars, much as President Carter does in his monthly visits to campus.

-- Make a determined effort to influence the curriculum of the College and other units of the university, through creation of a Center for Teaching and Curricular Enrichment. This center will be given resources and incentives for faculty to explore the possibilities of alternative readings and speakers dealing with a range of important social issues, including black and feminist perspectives. By coordinating curricular workshops for all faculty in the college, this would have potentially a far-reaching and profound effect on education at Emory. In short, I am in agreement that the college curriculum should more successfully engage all Emory students in multicultural perspectives, and I believe that there are many on the college faculty who share this commitment. As you know, this is a matter of faculty prerogative.

-- Create a Multi-cultural Resource and Learning Center under the direction of the Director of Minority Student Programs. Under this center, mentoring and academic support programs for minority students would be expanded, as would our outreach programs on racial awareness and multicultural diversity.

Educating the Community on Matters of Sensitivity

You are aware of many of the programs already in place to help educate our students, faculty and staff on matters of racial and gender sensitivity. You know that Emory has one of the firmest policies in the nation on the matter of discriminatory harassment. You also are aware of the many people who work at Emory who have committed their entire careers to transforming American higher education with respect to diversity and equity. But there is clearly more work to do. I propose the following:

-- So that these matters of concern this spring will not die in the summer vacation, I will propose to the faculty that the freshman seminar this coming fall be devoted to the issue of "Difference." In addition, Vera Rorie, Renee Baird and Bill Fox of Campus Life have been developing a multicultural program for each freshman residence hall during the fall semester.

-- In my address to entering students and their parents this fall, I plan to dwell on Emory's commitment to a pluralistic community and our absolute opposition to any kind of discriminatory harassment on our campus

-- We will attempt to reach all students in the residence halls, fraternities, and sorority lodges through a series of programs on race and gender sensitivity.

-- We will institute a series of sensitivity sessions for all personnel, both regular staff and students, who perform gatekeeper functions that bring them into regular contact with students: e.g., registrar, financial aid, PE Center, library, bookstore, food services, police.

Financial Aid Matters

The university has already made a financial commitment to its minority students that equals that of any other institution in the nation. Each year for the past decade we have increased aid substantially more than we have increased tuition, with the amount for minority students increasing even more. Three years ago, we reached the point of being able to promise to every student admitted to Emory that we would meet their demonstrated financial need, a

promise that few other colleges can make. This year, almost \$4 million has gone to minority students, which is the equivalent of the income from an \$80 million endowment. This fall, for the first time, the financial package for entering minority freshmen will include no loans. In addition to this need-based aid, black freshmen in the entering class have been offered 4 Woodruff Scholarships, 13 Martin Luther King Scholarships, and 3 other Emory merit scholarships.

In addition to these undergraduate awards, Dean George Jones has received a commitment for 6 additional graduate stipends for minority students in each of the next four years, until there are a total of 24.

My Personal Leadership

Finally, I want to say to you that these are such important matters to me and to the University that I am personally taking charge of this challenge to make Emory a model of multicultural diversity and global awareness. This is a commitment that comes out of my own life experience and that of my family. It is one to which I am deeply committed.

In this, I have good help. Among the university's trustees are several who hold strongly to this vision, including Mr. Felker Ward who has been much in evidence on campus the last few days. There is a large group of black alumni in this city who love the university and are determined to see it improve and flourish. The senior staff of the university is committed to this vision, and Vice President George Jones will be especially effective in counseling me.

In addition, I am giving both Dr. Robert Ethridge and Ms. Vera Rorie direct access to me, so that you can be sure of getting your concerns directly to me. Together they will continue to ensure the effectiveness of the President's Commission on Minorities in its cross-campus advisory role.

Finally, to Emory's students, whether of African-American or other heritage, I want to say that you are not merely passive receivers of an Emory education, with all its strengths and its flaws. More than any of your teachers or your advisors, you yourselves make your education. You have chosen to come to a university that is more ethnically diverse than many, that is closer to a global community than many universities you might have attended, one that is committed to certain ideas of living and learning together in mutual respect. Out of the events of the last several weeks, we have together accepted a common challenge, to realize the great possibilities of that diversity, and to carry that mark with us when we leave this place.