Bok issues "open" letter on discrimination

By Barry S. Surman

In an eight-page open letter released last Friday, Harvard University President Derek C. Bok also addressed the state of race relations, minority admissions and affirmative action, and made a proposal for a Third World Center at the University.

Bok stated that the issue of race relations, minority admissions and affirmative action are "of central concern" to every student, faculty member and staff member.

"We have made considerable progress toward our objectives. It is just as obvious that we have some distance yet to travel."

The three "pertinent objectives" stated by Bok are equal opportunity for all students at Harvard, an environment conducive to obtaining the best possible education, and encouragement of interchange among all students.

The message to minority students is "that they are welcomed here as fully as any other group of students."

Bok admitted that "the record of this standpoint, in that every student has assembled it in class with video valuations of the universe.

"The students should be benefited as much in their personal development from contact with each other as they have from their readings and lectures."

He continued, "an enlightened admissions committee will wish to assemble a class with widely varying backgrounds and talents so that every student has a chance to contribute."

"Every student has a chance to contribute."

He interpreted affirmative action as a policy of awareness and sensitivity, a policy of equality of educational opportunity, independent of the possession or nonpossession of traditional academic credentials. "A sound admissions policy, he noted, "should provide for special efforts to enroll able minority students because the recognition of this need and the opportunities to make important contributions to society after they graduate."

"We vowed to defend Harvard's admissions philosophy against any effort from outside the University to overrule our policies and limit our authority to use our own judgment in admitting students to this institution."

On the issue of race relations, Bok stated that "the record of achievement is uneven... We have obviously made considerable progress toward our objectives. It is just as obvious that we have some distance yet to travel."

The three "pertinent objectives" stated by Bok are equal opportunity for all students at Harvard, an environment conducive to obtaining the best possible education, and encouragement of interchange among all students. His message to minority students is "that they are welcomed here as fully as any other group of students."

Bok also made clear that Harvard's resources could not be used to "provide special facilities for the social and cultural needs of particular categories of students."

Bok defended the University's affirmative action policy. "Modest support is advocated, however, for an organization to promote racial understanding and appreciation," he said.

"One of Harvard's great opportunities lies in these issues," according to Bok. "He seeks to maintain Harvard's leading role in the advancement of the interests of minorities, and therefore in the nation as a whole."

GULF RECRUITING REPRESENTATIVES ON CAMPUS:

MARCH 10-11, 1981