A Maverick in the Field: The Oram Group and Fundraising in the Black College Community during the 1970s

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The Oram firm was really a different animal. We cherished a strong anti-corporate culture, we were cause-driven, and we served liberal and left-wing counter-cultural organizations.¹

Since its founding in 1939, the Oram Group has been a maverick in the field of fundraising, lending its expertise to the areas of education, welfare, social action, civil rights, the arts, and the environment. Beginning with the organization’s founder, Harold Oram, continuing to the current president and chief executive officer Henry Goldstein, Oram staff members have had an interest in supporting progressive (i.e., social justice-oriented) causes.²

Influenced by Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal policies and Lyndon B. Johnson’s vision of a Great Society, the Oram Group staff has been steadfast in its dedication, with founder Harold Oram referring to the organization’s work as “saving the world.”³ This approach was different from that of earlier fundraising organizations, such as Marts and Lundy or

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³ Henry Goldstein, interview with authors, April 2, 2006, Atlanta, GA. Interview and transcript in possession of authors.
John Price Jones—firms that worked, by and large, with elite white institutions and with black colleges under the direction of white philanthropists. For example, according to Robert L. Payton, for Arnaud C. Marts [and his colleagues at Marts and Lundy],

Philanthropy [was] closely linked to the free market economy, local government, and individual responsibility. The emerging civil rights movement, the decay of the inner cities, environmental pollution, and the radical challenges to authority were not yet part of Mart's [sic] consciousness nor of the general public's. Freedom and patriotism were the dominant slogans rather than equality and justice.4

Beyond other for-profit fundraising firms, the Oram Group distinguished itself from the leading foundations of the time—Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller—in terms of directly benefitting black colleges. Throughout the twentieth century these foundations had been practicing, as Alice O'Connor describes it, “philanthropic activism” by funding the creation of knowledge that could shape and support government policy for expanding the liberal state.5 For example, the Ford Foundation in the 1950s was involved in the support of the Fund for the Advancement of Education (FAE), which helped produce some of the academic research that was used to argue Brown v. Board of Education.6 FAE, with the use of Ford funds, also supported the National Scholarship Service and the Fund for Negro Students, both organizations dedicated to enhancing black leadership.7 While the work of these foundations in the area of black education is notable, it is different from the work of the Oram Group, which worked directly with black college leadership and empowered them with the fundraising skills necessary to successfully navigate significant capital campaigns. In addition, these organizations are foundations, whereas the Oram Group is, as mentioned, a for-profit fundraising and consulting group with arguably less freedom to subscribe to liberal politics and causes.

Unlike the work of Marts and Lundy and the large foundations, the Oram Group used its knowledge of fundraising and its connections within philanthropic communities to help further “equity and justice.” Of note is the Oram Group’s support of black colleges. Starting in 1964, a tumultuous time, and one in which many believed Brown v. Board made

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7Ibid.
black colleges obsolete, the Oram Group made a strong commitment to fundraising in this area, believing that black colleges offered a unique, mission-focused educational experience. Moreover, the Oram Group worked directly with individual black colleges rather than as an intermediary like many foundations at the time. In this article, we examine the work of the Oram Group, a for-profit fundraising organization, on behalf of individual black colleges. Specifically, we look at how and why this fundraising organization became involved with black higher education. What can be learned, we ask, from the strategies used by the organization to raise funds for and within black communities? This research complements new work on the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and its fundraising on behalf of black colleges. In fact, with the exception of the UNCF, the Oram Group has raised more money for black colleges than any other fundraising organization. However, the organization’s efforts remain virtually unknown and unexamined within the literature on fundraising. We hold that the Oram Group can be used as a lens through which we can view the development of modern day fundraising at black colleges. Historical evidence shows that in many cases, the Oram Group gave black colleges the advice they needed to develop fundraising programs that would no longer need to rely on the services of external professional fundraisers in order to be successful.

The purpose of this article is to provide a better understanding of the history of fundraising in black college communities; to complicate understandings of white involvement in black college fundraising; to understand the role of fundraising, that is, fundraising for social change and social justice, during the period that followed the Brown decision and encompassed the Civil Rights Movement; and to identify strategies employed by the Oram Group that are still relevant today for black college advancement offices.

Based upon our research, we suggest that the Oram Group was a maverick in the fundraising field both within their own organization and in the implementation of capital campaigns for black colleges. The Oram Group, as a for-profit firm, took on many black college clients that other firms considered too risky, charging them below-market rates. The case studies discussed in this article show the Oram Group as having progressive hiring practices within its own ranks long before others and having treated each black college and their situation in a unique way, not assuming that what worked at one institution would be successful at others. Further, for the first time, the Oram Group, encouraged black colleges to focus on fundraising from alumni and the emerging black

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middle class and worked with black college leadership to build campaigns that would sustain the institution for years to come rather than year to year. Finally, we will show that Oram consultants encouraged black colleges to build cases for support that challenged the idea, often held by the public and many foundation leaders, that their institutions were vestiges of segregation. Rather, through the use of comparison data, the Oram consultants helped their clients to develop a case for their donors that argued that black colleges were beneficial to American society as a whole.

The Literature on Philanthropy, Fundraising, and Black Colleges

Within the uneven and generally out-of-date literature on the history of philanthropy and fundraising in higher education, there has been much attention paid to white industrial philanthropists and their support of black colleges during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Some researchers see these business moguls’ support of African-American education as benevolent.9 Revisionist scholars, on the other hand, view the philanthropists’ efforts as part of a self-serving scheme to control the labor market in the South.10 Still other scholars have taken a seemingly more neutral view of the philanthropists, noting how their deep religious commitments dovetailed with their Capitalist mentalities.11 Scholars have explored the philanthropy of individuals such as John D. Rockefeller Sr., Andrew Carnegie, and Julius Rosenwald, to name a few.12 They have also examined the efforts of organizations such as the General Education Board on behalf of black colleges, noting underlying notions of paternalism and control.13

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13See, for example, Anderson and Moss, Dangerous Donations: Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South; Watkins, White Architects of Black Education; Lewis, W.E.B. Du Bois.
While many scholars have explored the philanthropists’ actions in giving to black colleges, very few have examined the individual black colleges’ fundraising efforts on their own behalf. For example, in *Fundraising in the United States*, Scott Cutlip dedicates only a page to this topic. One scholar has researched fundraising for black colleges during the 1940s and 1950s, specifically looking at the United Negro College Fund’s efforts as well as those of Marts and Lundy, Inc., a for-profit, fundraising firm. With regard to Marts and Lundy, this organization was typically hired by white philanthropists to work with black colleges or at the suggestion of these individuals rather than by the black colleges themselves. Shauna Tucker and Lea Williams have also examined the day to day operations of black fundraising organizations. With regard to the 1960s, David Garrow has explored fundraising on behalf of civil rights causes, finding that once civil rights and student activism became more mainstream it was considered fashionable to support causes such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Likewise, one of the authors of this paper has explored the impact of the black consciousness movement of the 1970s on the approaches to fundraising for black colleges, noting the resulting emphasis on hiring black fundraisers and pushing back against the demands of white philanthropists. However, to date, there has been virtually no exploration of for-profit fundraising firms and their efforts to raise money on behalf of black colleges.

Overall, there is little research that explores the actual strategies used by for-profit fundraising organizations (as opposed to industrial or corporate-sponsored foundations or individual philanthropists) to raise funds for black colleges, especially within the post- *Brown* era. This era is particularly important in that it was during this time that it became increasingly difficult to persuade donors to give to what appeared to be vestiges of segregation. Even past supporters and advocates of black colleges, such as Walter White of the National Association for the
Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), were calling for the closure of black colleges.\textsuperscript{19} What we know about white fundraisers working with black colleges is focused on the early twentieth century and is centered on the informal fundraising undertaken by wealthy white philanthropists, such as John D. Rockefeller Jr. and his New York associates. Not only did these individuals give their own money but they solicited others on behalf of black colleges. New scholarship will complicate our understandings of the relationships between whites and blacks in the area of fundraising, providing a more nuanced interpretation and covering a contemporary time period.\textsuperscript{20} By comprehending this relationship in a more refined way, we see a partnership emerge between white fundraisers and black college administrators. The combination of black agency and the knowledge, access, and progressive views of the Oram Group was of utmost importance to the ultimate success of these campaigns. The type of relationship between the Oram Group and its black college clients is quite different than those with philanthropists and even those with the UNCF (which had a predominantly white fundraising staff until the 1970s). Instead of the “conservative and noncontroversial” approach to fundraising used by many white philanthropist-fundraisers, including John D. Rockefeller Jr., the Oram consultants used a progressive approach, focused on social justice and held the unique mission of black colleges in high regard.\textsuperscript{21} We believe that this article helps to tell a more complete story of the history of fundraising within the black college and higher education arenas.\textsuperscript{22} Moreover, it will help us further

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., see “A Stigma of Inferiority” chapter.

\textsuperscript{20}This paper uses historical methods. We seek to gain an understanding of the past and to explain change over time. A key part of this approach is the examination of primary sources from the period in question (post-1954). Such sources in this case include the Oram Group’s archival papers (housed at the Payton Philanthropic Studies Library at Indiana University-Purdue University) and archival papers in the individual colleges with which the Oram Group worked over the past 40 years (including Meharry Medical College, Miles College, Fisk University, LeMoyne-Owen College, Howard University, Morehouse College, Clark Atlanta University, among others). We have buttressed the information gathered from these archival papers with oral history interviews conducted with Oram staff members and black college presidents. Oral history records the voices of those directly involved with the phenomena being studied, documenting human experiences and distilling larger ideas and trends. The underlying idea here is the concept of agency—“the assumed ability of individuals to shape the conditions of their lives.” Meredith D. Gall, Walter R. Borg, and Joyce P. Gall, \textit{Educational Research: An Introduction} (New York: Longman, 1996), 610.


\textsuperscript{22}We could only locate one book related to fundraising: Scott Cutlip’s \textit{Fundraising in the United States}. 
understand which fundraising practices worked most effectively with black colleges, given their unique missions of racial uplift.23

The Origins of the Oram Group

Harold Oram, born in 1907, was the son of Hungarian Jewish immigrants and grew up in rural Pennsylvania. He graduated from New York Law School in 1934, immediately beginning a career in journalism. By 1936, Oram began working with the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, a group that raised funds to support Spanish Loyalists who had left their native country following Fascist General Francisco Franco’s victory in the Spanish Civil War.24 The war was a precursor to the struggle against Hitler and the conflict attracted the attention of American left-wing idealists, such as Ernest Hemingway.25 After three years, Harold Oram, like many other Americans, became disillusioned with the movement and in 1939, he established the Oram Group, Inc., a progressive, for-profit company dedicated to fundraising for liberal causes and fighting injustice.26 He hired a diverse group of employees who shared this vision. Many of the early clients of the organization were fighting for social and political causes, including abortion rights, nuclear nonproliferation, civil rights and the environment.27 Two of the most prominent minority-serving organizations assisted by the Oram Group were the National Sharecroppers Fund and the NAACP’s Legal Defense Fund. It was particularly important to the Oram Group to fundraise for these organizations given their efforts to push for economic and social

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26Oram Group, Inc., Records, 1937–1992, MSS. 57, IUPUI University Library, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, Indianapolis, IN (IUPUI Archives from this point forward), 2.
27Ibid.
equality for low-income people. In its current state, the fundraising organization continues to serve progressive clients (as well as some more mainstream ones). The Oram Group’s progressive nature not only extended to its client list, but the company’s employment practices as well. Of note is the fact that many of the Oram Group’s first employees were women. More forward thinking than many of his male business counterparts in this regard, Harold Oram did not object to women working outside the home.28 That said, according to Henry Goldstein, the current president of the organization,

Harold … saw women the traditional way in the work place. Clarence Thomas, give me a break, that guy is a babe in the woods compared to Harold, who was a first-class ass-pincher. And, in fact, he would not have fit the times, these times, in that regard. And, still, they [women] would have gotten promoted, whether they traded any sexual favors or not, they would have been promoted. It was simply droit de seigneur, I mean, in that respect.29

Harold Oram’s actions illustrate the contradictions that typically inhabit the individual psyche. Through all of his battles on behalf of the downtrodden, Oram did not see his own behavior toward women as demeaning and unjust. He apparently felt that as long as he placed women in positions of responsibility, it was his right to take liberties with them sexually. And he did accord them plenty of power: in 1941, for example, he left the women to manage the fundraising organization when he took a leave of absence to serve in the army. In addition, Oram hired black employees and paid them an equal salary at a time when few others would do so. By 1964, Harold Oram had three black female vice presidents at his firm. According to Henry Goldstein, “the other firms either had no women on staff, or dunked them in the steno pool.”30

Interestingly, Harold Oram initiated some of the current standards in the fundraising industry, including direct mail and the selling of donor lists.31 Of particular note, was Oram’s use of full-page advertisements in national newspapers as stuffers in fundraising appeals.32

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28Henry Goldstein, interview with authors, April 2, 2006, Atlanta, GA. Interview and transcript in possession of authors.
29Henry Goldstein, Oral History Interview, IUPUI Archives, 23. Droit de seigneur is a term often used to describe the purported legal right of the lord of an estate to deflower its virgins.
As the Cold War brought shifts in the nation’s political mood throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the Oram Group’s clients continued to change, now including artistic, environmental, and educational causes. In a move that would eventually bring the Oram Group closer to working with historically black colleges and universities, the organization began, in the 1960s, to raise money for institutions through capital campaigns. Hampton Institute was the Oram Group’s first black college client. Over the years, the organization worked with Atlanta University, Dillard University, Tougaloo College, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, Howard University, Meharry Medical School, and Miles College.

Henry Goldstein, a long-time associate in the organization, followed Harold Oram’s lead in championing progressive causes when he took control of the firm in 1977. Although he maintained the original focus of the organization, he also gradually shifted the Oram Group in the direction of consulting to complement its fundraising prowess. According to Goldstein,

When I went to work for his company, Harold had already carved out a brilliant career as advocate and money raiser for unpopular, often vanguard causes, and activists of every kind. Many of them couldn’t pay fees and we took them anyway, hoping for the best. We often never collected, and as sometimes happens, friends became ingrates. He gave free office space to any crony, cause, or luckless stray who asked for it. This habit of welcoming wildly different people of strong intellect and uncertain temperament led to many strong encounters in our clutch of airless Manhattan offices …. We were a company (if you could call it that) of motivated, eclectic, multi-ethnic, noisy, opinionated, brainy men and women.

Harold Oram ran the office in the most unconventional manner, all the while mentoring his employees in the ways of progressive fundraising: “Each afternoon around five or six, anyone who was around gathered in Harold’s office for the best seminar on this business that you or anyone could possibly imagine. Clients, staff, jobseekers, and hangers-on drank his Dewar’s, and smoked what they brought. It was apt to be anything. Harold shared, smoked, chewed, and spat truly terrible Bock panatelas … and he constantly exhorted us to think, think, think.” Convinced that this atmosphere would not sustain the organization, Goldstein moved the firm closer in operation to a

34 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
traditional business: “Though I loved the madcap environment, I pushed us to become a business because I realized we could not survive otherwise. We went corporate in the 70s, as the staff grew. I caused the compassionate payroll to disappear.”37 Regardless of this business decision, Goldstein maintained a commitment to liberal causes, in particular, the nation’s black colleges—which were caught in the crossfire of liberal and conservative politics during the late 1960s and 1970s. As liberals fought for desegregation, some of them found it hard to support black colleges, which seemed a vestige of Jim Crow. Overall, the liberal left was somewhat fragmented during this time. Some liberals avidly supported civil rights whereas others were more focused on the Vietnam War. By 1968, with growing opposition to the war, many liberals abandoned Lyndon Johnson’s race for the presidency; in effect, clearing a narrow victory for Richard Nixon, who despite his affiliation with the Republican Party, enacted some liberal policies.38 Meanwhile, many conservatives supported black colleges, but mostly as a way to defer the enrollment of blacks in historically white institutions.39

Assessing and Working with Black Colleges

In order to understand the work of the Oram Group, it is important to recognize the climate around the funding of black colleges during the late 1950s and 1960s. Not long after the Brown v. Board of Education decision, there was a definite feeling among leaders of black colleges that many of the major foundations were going to starve black colleges by withdrawing funding from them.40 For example, along with the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation, the Ford Foundation began to conduct a series of independent studies on the future of

37Ibid.
38Michael W. Flamm and David Steigerwald, Debating the 1960s: Liberal, Conservative, and Radical Perspectives (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007).
39Gasman, Envisioning Black Colleges.
40The Ford Foundation was never in full support of the United Negro College Fund and, in fact, refused in 1944 to provide seed money when asked by Frederick D. Patterson and John D. Rockefeller Jr. See Benjamin E. Mays, interview by Marcia Goodson, transcript, May 1987, and Lindsley Kimball, interview by Marcia Goodson, transcript, March 1981, United Negro College Fund Oral History Collection, Columbia University Oral History Collection. It is interesting to note that in the transcriptions of both Benjamin E. Mays’s and Lindsley Kimball’s interviews, their comments about the Ford Foundation are blacked out. Marcia Goodson let each of the UNCF leaders read the transcriptions and decide what they wanted to keep and what they wanted to delete. The transcriptions were completed on a typewriter and thus from time to time there are blacked-out areas. For more details, see Gasman, Envisioning Black Colleges.
black colleges. Based on this research and a push among liberals for integration, some foundation leaders came to the conclusion, off the record, that black colleges would not be around for long. As a result, some of the foundation leaders refrained from giving money for new buildings to black colleges during the initial years after Brown. 

Eventually, during the civil rights era, foundation leaders decided to support a few black colleges such as Atlanta, Dillard, and Fisk Universities. These institutions were seen as having the potential to recruit white students, and thus, most likely to integrate. In addition, foundation leaders believed that it was best to concentrate funding on those institutions with the greatest capacity. Of course, this had been the strategy of industrial philanthropists since the early days of black colleges.

Further complicating the ability to secure foundation dollars was the Tax Reform Act of 1969. Beginning in 1965 the U.S. Congress discussed philanthropy and specifically the work of private foundations as charitable organizations; the investigations ended in the adoption of the Tax Reform Act. The Congressional committee hearings of 1965 were responding to a Treasury Department report that found that private foundations “constitute a powerful instrument for evolution, growth, and improvement in the shape and direction of charity.” William H. Smith and Carolyn P. Chiechi found that one example of this use of this “powerful instrument” spurred on the vast investigations of abuse that resulted in the changes to the tax laws concerning foundational philanthropy. The Ford Foundation’s grant to the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in order to increase voter registration in the poorer-areas of Cleveland was thought to have effected the mayoral election of 1967. As a result the Tax Reform Act of 1969 drastically changed how foundations could disperse their funds. This foundation scrutiny could have had an effect on how foundations

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45 Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South.
considered giving to black colleges at the time and how consultants such as the Oram Group and the black colleges themselves approached foundations. One result of the Tax Reform Act of 1969 was private foundations professionalized and increased their spending on administrative costs, thereby decreasing the amount of dollar available for granting.46

It was in this atmosphere that the Oram Group began fundraising for black colleges. Rather than using the “same old” strategies that these institutions had relied on for years (asking any and every foundation and corporation for money but rarely tapping the college’s alumni), the Oram consultants treated each college as a unique case. They would begin each relationship with a black institution by conducting a fundraising feasibility study. These feasibility studies were private documents between the Oram Group and the individual black colleges. They included the results of interviews with internal constituents and potential donors. Moreover, the studies reviewed each institution’s fundraising literature, records and strategies as well and their financial plan. Many times, the studies included feedback that was highly critical of the individual institution. The Oram consultants would have to use tact when sharing these comments with the presidents and development officers at the black colleges; in some cases, the colleges did not want to hear the information nor to act on it. And, occasionally the Oram consultants would fail to understand the contextual differences between black colleges and historically white institutions, and thus offer criticism that was overly harsh, considering the lack of resources possessed by black colleges.

When working with the black colleges, the Oram Group made clear the current situation for these institutions in the nation (at least as the consultants saw it). In each of the black college reports, the consultants noted the role that foundations played in the early establishment of black colleges, staying away from any of the political

elements of these relationships. Of importance, they told the black college leaders that although these foundations had given ample funding in the past and were often more sympathetic to the black cause, foundations were not able to give as much in the 1970s. Of note during this time, foundations accounted for only a “small fraction of philanthropic giving,” providing about 10 percent. On the other hand, individuals provided 71.4 percent, bequests 14.2 percent and corporations 7.4 percent. In 1974, foundation giving had reached $2 billion annually but this was a small figure when compared to federal dollars available for grants. Moreover, most foundations at the time donated according to “clearly defined program objectives” and as such, the Oram consultants advised the black colleges not to “base large goals upon expected major gifts from foundations for bricks and mortar, endowment, or general support.” The Oram consultants claimed that foundations traditionally were giving to pilot projects and endeavors that spoke to “pressing societal needs.”

Corporations, in the words of the Oram consultants, were the “Johnny-come-latelies” to educational philanthropy. Businesses had spent most of their philanthropic dollars on social projects in the areas around their own manufacturing plants and had only recently realized the potential benefits of donating to colleges and universities. The average major gift for a corporation was between $5,000 and $10,000. Also during the 1970s, the federal government, as a result of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the implementation of affirmative action policies, was pressuring corporations “to increase the number of blacks that they employ[ed] both in technology and in

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47See Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South; Anderson and Moss, Dangerous Donations; and Watkins, White Architects of Black Education.
49Atlanta University Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, 2 August 1974, IUPUI Archives, 19.
50Giving USA (1972); Giving USA (1973); Giving USA (1974).
51Ibid.; see also, Giving USA (1972); Giving USA (1973); Giving USA (1974).
53Ibid.
54Ibid.
55Giving USA (1972); Giving USA (1973); Giving USA (1974); See also Cutlip, Fundraising in the United States.
As is the case today, most corporate donations were made to colleges and universities that were viewed as potential feeder schools for corporate employment.

During the 1970s individuals gave the majority (71.4 percent) of gifts to educational institutions, directing their donations toward their colleges, alumni clubs, and social organizations. The Oram Group made sure to explain to the black college leadership the importance of donor cultivation and stewardship, noting,

Most major gifts and bequests from individuals result from seeds that were planted years before and carefully and assiduously cultivated by institutions. The announcement on the front page of the newspaper or in one of the in-house fund-raising periodicals which indicates that Mr. Jones has given $10 million to his college or university is likely to put Mr. Jones on the prospect list of practically every fund raiser in the country. The benefits likely to accrue to each of them from Mr. Jones is nil for if he makes another gift it is likely to be to the same institution which has cultivated him so carefully through the years, and he is likely to leave even more money to that institution in his will.

With regard to black individual donors, during the 1970s, black colleges had little contact with them. Most black colleges first established development offices and hired alumni secretaries and fundraising personnel in the late 1960s and 1970s. The growing black middle class, of the time, provided a small but significant group of potential donors, including some people who could make sizable gifts if cultivated. For years, most black colleges had assumed that a campaign among their alumni would not result in any donations. Interestingly, according to data from the United Negro College Fund, black alumni had been giving for years but not in an organized manner. However, according to the Oram Group’s research at the time, “the financial outlook for black people in the country, particularly persons with graduate degrees, [was] rapidly changing.” As such, the Oram

57 Giving USA (1972); Giving USA (1973); Giving USA (1974).
58 Atlanta University Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, 2 August 1974, IUPUI Archives, 22.
59 See Institutional Fundraising Surveys, 1944–1970, United Negro College Fund Archives, Robert Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, Atlanta, GA.
60 Atlanta University Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, 2 August 1974, IUPUI Archives, 24.
Group recommended implementing organized outreach efforts to each of its black college clients.

As of the mid-1970s, only two black colleges had experienced major fundraising campaign success: Meharry Medical College and Hampton Institute. Hampton, with the assistance of the Oram Group, raised over $20 million in the late 1960s. Meharry, again with the assistance of the Oram Group, boasted the largest individual campaign of any black college, raising $37 million. Quite a few black colleges announced large campaign goals throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, but “the net effect” had been negative. In the words of the Oram consultants, “Volunteers do not wish to be associated either as workers or as donors with losing causes, and when it is obvious in advance that an effort is a ‘loser,’ they shy away from it.”61 A close examination of a few of these feasibility studies gives us a glimpse into the Oram Group’s strategy for black college fundraising. In addition to an understanding of the Oram Group’s interactions with black colleges, it is also important to appreciate the issues faced by black colleges and their leaders, as they pertain to fundraising, at this point in time. Many of the Oram Group’s recommendations are prescient in that they anticipated the strengths and challenges in black college fundraising today. In particular, in this article, we examine Tougaloo College and Howard, Atlanta, and Dillard Universities.

The Oram Group through their feasibility studies and other interactions with these black colleges challenged the institutions’ leadership to think about their reliance on white wealth, corporations, and the federal government. The Oram Group introduced new approaches to successfully gain support for black colleges. Specifically, the consultants argued that black colleges should: (1) emphasize how the institutions contribute to the local and state economies; (2) approach alumni for support in an organized manner, focusing on participation first, then dollars; (3) insist that Board members commit to the institution with wealth or access to wealth and consider their institution a top priority; and (4) look to the Jewish community for financial support because of a sense of shared struggle. In addition to the Oram Group’s advice on fundraising from the private sector, Oram consultants made a convincing case through their work that black colleges should insist on federal funding. They believed that black colleges should receive funds not only under Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which allocates dollars to historically black colleges and universities, but through other federal programs as other

historically white institutions were doing at the time. As noted above, the Oram Group developed complex strategies for black colleges to employ on multiple levels to not only survive from year to year, as many black colleges were at the time, but be viable for generations to come. These historical case studies, considered together illuminate the complexities of fundraising for black colleges.

**Tougaloo College**

Tougaloo College was founded in 1869 by the American Missionary Association. After 2 years, the state of Mississippi formally recognized the institution; in 1901 the first bachelor's degree was granted. The institution became known for opening its doors to anyone who would come and for shaping these students into future leaders. Tougaloo’s history of progress is especially remarkable since many of the students would not have been accepted at other more selective colleges and universities. According to institutional data,

These students were the product of an education system that is nationally known for its inability to properly prepare students. In 1968, the average College Board scores of the entering freshmen were in the mid 300's. The 1968 graduating class with 36% going on to graduate school entered with 50% scoring below 250 verbal and 35% below 250 in the math section. These figures are remarkable, when most colleges are not answering the applications of students with College Board scores below 500 and many have entering freshmen class with average scores in the 600's.62

These scores were typical for many black college students.63 In the words of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, “Few other institutions are advancing underprepared high school graduates as far as the colleges founded for Negros.”64

Tougaloo began its relationship with the Oram Group in 1970 when the small college’s president, George A. Owens, met to discuss the potential of a capital campaign to raise $10 million. The Oram Group was particularly interested in working with Tougaloo because it was a small college and as of 1971, the consulting firm had only worked on major campaigns (in black college circles) with Meharry Medical School and Hampton Institute. They considered Tougaloo to be “of vital interest to the whole American society,” and believed that people

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would rally to Tougaloo based on the institution’s devotion to “the education of blacks in a backward state that has previously provided no support.” Moreover, the Oram Group’s choosing to work with Tougaloo fit with the organization’s tendency to work with disadvantaged organizations; groups that many for-profit fundraising firms would consider to be too great a challenge, with a small likelihood of success.

The strengths of Tougaloo included its president, who, according to the Oram Group, “enjoys the confidence and support of its Board.” Under President Owen’s leadership, the institution made significant gains in programming and physical size. In addition, the president oversaw the expansion of the development office, increases in the student body and faculty, and the implementation of a 30-year growth plan. The institution also benefited from its excellent reputation in Mississippi for serving blacks. This community seemed willing to support a fundraising campaign for Tougaloo. However, according to one white Mississippi businessman interviewed, it would be more effective if the white leaders of Jackson were approached by a “group of concerned citizens” rather than the president. In the words of the Oram consultants, “The current attitudes on race, although improving, have not reached the point where individual action would be accepted.”

Mississippi, of course, was a center of violence during the Civil Rights Movement and very few white leaders supported the rights of African Americans. The state boasted political opposition to racial progress and the violent actions of the Ku Klux Klan gave it a sullied and deserved reputation. It was in this context that the president of Tougaloo had to solicit whites for financial support.

Despite the presidential strength of the college, the Oram Group was concerned that the institution did not have the appropriate board leadership. They recommended that Tougaloo secure a campaign chairman of national stature. Before beginning the feasibility study, the Oram consultants knew that the small college did not have the leadership to handle a $10 million campaign. As such, when conducting interviews they tried to ascertain what access the board members had to

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66 Ibid., 3.
67 Ibid., 20.
68 Ibid.
people who “possess[ed] the status and leadership in the business community, the foundation community and in the general philanthropic.” The Oram Group concluded that J. Irwin Miller, the Chairman of the Board of Cummins Engine Foundation and a notable philanthropist, would be the most suitable candidate to lead the campaign. Interestingly, Cummins Engine, beginning in the 1930s, “contributed 5 percent of its pretax profits each year to a number of charitable and social service projects.” More importantly, J. Irwin Miller was much more progressive than his corporate counterparts; Cummins was one of the first companies in the United States “to hire blacks for other than janitorial jobs.” Miller’s stature and progressive thoughts made him a formidable leader of the campaign who would bring other whites into the institution’s donor base.

According to the Oram Group’s feasibility study, the Tougaloo board possessed little wealth and had only moderate reach in the local community. However, the Oram consultants did find the board had untapped potential in some members with ties to the finance communities. The Oram Group also found that there was much concern among the institution’s constituents, including students, that the board was predominantly white. Generally at the time, the “argument offered against increased black participation on boards is their lack of outreach into wealthy circles.” According to many of Tougaloo’s constituents, however, the current board had little access to wealth, while boasting many blacks with connections in the local area.

Tougaloo enjoyed a strong, loyal alumni base. According to the Oram Group, all of the alumni members who were interviewed saw Tougaloo as “largely responsible for what success they had achieved.” They considered the institution “their passport from rural Mississippi to urban America.” Despite this attitude, most Tougaloo graduates stayed in the Mississippi area as professionals, thus adding to the local economy and giving local businesses a reason to donate to the college. The school expanded the students’ horizons and also solidified their

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70 Tougaloo College Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, March 13, 1971, IUPUI Archives, 5.
72 Of note is that black college students had been protesting the make-up of black college boards of trustees for decades. See Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, for a discussion of student revolts at Hampton and Fisk Universities.
73 Ibid., 17.
commitment to the local community. Between 1969 and 1971, alumni giving increased from $8,000 to $25,000 due to the hard work of the Tougaloo development office. Despite the development office’s effectiveness, Oram consultants felt that the alumni were not “tapped out” and in fact, could give an average of $100 each.\(^{76}\)

Before beginning a campaign, the Oram Group recommended that Tougaloo address several basic needs. First, the institution had a substantial operating deficit of $450,000. Moreover, the institution needed to reduce its outstanding capital loans amounting to $1,475,000. It would be hard to gain foundation and corporate support, the Oram Group warned, if the institution appeared unstable. The Oram consultants also concluded that Tougaloo College should avoid beginning a capital campaign until they secured leadership of a national caliber.\(^{77}\) In the years before launching a campaign, the Oram Group suggested that Tougaloo set up local committees in cities such as Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, New York, and Washington, DC. This was a strategy that had worked well for the Oram Group with both Meharry and Hampton. Tougaloo College waited over a decade before launching a major fundraising campaign, working to strengthen their fundraising infrastructure and donor base.\(^{78}\)

The Tougaloo case demonstrates how black colleges were forced to work within the constraints of their state environments—environments riddled with racism and discrimination. The case also demonstrates the importance of not only having strong presidential leadership to launch a fundraising campaign, but the need for a well-connected board that is willing to raise money and the institutional profile. Lastly, this case brings to the fore, the push and pull of including blacks with little to no access to capital on the board of trustees. Although this practice appeased alumni, according to the Oram Group, board members with no connections were a hindrance.

**Howard University**

In 1866, the First Congressional Society of Washington, an organization devoted to the well-being of freemen, established a theological seminary to educate African-American clergymen. They named the institution for General Oliver Otis Howard, a decorated soldier who had dedicated his life to African-American advancement. Howard began in 1867 with only four students, but enrollment grew

\(^{76}\)Ibid., 21.
\(^{77}\)Ibid.
rapidly and as expected the curriculum expanded. Interestingly, in 1879, Congress approved a Federal appropriation for the institution—a first for a university.\footnote{Howard was only the second institution of higher education, beyond the military academies to receive direct federal appropriations. Gallaudet University (then Columbia Institution for the Deaf and Dumb) was established by an act of Congress in 1864. Gallaudet has received consistent federal allocations since 1858, before its official chartering. \textit{An Act to authorize the Columbia Institute for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind to confer Degrees, U.S. Statutes at Large} (1864), 45. For a discussion see, Albert W. Attwood, \textit{Gallaudet College: Its First One Hundred Years} (Washington, DC: Gallaudet College, 1964); Edward M. Gallaudet, \textit{A History of the Columbia Institution for the Deaf and Dumb} (Speech to the Columbia Historical Society, January 17, 1911), \textit{Records of the Columbia Historical Society}, vol. XV (Washington, DC: Columbia Historical Society, 1911); and Noah D. Drezner, “Advancing Gallaudet: Alumni support for the nation’s university for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing and its similarities to black colleges and universities,” \textit{International Journal of Educational Advancement} 5, no. 4 (2005): 301–15.} In 1928, Congress amended the institution’s charter to authorize an annual Federal allotment for construction of the physical plant. Under the leadership of Mordecai W. Johnson, which began in 1926 and lasted for thirty-four years, the institution grew from a struggling, unaccredited university to a fully accredited one with an $8 million endowment. In addition the faculty grew, boasting some of the most well known black scholars in the country.

President James E. Cheek hired the Oram Group in August 1972 to produce a capital campaign feasibility study.\footnote{Evaluation of the Division of Development and University Relations at Howard University, 4 October 1972, I/U/PUI Archives.} Of note, just before the hiring of the Oram Group, President Cheek hired a long-time friend, Roger D. Estep, as the vice-president of development and university relations. The Oram Group was wary of the appointment because of Estep’s apparent lack of fundraising experience. However, they quickly learned that, Estep was “no money-raising innocent. His begging cup is highly polished and he is probably one of the University’s most adept operatives, particularly in the federal sector.”\footnote{Ibid., 7.} As a result, the Oram consultants suggested a reorganization of the division to capitalize on Estep’s strengths—external relations with the public sector and larger private foundations.

Even with an acknowledgment of the tumultuous racial problems in the country, the Oram Group was particularly optimistic about the future of Howard University, proclaiming near the beginning of the feasibility study,

\begin{quote}
The case for Howard University is uncommonly strong. The claims Howard University can assert on American philanthropy in the final third of the Twentieth Century go overwhelmingly to the heart of the anguished, ambivalent and still unsatisfactory relationships between blacks and whites in
\end{quote}
this country; and to the responsibilities each have in delivering enabling and empowering opportunities to minority group Americans.\textsuperscript{82}

Howard’s quasi-federal status was part of the impetus for the hiring of the Oram Group. Two federal agencies, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), had both suggested it, finding that the institution relied too heavily on the federal government.\textsuperscript{83} The Oram Group found the federal government’s concern baseless. Their analysis of the amount and percentage of federal dollars allocated to private universities showed that Howard “was not particularly favored.”\textsuperscript{84}

In their conversations and interviews, the Oram Group found that the perception that Howard was fully funded by the federal government was pervasive among both alumni and nonalumni constituencies. Understandably, the Oram consultants noted that this belief must be refuted in order for a successful campaign to be launched.\textsuperscript{85} This finding echoed President Cheek’s response to the government’s apparent request to move Howard further from federal dependence. He stated in his 1972 testimony before the House of Representatives’ Subcommittee on Appropriations: “Howard is not currently visible in the philanthropic world as an institution that is seeking money; this is something that we have not done in any organized way in the past, so it is necessary for us to systematically organize and lay the foundation for this effort.”\textsuperscript{86} The Oram Group knew that in order to be successful in the coming campaign, Howard needed to keep the federal government involved. Simply put, for the university to reach its goals, the Oram Group believed that with his “begging cup in hand, Howard University’s President will continue to trek to the [Capitol] Hill each year, pushing for increments in the University’s operating funds as well as for the most urgently required construction funds.”\textsuperscript{87}

The focus of the Oram Group’s recommendations, then, was to develop private sector support while pursuing federal grants and appropriations in a more effective manner. The consultants

\textsuperscript{82}A Proposed Ten-Year Capital Development Plan for Howard University, January 4, 1973, IUPUI Archives, 9.

\textsuperscript{83}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{84}Ibid., 39.

\textsuperscript{85}Ibid., 50; This misconception of the needs of black colleges is common among many alumni still today. See Gasman and Anderson-Thompkins, Fund Raising from Black College Alumni.

\textsuperscript{86}Testimony of Dr. James E. Cheek, President of Howard University at hearings before the Subcommittee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, Ninety-Second Congress, March 7, 1972, 1230.

\textsuperscript{87}A Proposed Ten-Year Capital Development Plan for Howard University, January 4, 1973, IUPUI Archives, 57.
recommended a 10-year facilities projection of $260,228,000 as the principal public sector capital development goal with an additional $100 million capital component for the private sector. The Oram Group concluded that the goal could be reached by soliciting four broad constituencies: foundations, corporations, individuals, and religious, fraternal, and community organizations.\(^{88}\)

The Oram consultants knew that “unlike the conventional white—university or college” campaign, Howard would not be able to rely on its own alumni for significant financial contributions.\(^{89}\) However, a strong alumni campaign was necessary because participation would have the “symbolic value of influencing other gifts.”\(^{90}\) As in their communication with other black colleges, the Oram Group showed that while alumni dollars were low in past black college campaigns, they were involved in Hampton, 2.85 percent and Meharry, 2.0 percent; and this alumni participation influenced foundation and corporate giving profoundly.\(^{91}\)

To encourage giving by all constituents in both the private and public sector and to highlight the stature of the institution, the Oram Group, recommended the establishment of an “International Sponsors Council” comprised of corporate and civic leaders. The 150 person council would have at its helm a seven to fifteen-person cabinet, with the President of the United States [at that time, Richard Nixon], the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, the chairman of the board of trustees, and chair of the development committee as ex-officio leaders.

In the feasibility study, the case for Howard was described as “uncommonly strong” as the university was “generally hailed as the preeminent center of black higher education anywhere in the world.”\(^{92}\) However, the Oram consultants pointed out that while the institution was seen as the leader in black higher education it was “in fact critically deficient by the most basic normative measures though which adequacy is judged—let alone excellence.”\(^{93}\) Howard simply did not have the resources of its predominantly white counterparts.

Several themes emerged from the interviews conducted by the Oram consultants. For example, many interviewees stressed that the university should not look to become another “Harvard or a Berkeley”

\(^{88}\) Ibid., 62–66.  
\(^{89}\) Ibid., 60. See also Gasman, Envisioning Black Colleges for a discussion of black college alumni giving.  
\(^{90}\) A Proposed Ten-Year Capital Development Plan for Howard University, January 4, 1973, IUPUI Archives, 60.  
\(^{91}\) Ibid. Emphasis added in the original document.  
\(^{92}\) Ibid., 9. A search of the lexus-nexus database reveals that Howard, Spelman and Morehouse were viewed by the media and those in higher education as the premier black colleges during this time.  
\(^{93}\) Ibid. Emphasis added in the original document.
but rather university community members should focus on becoming, as one dean put it, “preeminent authorities on things related to black people.” 94 This was echoed in another theme; “Howard University must serve as a force for social change.” 95 The Oram consultants pointed to the lack of equity between black and white enrollment in graduate and professional programs—calling it “the nation’s educational deficit”—as an important reason to support the university. 96 The Oram Group noted that while community colleges served the needs of blacks and “represent[ed] a very important forward step, they do not answer one fundamental need of the black community—preparing black professional leadership.” 97 The consultants wanted Howard to position itself as a university that could produce these leaders. Creating an institutional niche has and continues to set black colleges apart from their historically white counterparts. The Oram Group saw building strong graduate and professional programs as the most convincing reason for donors to support the institutions, noting: “Lacking a strong cadre of professionals ..., black America will remain subjugated economically, consigned to the half-way mark in its progress toward equity and opportunity.” 98 In a table entitled “Black Enrollments in Selected Professional and Graduate Programs Compared with White Enrollments and the Deficit of Black Enrollments,” the Oram Group showed the large strides that needed to be made in order for black graduate and professional enrollment to be proportionate to the black population between the ages of 18–24 (at the time 12 percent). 99 In the early 1970s, blacks only represented 4.5 percent of medical; 3.6 percent of dental; 3.9 percent of law; 2.1 percent of engineering; 4.0 percent architecture; and 1.1 percent of PhD students in the nation. 100 The Oram consultants further argued that Howard’s campaign should focus on increased scholarship funds. This, the Oram Group said, would alleviate “the plight of the black students who needed practically a total subsidy if they are to have the freedom to pursue education.” 101

94 Ibid., 19.
95 Ibid., 20.
96 Ibid., 20.
97 Ibid., 45. It should be noted that community colleges at the time were educating low-income African Americans, but their graduation rates were very low. As a result, few African Americans transferred to four-year institutions and joined the ranks of the middle class. John R. Thelin, A History of American Higher Education (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).
98 A Proposed Ten-Year Capital Development Plan for Howard University, January 4, 1973, IUPUI Archives, 47.
99 Ibid., 46.
100 Ibid. See also, National Center for Educational Statistics.
The Oram Group suggested that Howard’s reputation as a force for societal change be a key part of its fundraising pitch: “obviously, any program which helps improve our deteriorating urban centers is worthy of support from both the private and public sector.” The Oram consultants recommended that while Howard was increasing its emphasis on graduate education it should also bolster its work to prepare high school students for college. Again within the scope of fundraising strategy, Oram believed that this type of program “continu[ed] to have strong drawing power in fund-raising terms … [and] represented the kind of experimental undertaking which usually appeals strongly to foundations.” Suggestions such as these indicate that the Oram consultants had a deep understanding of black colleges; they did not view them as the poor stepchildren to their white counterparts, but unique institutions that offered programs that were not replicated elsewhere. This perspective was acutely different from those fundraisers of the past who had worked with black colleges. Instead of treating these institutions as charity cases, the Oram Group considered their strengths and built upon them. Perhaps the Oram Group was better able to understand black colleges because it had a diverse staff and a history of working with marginalized organizations.

According to the Oram consultants, Howard was poised for greatness but would not be able to “attract and hold the best students” unless it garnered scholarship support. Likewise, the institution had to recruit a “more distinguished faculty to serve current and projected academic programs.” Howard would have to bring in more dollars to support these faculty members.

In order to set up the campaign, the Oram Group suggested that the President of the United States host the first International Sponsors’ Council at the White House. A request that the Oram consultants claimed had precedent. Past administrations had hosted fundraising campaign events for historically white institutions and had been active in fundraising for black colleges through the United Negro College Fund. To make a stronger connection between the Howard campaign and the welfare of the United States, the Oram Group suggested that the public phase of the campaign be aligned with the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration. The consultants believed that Howard had a unique opportunity, by virtue of its location and history, to create a series of events that celebrated black

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102 Ibid., 49.
103 Ibid., 49.
104 Ibid., 28.
105 Ibid., 31.
106 Ibid.
107 Gasman, Envisioning Black Colleges.
contributions to the nation. The events would allow Howard to receive attention regarding its role in these contributions and its need for support to continue as national leader.108

At the start of the Oram Group’s involvement, Howard University’s endowment was $19 million at market value (and $9.5 million at book value). Although the Oram consultants admitted that comparisons to the nation’s top 20 institutions were “perhaps simple-minded,” they included the figures regardless to show Howard the situation of its “peers.” For example, in 1971, the University of Texas’s endowment was $630 million, the Universities of Virginia, Michigan, and Minnesota each had an endowment over $80 million. Even the University of Cincinnati, a municipal college, had a $46 million endowment.109 Truth be told, Howard’s endowment was meager compared to these institutions, but it was even small in comparison to that of Hampton Institute, a black college, which boasted over $36 million.110

Given the goals of Howard and taking into account the small size of its endowment at this time, the Oram Group recommended that the historically black university raise $100 million in its campaign—an ambitious goal as it was a 500 percent increase over the institution’s existing endowment.111 It was no secret that President Cheeks wanted to raise $200 million but the Oram consultants recommended against it, noting, “Professional integrity compels us to assert that this figure—over 10 years—is far too high . . . . We wish to stress that a $200 million estimate of private sector need is not necessarily invalid or unreal—but simply not attainable in our judgment based on the resources available or that conceivably can be mobilized.”112

Although evidence suggested that it was a good idea in this case, it should be noted that black colleges were almost always asked to lower their campaign goals, both by the Oram Group and earlier in the institution’s history when they worked directly with prominent white, industrial philanthropists and fundraising firms such as John Price Jones and Marts and Lundy.113 Unlike many of their historically white peers, black colleges were often viewed by white donors as having poorly managed finances and posing risks. White donors would often give black colleges only a fourth of what they would donate to a comparable white

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111 Ibid.
112 Ibid., 52.
113 See Gasman, Envisioning Black Colleges.
institution. Of course, this suggestion could have been pragmatic in nature in that the white fundraisers and white philanthropists were aware of the prejudice that existed toward black leadership and black business acumen. In addition, there is a fine line between accomplishing a fundraising goal and missing the mark; missing the mark puts a taint on the institution’s success making future fundraising efforts more difficult. Howard University eventually surpassed the “mark” in its campaign, although it was an atypically long fundraising drive. The university exceeded its $100 million goal by $1,273,000 in 1989, seventeen years after the campaign started in 1972. This successful, yet extended campaign, shows that the Oram Group’s assessment of the feasibility of a $200 million campaign, as President Cheeks originally suggested, was correct. The Howard campaign had early success with business and industry, having raised $47 million by 1981 from corporations. As the Oram Group also suggested, Howard University asked for support from the White House. President and Mrs. Reagan attended a fundraising dinner for Howard in 1982 and were advocates of Howard during the federal appropriations cycles. Howard attempted to connect with individuals and bring alumni into their base of donors through smaller events and homecoming celebrations.

**Atlanta University (now Clark-Atlanta University)**

Atlanta University was founded by the American Missionary Association in 1865. During its early years, Atlanta University educated teachers and librarians. By the early 1930s, it was offering liberal arts focused graduate classes. Also in 1930, the institution affiliated itself with Morehouse and Spelman colleges and under the leadership of John Hope, formed the Atlanta University Center. Enrollment remained strong at Atlanta University, even after the Brown decision. However, the

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114Ibid.
116Janice Gow Pettey, Cultivating Diversity in Fundraising (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2002).
119Jack Eisen, “Raising Funds for Howard,” The Washington Post, March 11, 1983, Metro Section, 2; Jack Eisen, “Funds for Howard,” Mayor Andrew Young of Atlanta, former National Urban League president Vernon Jordan and TV actress Roxie Roker Kravitz (Helen in “The Jeffersons”) The prominent alumni included, Mayor Andrew Young of Atlanta, former National Urban League president Vernon Jordan and TV actress Roxie Roker Kravitz (Helen in “The Jeffersons”). Their goal for individual giving in 1984 was $1 million from 50,000 people, an average gift of $20.
institution began to have difficulty attracting funds from major donors as more African Americans entered historically white institutions.

Based on a rigorous methodology, the Oram consultants’ feasibility study identified Atlanta University’s strengths during the mid-1970s. Owing to its past scholarly reputation and location in the cultural center of the South—Atlanta—the university was highly visible within the foundation and corporate worlds. Unlike some of its black college peers, according to the Oram consultants, Atlanta University had a “dedicated cadre of working board members.” The institution’s business school was respected in many circles as were the faculty members. Lastly, it was one of two private black universities offering doctoral degrees, which gave it a niche, and made it valuable at a time when few blacks were enrolled in historically white graduate programs.

The Oram Group also pointed out the institutions’ weaknesses. These included a lack of organized donors and no track record in fundraising. Although the board of trustees was hardworking, they had done little fundraising. Likewise, the alumni association was small. Of concern was the lack of fundraising infrastructure at the institution.

At the time that Atlanta University contracted with the Oram Group to assess their ability to secure endowment funds, the institution’s president Thomas Jarrett, a former English professor, sought to raise $43 million. However, the Oram Group’s research predicted that the institution could only raise $5–6 million. Again, as a result of the perception that blacks could not handle money, many white donors limited their contributions to black colleges. Moreover, while there was a growing black middle class in Atlanta, they did not have enough access to capital. Although black middle class incomes were on the rise, their assets were severely limited due to past discrimination.

In the Oram Group’s opinion, Atlanta University’s lack of a coherent sense of mission was its greatest hindrance; it could not find agreement on mission in the interviews done with the trustees, administrators, faculty, and alumni. The Oram consultants pushed the
Atlanta University leadership to answer questions such as “What can Atlanta University do best in the future to advance the educational attainment of black people?”124 Challenging the institution’s comfortable place in the higher education status quo, the Oram consultants pointed to the “enormous changes in American society over the past ten years in which previously closed doors [were] now open” and how this presented “a new set of dynamics for blacks and black institutions and most especially Atlanta University.”125 Even more pointedly, the Oram consultants advised the institution of the national situation for educated African Americans:

We noted that a majority of the best-prepared black graduates (Morehouse and Spelman graduates, for example) are now applying to predominantly white graduate schools and while we know that the availability of fellowships, graduate study stipends and recruiting is a factor in this, A.U. is still threatened. We believe that blacks are demanding of Atlanta University a co-equal quality with white institutions, not only as a prerequisite to attending Atlanta University, but also out of black pride.126

Unlike the early fundraising firms as well as philanthropists that worked with black colleges, the Oram Group understood the importance of black pride and its role in securing support and funding within the black community.

The Oram Group’s assessment of black student college choice during the 1970s was similar to the attitudes of many foundation leaders (although slightly more sympathetic and focused on black pride). One foundation executive said,

We’re not interested in black colleges or black universities per se. We’re interested in educating black students and the question is “Where do they get the best education?” At one time the black schools could claim that they were educating students from all over the nation, but that is over and the expansion in the numbers of black students being served by higher education is in other institutions. The black schools are still increasing in size, but the majority of new students are being served by the public schools, particularly by the community colleges, and we have to look to those institutions and assist them in improving their services because that’s where the action is in the 1970’s.127

Based on this perspective, Oram suggested that rather than seeing this more open society “as a threat to its existence,” Atlanta University

124Atlanta University Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, August 2, 1974, IUPUI Archives, 29.
125Ibid.
126Ibid.
127Ibid., 33.
should use it as an opportunity to solidify its mission and create a role for itself.128 Solidifying institutional mission, and in effect, defending the black colleges’ right to exist as a black institution, was a strategy used by the United Negro College Fund as well during this same post-\textit{Brown} period.129

According to the Oram Group’s assessment, Atlanta University needed to focus its fundraising efforts on capital projects and program support when approaching foundations and corporations. Alumni and wealthy individual donors would need to be the source of support for endowment campaigns. In the words of one foundation leader,

\begin{quote}
We’ve had a half dozen requests for endowment from black colleges this year, two of them from that consortium. I’m glad to see they are actively seeking investment funds, but I’m puzzled as to why they think foundations may be a source. With just two or three notable exceptions, they’re not. I don’t know the corporations as well as I do the foundations, but would judge that they are not endowment-prone either. I’ve asked every president the same questions I asked you—What are you doing with alumni?—and the answer is usually that the alums have no money or are just getting started. Well, Atlanta University is an old school with old alumni and while it may not have produced the usual score of millionaires, it is a graduate school and its alumni are bona fide members of the American middle class and unless black people have found a way to put pockets in shrouds, they’re leaving some money behind like other people who depart this life.130
\end{quote}

Put even more directly, one foundation leader said, “Endowment comes from the believers and beneficiaries. I’m just a casual friend.”131

Although it is vitally important for black colleges to solicit their alumni, blacks at the time did not have access to wealth and more importantly, they lacked sizable assets—a key factor in sustained alumni giving.132 Regardless of the lack of disposable income on the part of

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128Ibid., 30.
129Gasmam, \textit{Envisioning Black Colleges}.
130Atlanta University Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, August 2, 1974, IUPUI Archives, 41.
131Ibid., 42.
blacks, as noted by the Oram consultants, the black colleges were mistaken in not asking their alumni to contribute. Not only would communicating with alumni increase knowledge of campus activities, but it would make alumni aware of their obligations to the institution. Additionally, despite having limited income, blacks have traditionally supported black causes, especially those involving education. During the 1970s, 30 percent of alumni donations to higher education went to graduate schools. However, in Atlanta University’s case, the institution did not have a “grasp on its alumni population.” The Oram Group made attempts to convince the institution that alumni provide “active manpower, continuing publicity for the school, especially through prominent alumni.” This strategy of cultivating alumni giving was quite different from that of past fundraising firms that worked with black colleges. They opted to ignore black alumni and focus all of their efforts on white businessmen; making future interactions with alumni quite difficult.

The Oram consultants suggested that Atlanta University’s board of trustees needed significant strengthening. Specifically, they characterized the board as “weaker than it appears.” They found “no trustee who was willing to make a major commitment and no trustee could point to another who could realistically be expected to make a commitment at the half million dollar or above level.” The Oram Group also found that many of the trustees were serving on other institutions’ boards and considered Atlanta University a second, third, or fourth priority. Moreover, the institution was looking to New York for trustees rather than in their own backyard of Atlanta. Of course looking to New York for trustees was more common due to the racist attitudes among many white businessmen in Atlanta toward African


Giving USA (1972); Giving USA (1973); Giving USA (1974).

Atlanta University Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, August 2, 1974, IUPUI Archives, 46.

Gasman, “Racial Stereotyping in Fundraising for Historically Black Colleges.”

Atlanta University Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, August 2, 1974, IUPUI Archives, 36.

Ibid.
Americans. In the words of one Northeastern businessman, “All of those colleges seem to be coming up here and asking the same thing. Isn’t there any spirit of innovation at Atlanta University? Can’t you go out and find some bright new people? I see new people moving into the places of power all the time and I’m sure that some of them are interested in black education if anyone would simply take the time to seek them out and ask their involvement?” Likewise, a foundation leader noted, “A lot of boards make the mistake of seeking out an established name of someone in a prestigious job when they need a new trustee. They would do a hell of a lot better if they sought out people interested in solving the problem they’re addressing.” The Oram consultants, in effect, told the institution that they needed to rid themselves of old habits; they must tap new leadership that was truly invested in Atlanta University’s mission in order to flourish.

Conventional wisdom at the time in the area of fundraising for colleges and universities assumed that “a board will give or get directly 33 percent to 50 percent of total fundraising income; that a board member will be selected as General Campaign Chairman; that the single largest gift in the effort will normally range from 15 percent to 20 percent of the total objective and that it will come directly from or through a trustee.” Interestingly, none of the private black colleges that the Oram Group assisted had in their history a governing board that could meet the giving targets mentioned above, even with the presence of prominent white philanthropists. And, unlike most other institutions, Atlanta University did not draw its campaign chair from the ranks of its board. Rather, it required the Oram Group to seek external leaders to chair the fundraising efforts. In Atlanta University’s case, only two members of the board had the capacity to give a substantial gift toward an endowment and only one of these individuals had the will to give. A few board members could give adequately and the balance could only give small gifts. Of course, this situation was vastly different from many comparable historically white institutions and fundraising difficult.

According to Oram, and to Atlanta University’s surprise, the greatest potential “funding constituent” to the institution was the

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140 Atlanta University Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, August 2, 1974, IUPUI Archives, 37–38.
141 Ibid., 38.
142 Ibid., 39.
143 Cutlip, *Fundraising in the United States.*
The consultants pointed out that “the Federal government is in education to stay and Federal funding is more stable than corporate and foundation funding which increasingly tends to fly from trend to trend.” In the Oram Group’s opinion, Atlanta University had no alternative but to relying on federal funding until it could cultivate alumni giving. Despite this pronouncement, the Oram consultants cautioned that there were risks involved in being too dependent on one source.

One other interesting and unexpected area of support, according to the Oram consultants, was “what is conveniently called ‘Jewish money.’” In the Oram Group’s words, Jews had “a sensitivity to the cultural and psychological needs of blacks.” Although Protestant foundation and corporate leaders tended to be more hesitant about their future support for black colleges, Jewish leaders responded to hypothetical solicitations with “Why yes, there would be [support]. Why not?” When one prominent Jewish businessman was asked why he was willing to support Atlanta University, his response was, “Culture makes a community better to live in, I guess after a while one realizes man isn’t just an economic animal.” There is a strong history of progressive philanthropy and support of social justice issues in the Jewish community. Traditional Jewish philanthropy rests upon the concept of Tikun Olam, repairing the broken world, a principle that extends to helping both Jews and non-Jews alike. Parallels between the anti-Semitic quota-systems that were used to exclude Jewish students from the Ivy League institutions and the barring of blacks from historically white institutions allowed Jews to connect personally to the need for strong institutions for black higher education. Further, the concept of philanthropy in Judaism supports “the need

144 Atlanta University Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, August 2, 1974, IUPUI Archives, 51.
145 Ibid., 47. It should be noted that most of the leadership of the Oram Group were Jewish.
146 Ibid. The American Jewish community had long been involved in the Civil Rights Movement. One such example was Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel’s arm-in-arm march alongside Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in Selma, AL.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
150 Ibid.
for self-help and maintenance of a separate communal order—one that enriches a distinctive and separate … identity.”\textsuperscript{152}

Of note, when the Oram consultants asked a Jewish foundation why it would be more inclined to donate to black colleges when it could achieve the same goal by giving to blacks at white institutions, the Jewish leader responded, “Several years ago the Board of Trustees here voted to focus on blacks in black institutions because [they provide] psychological security … and black pride.”\textsuperscript{153} Of course, the ideas of black pride and psychological security are the same arguments that the black presidents had been using for years to defend their colleges. By this point there was a history of Jewish philanthropy to black education. Julius Rosenwald, of Sears, Roebuck and Company, had given $22 million to black education between 1917 and 1948. By 1932, Rosenwald had initiated the building of over 5,000 schools in the South for black school children—providing educational venues for approximately 40 percent of the population.\textsuperscript{154} His gifts had supported black colleges such as Morehouse, Spelman, Fisk, Meharry Medical College, Lincoln University (PA), Fort Valley State, Atlanta, and Dillard.\textsuperscript{155} Interestingly, Oram found very few Jewish people on the list of constituents and potential donors of Atlanta University, determining that this was a “major untapped area of support for Atlanta University” given the history of Jewish support of African American civil rights in the city of Atlanta.\textsuperscript{156}

The last area that the Oram Group emphasized in its feasibility report for Atlanta University was the role that the institution’s president had to play. In the Oram Group’s words,

[The president] is the spark plug and the energizing agent for alumni affairs and the office of development for the Academic Senate as well as the Board of Trustees. The president’s three major roles are administration, public relations and fund raising, but in the time of a fund-raising campaign up to 70%

\textsuperscript{152}Tobin, \textit{The Transition of Communal Values}, 12.

\textsuperscript{153}Atlanta University Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, August 2, 1974, IUPUI Archives, 47.

\textsuperscript{154}It should be noted that African Americans were asked to match Rosenwald’s contributions to local black schools. See Anderson, \textit{The Education of Blacks in the South}.


of his time should be spent on fund raising and public relations, speaking before public groups, attending conferences and board meetings of relevant granting agencies, visiting individuals and, in short becoming a visible public figure.\textsuperscript{157}

In a bold move, the Oram consultants called into question the age of President Jarrett, noting that he was only three years from retirement and as such would most likely leave the institution during the middle of the campaign. Not only would this potentially make it appear that President Jarrett was having trouble raising the campaign funds, but it would also be difficult to recruit a new president. This could have made potential donors wonder about the institution’s stability as well. The Oram Group gave Atlanta University two options here: postpone the campaign or extend President Jarrett’s term of service. Atlanta University decided to postpone their campaign; however, in the years after Jarrett’s presidency they launched and completed a successful campaign using the Oram Group’s strategies. Although it may appear on the surface that the Oram Group was meddling too deeply in the affairs of Atlanta University, it was and continues to be commonplace for fundraising firms to scrutinize institutional presidents when preparing for campaigns.\textsuperscript{158}

\textbf{Dillard University}

In 1979, Dillard University embarked on a campaign of its own. Dillard University is the product of the merger of Straight University and Union Normal School. Established in June of 1869 by the American Missionary Association and the Freedman’s Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, respectively, both institutions began by providing elementary and secondary education, and eventually moved to a college level curricula for African Americans. Together these institutions included a law department, a medical college, a hospital and nursing school; however, the medical college was discontinued in 1911. When the two institutions merged in 1930, they chose their new name to honor James Hardy Dillard, a pioneer in educating African Americans.

The Oram Group conducted a fundraising feasibility study for Dillard University in 1979. They found the institution’s strengths to be in the area of leadership and stability. More specifically, Dillard had a long-standing reputation for being one of the top black colleges, boasting a committed faculty, stable enrollment, excellent physical

\textsuperscript{157}Atlanta University Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, August 2, 1974, IUPUI Archives, 65.
\textsuperscript{158}Cutlip, \textit{Fundraising in the United States}. 
Despite these strengths, the Oram Group pointed to some deficiencies that could lead to more serious problems in the future. These problems included difficulty raising scholarship funds to attract the best black students, the pressure of compensating for the academic deficiencies of their entering students, lack of funds to recruit talented faculty, and weaknesses in the area of alumni affairs. More specifically, Dillard was “confronted by the same dilemma facing every privately supported liberal arts school in the land: the proliferation of lower priced, often better equipped state-supported institutions.”

Like most black colleges at the time, Dillard had to compensate for its entering students’ poor primary and secondary education received. Also, like most black colleges at the time (and today), Dillard was able to add value to its students’ degree by successfully redressing past inadequacies. Interestingly, upon graduation, the Dillard students were on par with white colleges’ alumni in terms of performance in the work environment.

Despite these accomplishments, and the fact that the institution was well-respected in the city of New Orleans, Dillard was not as well known as its black college peer, Xavier University, in the same city. According to one potential donor in the New Orleans area, “Norman Francis [Xavier University’s president] has recruited a good national board for Xavier. Xavier will be successful in a capital campaign because Francis knows how. He has been in New Orleans longer, and he knows liberal blacks and whites and conservative communities. He has lots of access. Dillard’s Board connections are not as current as Xavier’s, but there is access to the New Orleans community within Dillard’s Board.”

The Oram Group suggested that Dillard place an emphasis on further developing its public relations efforts. Aside from the writings of the president and University’s internal bulletin, there was little printed material generated and distributed by the institution. Lastly, much like

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159 Dillard University Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, January 15, 1979, IUPUI Archives.
160 Ibid.
other black colleges, Dillard had not given much attention to its alumni; according to Dillard's fundraisers, “the dollar payoff was not thought worth the effort required.” However, in the year before the Oram Group’s feasibility study, the institution raised $38,000 from alumni.165

With regard to the Dillard board of trustees, its composition was much more heterogeneous than many of its peers. Heterogeneity is always a strength in fundraising.166 Dillard’s board, according to the Oram Group, “felicitously combines unofficial representatives of the United Church of Christ, the Methodist Church, and local citizens (black and white), and has maintained an historical tie with Southern Jewish philanthropists, a rarity among the private, predominantly black schools.”167 In addition to much needed diversity, the board, in the Oram Group’s opinion, participated in meetings regularly and came prepared. Perhaps most importantly, the board included people who had “significant giving capability” as well as “considerable access to philanthropic funds within New Orleans.”168 Moreover, the board of trustees was united behind Dillard’s president Samuel Dubois Cook. According to the Oram consultants, President Cook was Dillard’s greatest asset in the area of fundraising. He brought to the role “distinguished scholarly attainment, extremely high standards for himself and everyone else, an intense commitment to educational quality which is manifested both in his writings … and willingness to take the time required for money raising.”169

Despite these strengths, the Oram Group pointed to the institution’s lack of philanthropic influence outside the city of New Orleans, especially in the state of Louisiana, which had not been kind in terms of support of blacks or black higher education.170 The Dillard board needed to bolster its corporate representation throughout the state in order to tap into bigger donations. Perhaps the biggest hindrance to the college’s future success was the unwillingness of any board member to act as a leader of its proposed campaign.171

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165Institutional Fundraising Surveys, 1944–1970, United Negro College Fund Archives, Robert Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, Atlanta, GA.
168Ibid.
169Ibid., 23.
To prepare for the fundraising campaign and at the urging of the Oram consultants, President Cook and Charles Stephens, the vice president of development, prepared a list of goals for the institution.172 These included: improving the quality of the faculty, establishing “a climate of intellectual rigor,” establishing more constructive relationships with alumni, developing a long-range plan, increasing financial assistance for students, recruiting better-quality students, and expanding the university’s honors programs.173 At the outset of the feasibility study, Dillard University wanted to mount a $16 million fundraising campaign; however, after careful review the Oram consultants recommended that the institution propose a $10 million campaign. Moreover, the Oram Group recommended that the campaign begin locally, as Dillard was held in relatively high regard in the city of New Orleans.174 Of course, this is another example of the Oram consultants “low-balling” a black college campaign. The consultants based their projection on a comprehensive feasibility report; however, it gives one pause to see this type of low-balling appear time after time in the Oram Group’s recommendations to black college leaders.

Before consulting the Oram Group for fundraising advice, Dillard’s endowment stood at $4.2 million. With a total enrollment of 1,150 students, the average endowment per student was $3,652. This figure put Dillard in the position of being substantially better off than many black colleges but not as well off as those in the top tier of black colleges (e.g. Morehouse, Spelman, and Hampton). In preparing for the campaign, the Oram consultants provided Dillard’s administration with some comparison data for black colleges as well as many historically white institutions. Unfortunately, the Oram Group–produced comparison fell into the same trap as many others on black and white institutions did—it compared Dillard with the country’s most prestigious institutions, including the Ivy League colleges and universities and many of the most selective, wealthy, small colleges. These were not fair comparisons to make based on institutional history, entering students’ academic preparation, and alumni wealth. The Oram Group’s juxtaposition of Dillard and Oberlin College is a typical example. Although similar in enrollment size, Oberlin had a per capita endowment of $31,085.88.175 Moreover, the institutions had vastly different histories and student populations. A better comparison would have come with a similarly sized, similarly selective, liberal arts college in the

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172Charles Stephens, Interview with author, April 7, 2008.
174Ibid.
175Ibid., 33.
Southeast.¹⁷⁶ A little over ten years earlier, two Harvard sociologists, Christopher Jencks and David Riesman had made similarly unfair comparisons, resulting in a study that labeled black colleges as “academic disaster areas.” Their study had an incendiary effect, especially when its most devastating conclusions were parroted by the media. For years to come, the Jencks and Riesman study would have a negative impact on black college public relations and would create feelings of distrust on the part of black college leaders toward supposedly liberal researchers from the outside.¹⁷⁷ Although Oberlin is a more realistic comparison institution than Jencks and Riesman’s Harvard and Yale, the Oram Group also fell into the trap of false comparisons, which inevitably resulted in black colleges looking inferior. When this belief of inferiority reached the media, as in the case of Jencks and Riesman, the ability to fundraise by black colleges was effected, as donors tend to fund success rather than failure.¹⁷⁸

The Oram consultants surmised that Dillard’s prime asset was its own credibility.¹⁷⁹ However, this credibility could only take it so far in a nation that was continually asking why black colleges were still needed in an era of desegregation. According to the Oram Group, “No matter how well intentioned the question, the unhappy answer is that this nation tolerates a double standard—one attitude toward white schools another for black ones. A valid educational mission, irrespective of race, is the only justification for any institution to survive.”¹⁸⁰ Here the Oram consultants suggested that making black institutions equal was of paramount importance. They supported integration at the higher education level and believed that strengthening black colleges could make this possible.¹⁸¹

In response to the many questions about the future of black colleges and increased boasting on the part of historically white institutions about their integration success during the 1970s, Dillard President Cook fired back in a speech:

¹⁷⁸Gasman, “Salvaging ‘Academic Disaster Areas.’”
¹⁷⁹Dillard University Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, January 15, 1979, IUPUI Archives.
¹⁸⁰Ibid., 44.
¹⁸¹Henry Goldstein, interview with authors, April 2, 2006, Atlanta, GA. Interview and transcript in possession of authors.
Now that at bloody long last, white colleges have, under the coercion of the law and various extra-legal pressures, grudgingly begun to admit blacks—mostly in token numbers—the impressive democratic track record of black colleges is blandly disregarded and they, paradoxically and suddenly, are accused of being agents of segregation and instruments of the closed society. How curious! How strange! How unfair! How contemptuous of logic, history, and the sense of justice and fairness! The colleges that should be on the moral educational and social defensive—white colleges, with their history and tradition of racial selectivity and exclusion—are being congratulated and celebrated, in response to which they have developed an attitude of self-righteousness, self-congratulations and an easy conscience. The colleges that should be congratulated and celebrated for their record of democracy, moral courage and pluralism in education—black colleges—are not only placed on the defensive and perpetually called upon to justify themselves, but are condemned as being outside the “mainstream” of American higher education and ideals. The poet is right: the times are out of joint.182

Although President Cook aptly identified the problem ahead for many black colleges, within the larger New Orleans community and national philanthropic community, Dillard University itself benefited from an excellent reputation—particularly in its ability to provide a value-added education to under prepared students. This is best summarized by a New Orleans philanthropist: “A basic strength of Dillard, or any predominantly black college, is its policy of taking kids who’ve been written off, work with their handicaps and turn out citizens equipped to do better than just teach or preach. Dillard does a very good job of that.”183

The Oram Group played upon the strengths of Dillard University, paying special attention to the black college’s charismatic and talented president. They were able to capitalize on the heterogeneity of Dillard’s board of trustees and the institution’s reputation for integrity within the local community, while simultaneously strengthening the institution’s vulnerabilities in terms of fundraising. However, it would be almost ten years after the feasibility study until Dillard pursued a small, manageable capital campaign with the assistance of the Oram Group.184

183 Dillard University Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, January 15, 1979, IUPUI Archives, 75.
Conclusion

The Oram Group’s success in raising funds for and bolstering the profiles of black colleges demonstrates that fundraising expertise, when put to the service of liberal ideas, can be effective and used to make change albeit on a small scale. The firm’s consulting advice shows the complex thought processes involved in campaign development, especially in terms of raising money for black colleges. While the Oram Group was ahead of its time in its strategies to raise money for black colleges, they were not able to fund their firm on these causes alone. In order to be able to support liberal and progressive organizations, it was essential that the Oram Group handle more “mainstream” clients. The Oram consultants found that more progressive organizations and institutions, especially those in education, were not able to pay the high-end consulting fees that were necessary to maintain their business.

In its feasibility studies, the Oram Group consistently encouraged black colleges to move away from foundation support, which was becoming more limited. Instead, the firm suggested that black colleges increase their focus on corporate and government grants and gifts from individuals. The Oram consultants also challenged the colleges to engage their alumni—a group that many black colleges had neglected in the past. They rightfully believed that alumni participation, at any level, was essential for a campaign to succeed and they understood that these black colleges served as a “passport” to a better life for their graduates. And alumni giving was even more crucial at a black college as it tended to highlight these institutions’ unique mission of racial uplift. Blacks had a long tradition of philanthropic giving based on self-help and obligation—yet black colleges had yet to tap into this tradition.

The Oram Group’s work with black colleges also provides a window into the gradual cooling of “white guilt” or white feelings of responsibility toward blacks for past injustices, during the 1970s. At this time, support for black colleges, was waning. This was on top of the fact that post-\textit{Brown} calls for the end of black colleges had made many foundations weary of supporting institutions that might have been reaching obsolescence. Both these situations made it all the more necessary for black colleges, as the Oram Group pointed out, to more fully articulate their mission and need if they were to receive support from whites. Of particular interest to potential donors, in the opinion of the Oram Group, was the black colleges’ ability to make up for black students’ poor preparation at the primary and secondary level.

\footnote{Tougaloo College Study of Fund-Raising Feasibility, March 13, 1971, IUPUI Archives, 17.}

\footnote{Gasman and Sedgwick, eds., \textit{Uplifting a People}.}
Because many black colleges were willing to accept students with lower academic qualifications and work with them through developmental curricula, these institutions have a value-added impact compared with many of the nation’s historically white institutions.\(^{187}\)

Of note is the vastly different opinion toward supporting black colleges on the part of Jews. According to the Oram consultants, including Harold Oram, Hank Goldstein, and Norman Bloomfield (all Jews), Jewish individuals and foundations were more willing to support black colleges than many of their white peers, since many Jews saw similarities between the black and Jewish struggles for equality, and also saw the importance of preserving a unique culture within the group. Because of this support, the Oram Group suggested that the black colleges engage Jews as donors and board members.

The Oram Group’s recommendations not only focused on the colleges’ external relationships but those within the institutions as well. The Oram consultants were mindful that board composition was vitally important to the success of a campaign. They reminded the black college administration that a board member must provide wealth, wisdom, or work to the institution in order to remain valuable. In other words, board members needed to have either the capacity or the willingness to give a substantial gift or connections with corporations and people who could give generously. However, the Oram consultants also insisted that the black colleges recruit board members who considered their institution their first priority. The consultants suggested that the colleges retire those board members who did not meet these criteria. Institutional leadership and sustainability were also an internal concern for the Oram consultants as they knew that large-scale donors were reluctant to give to any institution that did not have stable leadership in place during a campaign.

The Oram Group often compared the black colleges with elite historically white institutions, such as members of the Ivy League, in an attempt to demonstrate the necessity of increasing resources if these institutions were to achieve parity with white institutions. The institutions to which the consultants compared the black colleges were not always their peers in terms of enrollment, selectivity, physical plant, endowment size, and history. While well-intentioned (i.e., a way of showing that black colleges should be seen and treated no differently, than their historically white counterparts), the Oram Group’s unequal comparisons might have done more harm than good. In effect, such

\(^{187}\)Cutlip, *Fundraising in the United States*; Gasman, “Racial Stereotyping in Fundraising for Historically Black Colleges.”
comparisons set black colleges up for failure by presenting often insurmountable hurdles rather than realistic goals.

At times, the Oram consultants offered suggestions or criticism that the black colleges did not follow. In some cases, the consultants would respond harshly, reprimanding the black colleges for not heeding their “sound” advice. Although in some cases not following the advice was pure neglect, in many cases the black colleges did not have the funding and infrastructure to capitalize on the Oram Group’s suggestions. Instead of spending money on cultivation of donors, as advocated by the Oram consultants, the black colleges went for the “quick fix.” Sometimes this paid off and other times it left the colleges with regrets.

The relationships and trust, between the Oram Group and the black colleges was the hallmark of these interactions. Prior fundraising firms and individual philanthropists did not approach black colleges with this level of respect, even when supporting and raising funds for the institutions. By approaching the institutions with deference and giving them the advice to build connections within their own communities and among alumni, the Oram Group attempted to give black colleges the ability to be self-reliant in their fundraising future.

Lastly, and probably of greatest concern is the power of institutional lore identified by the Oram Group. In the case of black colleges, the Oram consultants discovered that institutional lore was significantly more powerful than reality. Donors, unfamiliar with the day-to-day struggles and success of black colleges, often had inaccurate perceptions of these institutions. The reasons for this unfamiliarity were many, but among the most important was the lack of effort on behalf of black college administration to promote the contributions of their institutions beyond their local communities. The most successful institutions were those that carved out a regional or national reputation, and also those who had a niche market in terms of curricular strengths, mission, and type of student. The Oram Group’s suggestion that black colleges promote their contributions to the local and state communities through an emphasis on black colleges’ production of a strong tax paying workforce is one example of this important fundraising tactic.

Although the Oram Group made these suggestions over 35 years ago, they are still relevant today as black colleges struggle to identify their role in a post-Brown era, and in a time when some members of the white community are hostile toward anything that resembles racial preferences, be it federal support of black colleges or institutional support of diversity. Understanding the unique environment of the black college—the dedication to racial uplift—was perhaps the greatest strength of the Oram Group.