

May 25, 1969

Dear Brother (or Sister):

On behalf of the Afro-American Student Union at Harvard Business School, I would like to welcome you to the M.B.A. Class of 1971. The AASU has every expectation that the coming two years here at HBS will prove to be valuable and productive ones for you.

In the interest of helping you become acclimated to the Program, I am providing herein information which I think will be of use to you. Should you have questions about any of the information contained in this letter, please write to me or to anyone else in the AASU at HBS.

Forgive the formality of the format. There is so much to be related that it is impossible to compose a letter that is sufficiently personal and lucid to do justice to the significance of the letter's content.

The Afro-American Student Union.

The AASU was founded by the six Blacks who constituted the Black first-year class of 1969, in February 1968. The AASU arose out of a real need to provide a base from which Blacks at HBS could move to increase the enrolment of Black students, to increase the fellowship monies available to Black students, to initiate or cause to be initiated new courses of greater use to Blacks, and to provide for more meaningful social interaction and career development interaction among the increasing numbers of entering Blacks.

This group of six helped to recruit many of the 27 Blacks who constitute the M.B.A. class of 1970. And this total group of first-year and second-year Blacks have worked together this year to implement the organization's several objectives. Although I cannot list all of the many things we have accomplished and are still in the process of accomplishing, I will list several. They are:

1. More extensive recruiting at approximately 20 colleges and universities across the nation.
2. A commitment for larger fellowship awards to Black students who are in need.
3. A commitment from the Faculty to do even more extensive recruiting next year so that Blacks will constitute nearly 10% of each entering class.
4. The creation of several "Black-related" or "urban-related" courses in the second year.
5. The acquisition of an AASU conference room.
6. The "politicizing" of the more liberal wing of the student body, Faculty, and Administration.

There exist committees which are responsible for ensuring that the AASU's wishes are fulfilled in each of the above-mentioned areas and in several others.

The AASU is indisputably the most powerful interest group on campus - welcomed by some, envied by some, hated by some, and respected by ALL. But, the AASU is not engaged in "politics" simply because political involvement is in fashion. Everything that we have done this year has been motivated by a desire to promote constructive change at HBS. We are intent upon creating the types of changes which will make HBS more useful to ourselves, those who will succeed us, and the general Black community.

We want to emphasize the fact that the AASU is not a court of adjudication designed to judge the "Blackness" of individual students or to segregate the "together" from the "un-together." We are engaged in so many vital activities that we welcome any and every Black student who wants to contribute his time and energy to any one of the programs or activities in which we are involved.

While we know that it is, perhaps, "natural" that persons make evaluations of the "Blackness" of other persons, we feel that - given the necessity of maintaining group cohesion in what can be a hostile environment - all of us should do our damndest to avoid the standard "Blacker-than-thou" attitudes and behavior. We urge you - as, indeed, we have urged each other this year - to withhold judgment of your fellow classmates until you have got to know them as individuals, each of whom has a unique background, a unique personality, and a unique way of ordering his understanding of the world in which we now live.

We have found in working together this year that mutual respect and effective cooperation are possible even among persons whose dress, speech, walk, background, and career goals are strikingly different. We have learned to work together and to assist each other even though we occasionally find ourselves in substantial disagreement with each other's personal philosophies and views. This is the basis upon which the AASU operates to generate meaningful change at HBS. We hope that you will accept this basis of mutual respect and cooperation, also.

#### Participation in the AASU

For the most part, you will have time to study only during your first three months at the School. We do not expect you to spend a great deal of time in AASU meetings or working on committees. However, meetings will be held at least once a month, and we urge you to attend these meetings. Only through regular attendance at and participation in such meetings can you obtain the information which will be invaluable to you in negotiating the rigors of the first-year program. (For example, a committee is currently working on study aids - including old WAC's, class notes, tutors for the quantitative courses, etc. The most efficient means of getting such information and assistance to you is through organizational meetings.)

We have, for the most part, gone through hell in getting through the first year. (Don't start trembling, however; everybody goes through hell in the first year.) We want to make the first-year hell a little cooler for you.

But, you will have to demonstrate trust in our ability to assist you by attending the monthly meetings. We will have little time to track you down and individually brief you on the things that are going on.

The AASU will elect new officers in December, just before vacation. At that time, you and your classmates will have to assume the direction of the organization. You will be at a loss as to what to do if you have failed to keep yourself informed of the progress in recruiting, financial aid, career development programs, etc. And one important lesson which we have learned this year is that decisions based on incomplete or inadequate information lead to unintended results - which, in turn, lead only to more acute problems. We strongly urge you to keep in touch with second-year Blacks and with the AASU so that you will be on top of every situation.

#### Academics.

Your first obligation as a Black student at HBS is to establish yourself academically. By this we mean that in seeking to further the causes for which the AASU stands and in seeking to maximize your personal effectiveness, your first duty is to learn the rules of the academic game here and to master the game. This does not mean that you have to become a Baker Scholar (though this is an honorable objective). We are mainly concerned with ensuring that every Black who starts in September 1969 returns in September 1970.

As an organization and as individuals, we have many things to do which require a great deal of time and energy from each of us. Our organizational and political energies will not be wasted on those persons who help themselves flunk out. We intend to help to the maximum extent possible those who help themselves; we do not intend to legitimize laziness and indifference, even if that laziness and indifference is camouflaged by charges that the School is irrelevant.

We are at all times anxious to hear your suggestions on how the Program can be improved. We have a committee that is working with various professors and administrators on this very matter. However, if you do not communicate your concerns to us (or if you do not work on these concerns individually), then we will not be swayed by 11th-hour appeals to bail anyone out of academic trouble. Let us be very clear about this matter before the year begins: we are prepared to help in every way possible those who both seek our help and those who really try; conversely, we are prepared to let die those who write their own execution order.

#### AASU Strategy for Fomenting Change.

As we will explain in detail in September, we have moved the School quite a distance during the last nine months. The winds of change are beginning to blow on a campus which has been termed the "West Point of Capitalism." (Others have more correctly called it the "Bastion of Economic Conservatism.")

But the ball game is constantly changing. The rules of the game, the players, and the spectators - all have changed since September 1968. Therefore, the AASU takes pains to keep abreast of what is happening behind closed doors at HBS because we do not intend to have our effectiveness neutralized. So, our main concern is with adequate and correct information. Secondly, we concern ourselves with a thorough analysis of the complexities of each situation. Thirdly, we make a decision and move to see that that decision is not nullified.

The "system" at HBS differs in its complexities, its vulnerabilities, and its changeability from other systems. As you find your way through the first several months of the Program, please take pains to understand how decisions and institutional strategy are formulated here. To the extent that you understand how this place is put together - to that extent your actions will attain the intended results.

To avoid major disasters next year, we urge you to listen to the experiences and recommendations of second-year Black students. Learn how the Faculty, Administration, student body, and AASU operate. Be ready to change your preconceptions and strategies when new information arises. (New information and changes in the rules, the players, and the spectators - all are quite common here.) By following this advice, we guarantee that you will save yourself much anguish and frustration.

#### Extracurricular Life.

Traditionally, the SA and the various clubs at HBS organize most of the speaker and social functions. Sections occasionally give parties, also. We have found the sections, the SA, and the clubs to be less than adequate in serving our extracurricular needs, social and otherwise. Therefore, the AASU handles its own extracurricular needs through the collection of dues from its participant-members.

Next year, we are planning to bring in at least six speakers of the caliber of author Harold Cruse, politicians Edward Brooke and Julian Bond, civil rights leaders Rev. Jesse Jackson and Mrs. Martin L. King, Jr., economists Andrew Brimmer and Robert Browne, etc. We also plan to have one major conference on Black economic development (or a topic of similar importance) at which Black M.B.A. students from across the nation will be invited to attend. We hope to send a representative to major conferences of great interest to Black people - e.g., the Black Power Conference, the National Black Economic Development Conference, etc. Finally, we plan at least five parties (with "soul" bands and "fire water") at which girls from the local colleges (Radcliffe, Wellesley, Simmons, etc.) will be invited. Other organizational activities will undoubtedly be planned as the year proceeds.

In order to finance these activities, second-year Blacks are paying \$40 per person and you are being asked to contribute \$25 per person. (We expect to be able to get outside funds to match whatever we generate internally.) Now, the SA charges \$10 for membership and the Interclub Council charges \$15. These charges are unnecessary. First, the SA provides soul-less bands, boring cocktail parties, and a "Fifth Avenue"

Christmas Ball. You won't even approach getting your money's worth out of the SA because you'll be out-voted on any exciting and meaningful extracurricular activity which you propose. Let's face it: your non-class needs will be different from the majority of the students at the School. And, of course, the majority rules.

As for the Interclub Council, your \$15 membership fee goes to buy liquor for those boring cocktail hours which follow each speaker which the various clubs invite. This would be fine if the speakers were of such stature and interest that you would want to attend the cocktail hours. However, this is not the case. Plus, you can attend the speaker sessions - free of charge - and, then, go to the Pub for a beer, if you are so inclined. So, why pay the ICC \$15 that yields you nothing which you cannot obtain anyhow?

We are not saying that you should isolate yourself from the wider range of activities which are provided at the School. We are simply saying that the AASU needs your financial support next year in order to carry out its activities and programs, which you will undoubtedly find more to your liking. We urge you to pay the AASU \$25 in lieu of paying the SA and the ICC \$25. Should you find the AASU's activities to be irrelevant, your money will be returned. This we promise. (Dues will be collected at the first organizational meeting on the first Saturday following the first two days of classes.)

#### The Summer Program.

Because it was deemed useful by the students who were in it last summer, a summer program is being offered again this year. Some persons - both Black and white - whose test scores and/or grades indicate that they could benefit from the courses in the summer program will be invited to attend. We believe that you should take advantage of the orientation and courses which will be offered in the summer if you are asked by the School to participate. The program will cover a substantial portion of MERC I and MERC II and several WAC's. It has been designed to help you negotiate the rigors of the first year. Several of us second-year Black students will be around during the summer to participate in the orientation sessions.

If you are asked to attend, you should not feel that you will be stigmatized for the remainder of the two years of the Program or that you will be getting a second-rate degree or anything like that. Accept it for what it is: a chance to save yourself some problems during the first-year Program. If you are asked to attend and you accept, you will start out the regular term in September with a little more self-confidence and a better idea of what to expect than will those students who do not attend the Program.

#### Housing.

If you need help in locating off-campus housing, please write to the chairman of the AASU's Housing Committee. His address is:

Mr. Daniel Dennis  
33a Slayton Way  
Roxbury, Massachusetts  
Phone: (617) 445-4906

Dan will do his best to advise you on what housing accommodations are available in the Boston area. He has a list of Black realty firms who have decent apartments. If you need housing, and if you intend to seek Dan's help, please do so immediately. Boston's supply of apartments goes very quickly because of the large student population in the city.

For single students who intend to live on campus, do not hesitate to ask for a Black roommate if you want to live with a brother.

Conclusion.

It is hoped that this letter has been helpful to you in your preparations for the "B" School. If it has offended your sensibilities, I apologize. If you have questions, please write. We will see you in September. (Try to get some rest this summer.)

Sincerely,

Address:

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Clifford E. Darden, Chairman  
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The A.A.S.U.