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## College guide helps blacks in transition

United Press International  
PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Barry Beckham was an eager but woefully unprepared student when he left his home in New Jersey in the 1960s to attend Brown University.

"I was floundering academically and there was nobody to help me. I learned by trial and error," Beckham recalled.

Even though he was an "inveterate college guide reader," Beckham's research was lacking in one crucial area: What did Brown offer him, a black student?

Beckham, 38, survived the initial academic shock quite well and is now an associate professor of English at Brown's Gradu-

ate Program in Writing. And now, the successful novelist is putting together a guide he hopes will ease the often painful college experience for students who are black.

"The Black Student's Guide to Colleges" is a student and administrative profile of 165 institutes of higher learning across the nation. It is designed to answer the questions asked most often by black applicants.

Beckham, who still could pass for an undergraduate, said the collection of essays, observations and basic facts addresses the concerns of the black high school student making the big move to college.

"Black students need an entirely different set of information than they get in ordinary guides," he said. "In choosing between Brown and Princeton, or any school the black student looks at, he has to ask: 'How comfortable will I be, not only academically but psychologically?'"

Beckham said the guide is particularly needed now with more blacks going on to college. When he graduated from Brown in 1966, the graduating class at the Ivy League school included three other black men. Today, between 400 and 500 black men and women attend Brown University.

But there's a flip side to the higher enrollment figures. Black students are dropping out at an alarming rate, Beckham said.

"The name of the game is retention," he said.

The guide should prepare

black students for what's in store before they attend their first class, he said. It will focus on several key areas: social, academic, financial aid, black organizations and off-campus climate.

A key to a black student's success, he said, is what support services are available — tutoring, professional services and alumni activities, which can provide a valuable role model in telling students how alumni survived, he said.

Black professional societies are an important aspect of achievement, he said.

"There are some things only a black medical student can tell another black student," he said. "It's the old-boy networking system of survival. We have to feed each other to help each other."

A college's social life, another key question of any freshman, is answered in the guide with emphasis on black activities. Parties, sports, entertainment and other diversions are all touched upon.

"My experience was very, very difficult," Beckham said of his undergraduate years. "There was no black social life, no black faculty, no black students, no black parties. Since then, there have been tremendous changes."

A typical entry for a student at a small, competitive California college will advise applicants: "The counseling services are very good, but there are no black counselors except our assistant dean of admission, who alone is trying to accommodate all of our needs."

A student at a small Rhode Island college warns of the school's "intimidating whiteness and uninspiring social life, but most black students are pleased with their choice."

A community's racial atmosphere is also surveyed. "The town-and-gown aspect is very important," Beckham said. One college, a member of the Seven Sisters, was ranked very high by black students for its academics.

"But one student said shopkeepers looked suspiciously only at black students when they shopped," Beckham said.

Beckham collected his information through mail surveys submitted from five black students at each college. One administrator at each school was asked to complete a questionnaire on such basic facts as enrollment, the number of black students, tuition and financial aid opportunities.

The guide also contains a ranking of the top colleges for blacks and essays on writing term papers, on study skills and on the black student-athlete.

Beckham was assisted by 20 student editors in sorting the information. "I've got students working on this who said they could have used the guide."

From the initial response, Beckham sees a need for the guide.

"We are finding almost blanket agreement that blacks are having transitional problems," he said. "The progressive schools have programs to deal with these problems."

## Quirks in the News

United Press International  
NEW YORK (UPI) — Swedish medical researchers say patients who combine aspirin with a diet rich in fish may stave off heart disease.

A report in Therapiaea, the monthly supplement of the Medical Tribune, says Dr. Margareta Thorngren, of Sweden's University of Lund, found potentially dangerous blood clots reduced in 35 healthy volunteers who were fed aspirin and fish daily. The Tribune is a New York-based medical journal.

In the same report, Dr. Peter Elwood said six studies of aspirin have shown a 10-15 percent reduction in cardiac mortality and a 20-25 percent reduction in non-fatal second heart attacks among men. Elwood is director of the epidemiological unit of the British Medical Research Council.

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