Each college had its own master as well as a roster of faculty associates. While the colleges did not offer a separate academic program for credit, they were expected to provide an intellectually stimulating environment for their residents by arranging seminars, discussions, and related activities. Two of the colleges organized their programs around specific themes—one around Community Studies, and the other around Philosophy and Religion—from which they took their names. The remaining three—Willard, Shepard, and Lindgren—chose not to commit themselves to any specific area in arranging their programs.

In 1962 an activist student group called Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) had been formed at Port Huron, Michigan. Over the next few years chapters spread to campuses across the country. In October 1965, following a wave of anti-war demonstrations throughout the United States, a chapter of the SDS was organized at Northwestern and accorded recognition by the Student Senate in December of that year. According to Jack Nusan Porter, who wrote an account of student protest at Northwestern:

S.D.S. at Northwestern University merged with a local civil rights group called F.R.E.E., For Real Estate Equality, and a student group called Students for Liberal Action. Its first meeting ... drew a polyglot group of 80 people, graduate and undergraduate students, Greek and non-Greek.

Porter goes on to note that even during the following year Northwestern was still “at an early level of student activism; the issue of men’s visitation and curfew hours were in the foreground.” It is generally agreed that this situation changed radically in the spring of 1967.

The first massive anti-war rally on campus was a Viet Nam teach-in, organized in April 1967. During the same month Ellis Pines, the newly elected head of student government who had run on a student power platform, arranged a rally on the steps of the administration building at 619 Clark Street. In an exchange with Vice President Kreml and Dean Wild, the students pressed for a say on a variety of academic issues as well as on the allocation of financial aid. As part of their protest against the American involvement in Viet Nam they asked that the NROTC program be discontinued.*

The leaders of one of the anti-war groups announced their intention to hold another demonstration—which they dubbed “Gentle Thursday”—on April 27, in front of Harris Hall. The rally would coincide with the weekly NROTC drill on adjacent Deering Meadow and the administration immediately let it be known that it would not tolerate disruption of “any authorized university event.” “Gentle Thursday” did not belie its name. A few balloons floated over the hedge toward midshipmen drilling on the Meadow, but the gathering resembled a student carnival more than a protest by militants.

The tone of student agitation became more strident in the course of the following year. The spring of 1968 brought demonstrations, sit-ins, and discord to academic

*Since the establishment of the program at Northwestern in 1926, over 1,300 students had had their education subsidized by it, receiving their commissions through the NROTC graduation. Much praised in the 1940's and 50's, the program had become one of the prime targets of anti-war protest on campuses throughout the country by the mid-1960's.
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communities from the University of California at Berkeley to Columbia University in New York City. The immediate cause might differ from school to school, but almost invariably the crises assumed certain common characteristics as members of the university community became polarized by the reactions of the administration and, in some cases, the citizenry outside the campus.

At Northwestern the first major confrontation occurred on May 3rd and 4th, when a group of black students occupied the university’s business office at 619 Clark Street. The immediate cause was the administration’s refusal to accede to a set of demands submitted by For Members Only (the black undergraduate organization) and the Afro-American Student Union (the black graduate student organization) on April 22nd. The conditions that had led to the formulation of the demands, however, were considerably more complex.

Between 1965 and 1967 the number of black freshmen registered at Northwestern had risen from 5 to 70. In all, by the spring of 1968 there were about 160 black students on the Evanston campus, out of a total undergraduate population of 6,500 and a total graduate registrations of 2,500 part-time and full-time students.165

During the exchange between the black students and the administration in April it became clear that the black students had felt isolated in the midst of so many white students. This isolation had been exacerbated by hostile encounters between some black and white students. While the administration had assumed that once they were admitted black students would become integrated into the mainstream of campus life, this did not, in fact, happen. As a subsequent investigation revealed, black students at Northwestern felt “alienated from the mainstream of campus life . . . and by a foreign white mainstream that offered (in their eyes) little or no freedom of expression and movement for the black student.”166

Feeling themselves apart from the white community, the black students turned to one another for support. A report by the University Discipline Committee which investigated one of the clashes between white and black students noted that “as the number of blacks on campus increased, . . . black students began to ‘discover’ each other. This gravitational movement tended . . . to provide black students with the reinforcement and support they individually needed to maintain their identity in the overwhelmingly white culture of the university and . . . contributed greatly to the sense of frustration and dissatisfaction these students felt. This getting together and discussing their plight heightened their sense of powerlessness and increased their bitterness towards the university.”

This report recommended several measures to improve the racial climate, including the hiring of a black counsellor to deal with student affairs; the provision of facilities for meetings and social gatherings organized by and for black students; representation of black students on appropriate university committees; and the convening of campus-wide meetings addressed to the problems facing a predominantly white academic community attempting to adjust to the reality of a multi-racial campus.167

But it was already too late. When the administration announced the appointment of a black counsellor to work jointly with the Admission Office and the dean of students, effective the following September, the black students objected because
Student demonstrations: (top) spring 1967, Vice President for Development Franklin M. Kreml (left) and Dean of Faculties Payson S. Wild; (bottom) spring 1970, Mr. Kreml and Vice President for Student Affairs Roland J. Hinz (top photo courtesy alumna Lynn Davis)
Confrontations (top) give way to more peaceful encounters (below) as Vice President and Dean of Faculties Raymond W. Mack welcomes freshmen during New Student Week.
they had not been included in the selection process. By this time they were already set on the course which would lead them to present their demands to the administration on April 22. These made clear the black students’ conviction that only if they were accorded a share in the making of decisions on matters concerning them would their position at Northwestern be viable.

The students demanded first that the university acknowledge its racial character and commit itself to changing its “racist structure” by providing for the following: that each forthcoming freshman class be 10-12 percent black, with at least half coming from the inner city; that the blacks alone appoint a committee to assist the Admission Office and that this committee have “shared power” in the making of decisions “relevant to black students”; that black students receive special consideration for increased financial aid and that black financial aid recipients not be required to augment aid by loans and jobs; that a black living unit be established; that more black faculty be appointed and that the black students decide who should occupy a proposed visiting chair in Black Studies; that black students must approve the appointment of any counsellor for the “black community”; that black students approve of all appointments to the proposed Human Relations Committee; and that blacks have access to the committee studying open occupancy and discrimination.

In response the administration indicated its willingness to seek the black students’ advice on the recruitment of black faculty and students, but made quite clear its refusal to yield any of its power to make decisions on admission and financial aid, on curriculum, on the hiring of faculty and staff, and on housing. Reaffirming its commitment to integration, the administration stated that “while the university believes there is much to be done to assure the black student the rights and respect on this campus that he deserves, it strongly believes that organizing separate living for blacks is self-defeating and cannot contribute constructively to the academic purposes for which the university exists.”

The black students immediately reaffirmed their demands and concluded by declaring, “The University either responds to our demands or we have no other alternative but to respond to its lack of response. The University has until 5 p.m. Friday, April 26, 1968, to notify us of its decision.”

On May 2, President Miller asked the black students to a meeting scheduled for the following day. The same day, Dean I. W. Cole and Professor Daniel Zelinsky, who served on the Committee on Financial Aid to Students and the Committee on Admission respectively, invited the students “to discuss in detail any matter relating to the admission and financial aid policies of the university.” But neither of these invitations was accepted. Though the administration and representatives of the two concerned committees genuinely hoped to reconcile the differences between the university and the black students, the latter regarded these invitations as highhanded summonses from the “Establishment” expressing typical racist condescension towards blacks.

Instead of meeting, approximately 100 black students entered the business office at 619 Clark Street at 7:45 a.m. on May 3, after having diverted the security officers at the door by means of a ruse. Once inside, they chained the door. They had
brought with them bedding, food and other supplies, and through their leader, a graduate student named James Turner, announced that they would occupy the building until their demands were met. Throughout the occupation, the black students inside talked to sympathizers outside through the open windows on the first floor. Indeed, several of the occupiers who were members of athletic teams kept their engagements by coming and going through those windows.

As soon as word of the occupation of 619 Clark was conveyed to members of the administration, they gathered at a building across the parking lot from the occupied building. Among those present were Vice Presidents Kerr, Kreml, Schmehling, Hinz and Wild, and Maurice Ekberg, superintendent of buildings and grounds. They were joined very shortly by a black faculty member, sociologist Walter Wallace.

Some time before, as student sit-ins and disturbances made their appearance on other campuses, the administration had prepared a plan for dealing with this kind of situation. This called for a request to demonstrators to quit the premises, to be followed—in the event that the request was not met—by an order to leave, accompanied by the warning that disciplinary action would follow if the order were not complied with. The third step called for removal of the trespassers by the university’s security force, and the fourth for intervention by the Evanston police if the former proved unable to complete evacuation of the building unaided.

As the administration representatives conferred it became clear that they did not consider this prearranged plan appropriate to the occasion. In the preceding days, Columbia University had been wracked by fierce battles between students and police called to force evacuation of buildings occupied by protestors. Television screens had flashed across the nation pictures of the bloody combat. In the storm of recriminations that swept the campus in the aftermath, faculty, administrators, and students were so deeply divided that the viability of Columbia as a center of learning hung in the balance. At the University of California at Berkeley, at San Francisco State College, and at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, the summoning of police had similarly served to polarize the campus and escalate disaffection.

With these instances only too vividly in mind, the administration at Northwestern debated what course of action to follow. In a subsequent report to the board of trustees, President Miller explained what the alternatives and their potential consequences appeared to be:

The university authorities had to choose among three courses of action: One, which has had great appeal to many who were not close to the situation was to order the students summarily to leave (which they would not have done) and then to call the police; second, which was the decision followed, was to bring them out of the building through a process of negotiation, probably entailing some concessions to their demands, but none divesting the University of any of its authority. This course of action left open the possibility of a later decision to remove the students by force if the negotiation process failed. A third possibility was simply to ignore their demands and let them occupy the premises as long as they would, be that weeks or months.

The third possibility can be quickly disposed of. This would have resulted in such
an interruption of the function of the University that it could not be tolerated. The cost of any of these alternatives was great.

Had the first—forcible evacuation—been pursued, the possibilities are estimated as follows: Since Northwestern’s own security forces were inadequate in number to do the job, evacuation would, therefore, have had to be turned over to the Evanston police, who may well have needed the support of police from neighboring communities. The students within the building, accounting for a majority of the Negro students at Northwestern, would have had to be placed under arrest and removed physically. Instances of conflict would doubtless have occurred, followed by charges of “police brutality.” There would have been involved not only the Negro students, but a goodly number of white student sympathizers and possibly some members of the faculty as well. In short order, protests would have become widespread not only among the white student body, activists, semi-activists, and others, but among the faculty as well. The possibility that further buildings would have been occupied by growing numbers of Negro sympathizers would have been great, and the continuation of this course of action would then have required having the police move against further groups of students and many of our own faculty members. It is quite possible that a majority of the faculty would have taken a stand in opposition to the administration as this process continued. The arrival of support groups from the Evanston and Chicago communities would almost certainly have followed. The resultant situation would probably have paralleled that which occurred at Columbia University... This takes us to the second course of action, which we actually followed. It went well. The concessions that the University made were not unreasonable; and the demands that it felt it ought not to accede to were stubbornly resisted...169

Such was the reasoning that called for negotiation instead of force. The group of university officers and faculty who set about drafting a response to the black students included Vice Presidents Kreml, Kerr, Schmehling, Wild and Hinz, Dean Robert H. Strotz of the College, Dean Robert H. Baker of the Graduate School, Director of Admission William Ihlanfeldt, Professor Wallace, Professor Gail Inlow, chairman of the General Faculty Committee, Professor Joe Park, chairman of the Faculty Committee on Educational Policies, and Lucius P. Gregg, Jr., associate dean of science. The deans of the schools were informed and consulted as the negotiators proceeded with their task. Vice President Hinz went back and forth between the conference room and the chained doors at 619 Clark Street, conveying messages, while two secretaries typed the tentatively agreed-upon statements. President Miller moved about the room urging speed and giving counsel. Attempts to reach the chairman of the board of trustees, John G. Searle, proved unsuccessful as he was out of town and unavailable.

A special meeting of the faculty was called for 4 p.m. in Cahn Auditorium. It was an unparalleled gathering which had no precedent in the history of the university, for it was not a session of faculty representatives but an assembly of all faculty members who wished to come. When President Miller opened the meeting, the main floor of Cahn was filled and the hall literally hummed with excitement. The president briefly explained the reason for the meeting and Dean Hinz outlined the events of the preceding hours. He was followed by Dean Wild who described
the nature of the black students' demands, reported that attempts to negotiate were going forward and pledged that written accounts of the results would be made available to the faculty. There were a few statements and questions from the floor, and then the meeting adjourned. No vote was taken and none seemed appropriate at that stage. But it seemed to those present that sentiment ran roughly as follows. About a third of the faculty was extremely sympathetic to the black students’ cause; about an equal proportion was opposed to the students' tactics; and the remainder appeared somewhat ambivalent. In any case, the majority seemed to favor further negotiations rather than the use of coercion.

Negotiations went on throughout the following day, Saturday, May 4th. The tone of the proceedings was cool and moderate. The university delegates learned that the black students sought recognition of their identity as blacks with a culture different from that of white society; that integration, as the whites understood it, was not an immediate goal; that the blacks did not wish to be swallowed up in white society, did not wish to lose their separate status. For their part, the black students learned a great deal about the way a university functions; that administrators do not have the power or authority to effect changes or draft edicts which ignore the statutes of the institution, the role of the trustees, and the prerogatives of the faculty in determining curriculum and making appointments. Accordingly, concessions were made on both sides.

In the late afternoon, the student negotiators returned to 619 Clark Street and secured the endorsement of their colleagues for the agreement with the administration. By 9:30 p.m. the black students had cleared the building, leaving everything in the best of order. Both sides had kept good faith; coercion and violence had been averted.

In essence, the university agreed to seek the advice of black students on matters that closely touched their interests, while the students agreed to give up their demands to participate in the final decision-making on admissions, personnel, and curriculum.

Once again, President Miller’s report best covers the results of the two days of negotiations:

We indicate in the following paragraphs what the University did agree to do and, of that which has been demanded, what it did not agree to do.

1. Issue a policy statement deploring white racism in this country, and acknowledging its existence and extent. Granted.

2. Allow the black students to name half the members to a new University-wide Human Relations Committee, and approve the other members. Not granted. Instead, the administration called for a special advisory council to recommend to the University what changes in its procedures are needed to handle better the problems of black students. This council, composed of ten members selected by the president, J. Roscoe Miller, from a list of 20 supplied by the black students, “could in future years play an important role in recommending selection of members” for the Human Relations Committee, the agreement said. But for the moment, the President would make appointments in a way that elicits and recognizes the views and recommendations of the black students.
3. Assure that each new freshman class is 10 to 12 per cent Negro and, that half the black students come from the urban ghettos. Not granted. The University declared a commitment to seek at least half its new Negro students from urban ghettos. But it said it "cannot in good faith offer such explicit guarantees on class-wide quotas."

4. Institute a committee selected by black students that would assist the Admission Office in recruiting Negro students and share in decision-making authority, and pay the members. Partially granted. The University welcomed a committee to help in recruitment and said it should be paid on an hourly basis. (The committee work constitutes the work portion of students on work-study programs.)

But it added that it "cannot permit University students to make individual admission decisions. The evaluation of a candidate's folder is confidential and a privileged communication between the candidate and the office of admission."

5. Supply For Members Only with a list of all Negro students on campus as well as names and addresses of incoming freshman. Granted.

6. Re-evaluate the process of determining and administering financial aid for Negroes and increase scholarships so requirements for part-time and summer work can be ended. Not granted. The University agreed "in principle" that the amount of aid should be increased and agreed to create a committee to advise the administration on financial aid policy and to help review individual requests for special assistance.

7. Provide separate housing facilities for black students. Granted. (Campus activity facilities were agreed to earlier.)

8. Allow black students to approve any personnel hired as counsellors for Negro students. Not granted. (The University on April 15 hired a counsellor to start in the fall quarter.)

9. Work with a committee of students selected by the Negroes on creation of a black student union. Not granted. (See 7.)

10. Give Negroes access to administration panels studying open occupancy matters and working on a new housing policy for the University. Granted.

11. Add studies in Negro history, literature and art, and give black students authority to approve Negro professors appointed to teach these courses. Not granted. The University said it agrees on the "importance of expanding studies of black history and black culture," which the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences would "urge upon his departmental chairmen for consideration."


The University added that "we welcome suggestions from the black community as to qualified potential faculty members" but noted that appointments are made by the various faculties.

In conclusion Dr. Miller added that the impression of those who had dealt with the students had been that they had a remarkable "depth of understanding for both their problems and ours. They did not appear to want to use their leader-
ship position for personal notoriety or to want to make trouble for the sake of making trouble. . . . The Negro students staged an illegal and forceful demonstra-
tion, but they were not the brigands some sectors of the press depicted them to be.”170

The relief which followed the peaceful settlement of the dispute was rudely shattered by the banner headline on the front page of the Sunday morning edition of the Chicago Tribune of May 5, 1968: “Black Power Wins at N.U.” The article characterized the agreement as a capitulation by the university. A scathing editorial the following day, entitled “A Sad Day for Northwestern,” accused the university of having disregarded its statutory obligations and of having yielded its decision-
making power to “trespassing rascals.” The fact that these newspaper accounts were inaccurate and misleading in no way saved the administration from an avalanche of letters and calls, many of them vituperative. The president and his colleagues were castigated for abdicating their responsibility as administrators and for spinelessly allowing a small group of black students to dictate to the university. That the university had not, in fact, surrendered its fundamental authority was often overlooked in the barrage of criticism.

But there were also vigorous expressions of support. The president of the Alumni Association urged his fellow alumni to recognize that the university did not “release final authority in matters of academics or student life.” Editorials in the Chicago Daily News of May 6, and the Chicago Sun Times of May 7, gave a more accurate account of what had taken place and so helped restore the balance. The faculty and staff gave high praise to the administration. Indeed, 425 of the 734 full time faculty on the Evanston campus had signed an endorsement of the agreement with the black students. At a meeting of the University Senate later in May, the unusually large gathering of faculty rose to give President Miller a standing ovation.

The trustees, however, were more tempered in their reactions. After several meetings at which the implications of the agreement with the black students were fully discussed, the board adopted a resolution which declared, in part, “The Board concurs in the administration’s sincere effort to understand the problems of the black students’ group . . . and authorizes the administration to proceed with the terms of the agreement of May 4, subject to review from time to time by the Board. The Board is satisfied that the administration properly rejected all demands that the University surrender administrative authority or faculty prerogative, and that under the terms . . . students will be consulted in an advisory capacity only.” However, the trustees rejected any suggestion that Northwestern University was racist, adding that “the Board decries racism in any form.” The resolution served notice that the trustees opposed negotiations of any kind “while unlawful or disruptive activity is in progress.” In conclusion it noted that: “The Board expresses complete confidence in the administrative officers of the University and directs them to take prompt and effective action in case of any future attempt to engage in tactics which disrupt the orderly conduct of the University.”171

Thus the crisis ended peacefully with no injury to life, limb, or property and with considerable support within the university for the action taken. The peaceful resolution of the crisis set a precedent which was to stand the university in good stead during the next few years.
However, the creation of better understanding between the university administration and faculty on the one hand and the black student community on the other, could not prevent occasional incidents of a potentially explosive nature. In March 1969, a group of black students invaded the Triangle fraternity house in search of a fraternity member who had allegedly insulted a black woman student. Personal injuries and property damage resulted and the University Discipline Committee imposed penalties on the twenty-one students who admitted their responsibility for the incident. A group of black and white student sympathizers protested the penalties—which called for restitution for damages, in some cases suspension for the current academic year, in others, probation for two years—by staging a hunger strike on Rebecca Crown Plaza. The strike came to an end when President Miller personally reaffirmed “the decision and penalties authenticated by the University Discipline Committee.”

During 1969 and 1970 the black community on and off campus continued to press for the admission of large numbers of black students whose “total financial needs” would be met by financial aid. For its part, the university honored the commitment it had made in 1968 and recruited black students in increasing numbers. By the fall of 1973 approximately 650 of the undergraduates enrolled—constituting ten percent of the undergraduate body—were black students. A black staff member had joined the Admission Office in the fall of 1971. The following year the College of Arts and Sciences formally established a department of African-American studies.

At the same time that the university was attempting to deal with pressures from the black community, the opposition of many students and faculty to the Viet Nam War was becoming increasingly vocal and militant. Between 1969 and 1973 the administration was confronted by a series of demonstrations in which both students and faculty participated. Led chiefly by the SDS, the militants on campus resorted to force to draw attention to their views. Others, strongly opposed to the war, nevertheless rejected the tactics to which the militants resorted. Still others, both students and faculty, continued to support American intervention in Viet Nam. The administration saw itself as having the responsibility to make possible the expression of all the diverse viewpoints and to prevent the identification of the university with any particular position in the increasingly passionate controversy.

The militants at Northwestern, as elsewhere, directed much of their activity against the NROTC, insisting that this symbol of militarism had no place in an academic institution. In May 1969, an angry mob of demonstrators tried to block the entrance of guests to the annual NROTC review which had been moved from Deering Meadow to McGaw Hall. Evanston police had to be summoned to keep back the crowd and make way for those attending the review.

Early in the fall of 1969, Chancellor Miller, anticipating further disturbances, issued a statement to all deans and faculty affirming that the university would not countenance any disruptions. In mid-November, the SDS issued an “hourglass

*In March 1969, the Student Senate recognized the Northwestern University G.I. Student Activity Committee, which later changed its name to the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam.