

Forum on equal access to Grad and Professional Schools

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What has become of the aspirations of the disenfranchised - minorities, women, the poor - encouraged by the promises of the 1960s and early 70s?

In the wake of a national and worldwide economic squeeze, together with counter accusations and "reverse" civil rights suits, many dreams seem to have dissolved.

In order to focus attention on these and similar discrimination problems, the Office of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of California, San Diego is sponsoring a forum on "Equal Access to Graduate and Professional School: A Myth or a Reality" from noon to 2 p.m. Friday, June 4. The forum, which is free and open to the public, will be held in the Formal Lounge on the Revelle College campus.

According to Frank Saiz, assistant dean of students with special responsibility for minority graduate students at UC San Diego, the forum will address itself to the many crucial questions currently being faced by the so-called "affirmative action" programs at colleges and universities.

"Many points of view will be represented at the forum," Saiz said, "including those of black women students, white women students, the white male who feels reverse discrimination, the black male graduate student, the chicano medical student and even the black professor.

According to Saiz, higher education is currently facing a crisis fed by many old myths, and some new ones, in trying to explain the difficulty women and students of color still have in "making it" in the academic community despite the law purportedly ensuring equality of opportunity.

"In a job market already glutted with too many unemployed Ph.D.s is it fair to pump up the hopes of still more graduates who bear the added burden of being standard-bearers for their group, race or nationality," Saiz said. "Or is such an expression of concern just another form of racism or sexism?"

"Is it just an old prejudice surfacing under a new guise or is it true that there are still very few minorities and women in decision-making positions because they just don't have what it takes to get up there and stay there," Saiz said.

"These are the questions we want to get at," Saiz said. "There are many well-meaning people who don't even realize they're prey to prejudices, assumptions and hidden traces of racism and sexism," he said. "We're not trying to expose or embarrass them. We simply want to give everyone an opportunity to air their differences and grievances and, we hope, to offer some suggestions and guidelines for working together."

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