

Diversity in Higher Education: The Story of SEOP and ATEP

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## **Abstract**

This research illustrates the history of African Americans at the University of Illinois during the 1960s and 1970s. It primarily focuses on the Special Educational Opportunities Program (SEOP) and the Alternative Teacher Educational Program (ATEP) that developed during this time period. It utilizes archival and secondary sources on the subject to document this history. The goal of this research is to explain how SEOP and ATEP was established and maintained and to illustrate the significance each had in providing minority students greater opportunities on a majority white college campus.

## Introduction

The main focus of this research paper is on the Special Education Opportunities Program (SEOP) and the Alternative Teacher Education Program (ATEP) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (U of I) during the late 1960s to mid 1970s. During the 1960s and 1970s, racial issues were front and center in the American social order and they gave a global audience an understanding of the many problems race posed among all aspects of the American public life. One the most glaring problems occurred within the differing education systems of the United States. Race overwhelming determined a child's school assignment, educational outcome, and by default overall opportunities in adult life. As such, Black students, because of race, were provided less resources and opportunities than their White counterpart. After the landmark ruling *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954), which upended segregation by law, race could no longer be used to place children of color in inferior or segregated educational facilities. *Brown* may have upended legal segregation, but it did not do away with racism. Racism continued, especially in higher education, and this research illustrates how one university, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (U of I), challenged the practices of the day to become a more diverse and inclusive institution.

This research examines the African American experience at the U of I during the late 1960s and mid-1970s as the nation was rethinking and redirecting its practices regarding race. The research is vital because, historically, the U of I had had a small population of Black students, but this low enrollment was challenged after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Black students who were influenced by the Civil Rights and Black Power movements demanded their calls be heard and carried with them a passion for their actions in a way that firmly established their point of view to administrators at the university. The primary demand from African American students at the U of I following the assassination of Dr. King was that the campus admit a larger number of African American students. The university responded, and created programs to attain the admission and social reforms being demanded. The outgrowth was the establishment of programs like the Special Educational Opportunity Program (SEOP), commonly referred to as Project 500, and the Alternative Teacher Education Program (ATEP), and this paper illustrates a brief history of both.

Consequently, the purpose of this research is to share and explain the significance SEOP and ATEP had on the U of I campus during the late 1960s and mid 1970s. This history illustrates how the campus, and more specifically the College of Education, designed these programs to enroll and address the educational needs of students from minority backgrounds. Some published literature discusses in detail the history of SEOP at Illinois, but very little attention has been given to ATEP. This research contextualizes the importance of SEOP at the university but its primary purpose is to elaborate the history of ATEP. In the end, this research seeks to fill the void of the untold story of ATEP.

## **Literature Review**

The discussion of African Americans in higher education, especially at all white institutions has been a popular topic throughout American history. Before and after slavery, black Americans experienced a lack of educational opportunities and resources in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education. It was not until the 1954 ruling of *Brown vs. Board of Education* that American universities and institutions began to open its doors and enroll minority students. Between the 1950s and mid-1970, however, black enrollment at traditionally white institutions became a huge consideration. Given the significance of black enrollment during this time, it is important to understand the relationship between the black student's experiences on all white institutions and these institution's support services that helped these students perform well. But before exploring this central idea, we must analysis three areas that are important to this literature review. These three areas are: African American history at all white institutions, African Americans at the U of I, and African Americans at the U of I during 1960s-1970s. Although most of the literature review consists of works related to the issue at the U of I, it is important to contextualize African American history at traditionally white institutions because it provided a more complete understanding of the topic.

### **African American at All White Institutions**

Although African American segregation in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education was an important topic, most of the relevant research in this area focuses on desegregation. In a 1935 article entitled, "Does the Negro Need Separate School" W.E.B. Du Bois claims that segregated black schools are "needed" as long as they "are necessary for the

proper education of the Negro races.”<sup>1</sup> The central idea that surrounds Du Bois’s point is black unity for an intrinsic education that supports and nurtures the minds of black youth. Du Bois assumed many would think that he was an advocate of segregated schools, but he offered a disclaimer to insist that he was not. He stated, “I know that this article will forthwith be interpreted by certain illiterate “nitwits” as a plea for segregated Negro schools and colleges. It is not. It is simply calling a spade a spade. It is saying in plain English: that a separate Negro school, where children are treated like human beings, trained by teachers of their own race, who know what it means to be black in the year of salvation 1935, is infinitely better than making our boys and girls doormats to be spit and trampled upon and lied to by ignorant social climbers, whose sole claim to superiority is ability to kick “niggers” when they are down.”<sup>2</sup> To a degree, Du Bois makes a great point about the seriousness of black education and the consideration of blacks surviving a racist society, but this feeds into the motivations of Jim Crow and racism.

In 1954, Plaut analyzed the enrollment of black students in northern colleges. He believed the lack of black enrollment was not a result of colleges or institutions making places for the students, but instead, qualified applicants of color holding the numbers down.<sup>3</sup> His study revealed that African American students were one-third of the enrollment in secondary schools, but only two-tenths of one percent of high school seniors had the minimum college qualifications—a high-class rank and comprehension in required subjects at the college level.<sup>4</sup> Plaut attributed home life, poverty, and low motivation for higher education as the primary reason for the under-performance of black students. “One set of causes,” Plaut deduced, “arise at home; another, at school. At home, the large number of families with no tradition of higher education or coping with extreme economic disadvantage, in too many cases leads to under-motivation on the part of the student to seek higher education.”<sup>5</sup>

In 1970, David Nichols and Olive Mills in their edited volume *The Campus and the Racial Crisis*, examines the American Council on Education’s 1969 meeting about the

<sup>1</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois “Does the Negro Need Separate Schools” *The Journal of Negro Education* 4, no. 3 (July 1935): 328.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>3</sup> Richard L. Plaut, “Racial Integration in Higher Education in the North,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 23, no. 3 (Summer, 1954): 310-316.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

understanding of the racial crisis on college campuses. Alexander W. Astin essay, “Racial Consideration in Admission,” directly involves the issue of minorities in college admissions. He analyzes and answers the basic questions that involve the context of racial consideration in college. He draws seven conclusions, a handful being direct considerations for the research in this paper. In conclusions 3-6, Astin argued (as this researcher does) that “(3) The goal of furthering racial integration in colleges basically conflicts with the use of purely meritocratic standards in admissions; (4) All white colleges that lower admissions are likely to experience significant changes in their dropout rates; (5) Basic problem in achieving racial integration in American colleges is the total supply of black college-bound youth is inadequate; and (6) the lowering of admission standards does not necessary result in lowering of academic standards.”<sup>6</sup> Astin’s essay consists of excellent statistical information regarding high school seniors and freshman college students and the essay does not explain or analyze specific enrollment programs at all white institution.

Others took a different approach. In 1978, Marvin Peterson published *Black Students on White Campuses: the Impacts of Increased Black Enrollments*. He examined a small group of white colleges and universities after large increases of black student enrollment between 1968-1972. He explores thirteen colleges and universities, ranging from large and small public and private institutions.<sup>7</sup> The study consisted of two stages: institutional visits and institutional surveys. Stage one was designed to address institutional responses in four areas: administrative, faculty, and academic or curriculum responses and student responds. Stage 2 conducted extensive surveys for four of the thirteen campuses.<sup>8</sup> The study is important because it primarily focuses on college or universities that enrolled a vast number of black students between the years of 1968-1972—the years of the primary research for this study. It offers an alternative perspective to what was occurring not just at Illinois, but also at other institutions higher education in the nation.

### **African Americans’ History at the U of I**

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>7</sup> Marvin W. Peterson, *Black Students on White Campuses: the Impacts of Increased Black Enrollments* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1978).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 50, 52.

While the scholarship is not as extensive, there are significant publications related to the history of African Americans at the University of Illinois (U of I) prior to the establishment of SEOP and ATEP. One of the earliest publications is by Davis ET. Al. entitled, “A Comparison of Characteristics of Negro and White College Freshman Classmates.” It was published in 1970. The study details the academic performance of black freshmen students during the 1966-1967 academic year. Data yielded by these researchers illustrated the need for the U of I to establish more programs for admission, counseling instruction, and related activities for black students.<sup>9</sup> In this study, the researchers examined the high schools attended by black students, their high school percentile ranking, and the number and type of high school courses completed by these freshmen. The research found that black freshmen students had consistently lower ACT scores than their non-black classmates and it suggested that black freshman were not as well prepared as their non-black classmates.<sup>10</sup>

Although the research and findings of Davis et. al. is important; it did not capture the black students’ experiences at Illinois. Carrie Franke and Deirdre Cobb-Roberts, in their respective works, do a much better job describing the black experience at the U of I. In her dissertation, Franke examines de facto segregation was ever-present at Illinois and in the Urbana-Champaign communities between the World War II era and the early 1960s. She explores the problems black students faced in many areas like housing, admissions, and university organizations, and identifying with faculty who looked like them. Her dissertation gives a good assessment of what life was like for African American students at the University of Illinois prior to the establishment of SEOP and ATEP.<sup>11</sup>

Deirdre Cobb-Roberts’s dissertation, *Race and Higher Education at the U of I* also examines the history of Black students at the University of Illinois between the years of 1945-1955.<sup>12</sup> She provides an in-depth history of black students at the U of I, and explains in extensive

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<sup>9</sup> Samuel C. Davis, Jane W. Loeb and Lehymann F Robinson, “A Comparison of Characteristics,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 39, no. 4 (Autumn 1970): 359-366.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 365.

<sup>11</sup> Carrie Franke, *Injustice Sheltered: Race Relations at the University of Illinois and Champaign-Urbana, 1945-1962* (Ph.D. diss. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> Deirdre Lynn Cobb-Roberts, *Race and Higher Education at the University of Illinois, 1945 to 1955* (Ph.D. diss. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1998).  
*Ibid.*, 39.

detail the role of black fraternities and sororities, such as Alpha Kappa Alpha, and the Champaign African American community had on helping black students arriving at the U of I. Also she explores the affect Albert R. Lee had on assisting black students during their four year tenure. Albert R. Lee was a university employee that was known for his diligent effort in helping black students through their four year tenure at the U of I. He was known as the “unofficial” dean of African Americans and was responsible for compiling data on black student’s attendance between the years of 1900-1940. This was important because he volunteered most of his information for the purpose reporting to W.E.B. Du Bois, who was the editor of the *Crisis*, the official journal of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).<sup>13</sup> Lee was involved in African American affairs on and off campus and was important, well respected figure in the Champaign African American community.<sup>14</sup>

### **African American History at the U of I during the 1960s-1970s**

Research concerning black/minority students at Illinois during the 1960s and 1970s has primarily been written by one scholar, Joy Ann Williamson. Her research largely focuses on two important aspects: 1) minority students’ demands for change in enrollment and retention practices for students of color at Illinois; and 2) the institution’s responses to these demands. Williamson’s book, *Black Power on Campus*, examines the U of I between the years of 1965-1975. Her research primarily focuses on the campus environment during the Black Power Movement and explains how black students use their voice to demand change from university administrative and academic practices toward minority students. She also describes two type of recruitment program that were initiated to enroll more minority students.<sup>15</sup> These two programs are the Special Educational Opportunities Program (SEOP) and the Alternative Teacher Education Program (ATEP).

Although research about the topic of African American history at all white institution is important and highly considered among historians, little of this research considers enrollment

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Joy Ann Williamson, *Black Power on Campus: the University of Illinois, 1965-75* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2003).

programs that were implemented at all white institutions during the late 1960s and mid 1970s. The present study is designed to analysis the Special Educational Opportunities Program and the Alternative Teacher Education Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and to fill this gap in the literature by explaining the origins of these two programs and the significance each program had on minority students at the U of I campus.

## **Methodology**

The methodology of this history is archival. Accordingly, primary and secondary source materials guide this study. Primary sources—letter, reports, comments, statistics, etc.—perused and gathered at the university archives provide a firsthand account of the history of ATEP. Secondary sources complement this narrative and explain the history of SEOP or African Americans at the U of I. Secondary sources consist of scholarly publications that document the history of African Americans at Illinois before and during the creation of SEOP and ATEP and that document the general experiences of African Americans attending college at a traditionally white university during the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. Primary and secondary sources are the foundation of the entire research paper. Both sources are vital because they explain the stories of SEOP and ATEP.

## **Findings**

### **Early Century at the U of I (1900-early 1960s)**

While their numbers have been low, African Americans have sporadically always attended the U of I. In 1887, Jonathan Rogan was the first African American admitted to the U of I, albeit he only stayed one year, twenty years after the school's opening. Years after Rogan's enrollment, the first black male student did not graduate until 1900; and the first black female graduated in 1906. As the beginning of the twentieth century embarked, black student enrollment increase while their presence on campus continue to remain only one percent of the student population. Once black students were in U of I, they experienced discrimination from all aspects of campus life.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, most black students experienced campus dissonance from white students. Discrimination became the unheralded mandate for the entire

campus as black attendance grew but the population percentage remained the same. During this time, black students experience racist events, such as the Hobo Parade, which depicted and condemned black culture. According Williamson, the Hobo Parade occurred “in the early part of the twentieth century during Homecoming.”<sup>16</sup> She explained how white students “would dress as indigent people” and “made postcards of the hobos in black face and imitated other minority groups such as Jews, and the Irish.”<sup>17</sup>

Despite these incidents, black students persevered and became active members in many university organizations. They participated in various organizations like the Glee Club and the student newspaper, the *Daily Illini*, but black fraternities and sororities or the local churches sponsored the majority of their social activities. During the 1940s and 1950s, the black student population at Illinois increased but the overall percentage—1 to 2 percent—remained the same. By the 1960s, during the height of the Civil Rights Movement, black students began questioning these enrollment practices and demanded an increase in black students.

In the 1960s, the federal government enacted many policies to alleviate the urgency of racial issues. Policies like the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Higher Education Act were initiated to provide assistance to African Americans in their daily lives. From these federal policies, higher education institutions were forced to acknowledge their role in providing social reform and assuage discrimination. With the federal support, universities across the country began to implement affirmative action practices and programs for African Americans or minority students; these labels vary because different institutions had various definitions for underprivileged students.

### **SEOP at the University of Illinois**

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is primarily known as an all white institution throughout the school’s entire history. During the 1960’s and 1970’s, black students began to challenge this mandate as social movements gave these young citizens an outlet to demand equality. As black students began to aggrandize their voice for change, university administrators planned and discussed the increasing of equal educational opportunities for

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

minority students. President David Dodds Henry demanded this action as he created the University Committee on Human Relations and Equal Opportunity. The committee's goal was to analyze the university's role in diversity and find solutions for these problems. In the November 1964 report, the committee reported the imbalance of minority student enrollment and urged the University to take action in rectifying this issue.

Between 1964 and 1966, the U of I organized programs and policies to increase the diversity on campus. In the spirit of this initiative, other units, like the College of Education, the College of Law, and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS), began their own equal opportunity programs. Although Illinois's actions for diversity were far ahead of other traditionally white institutions, its black enrollment remained low. Notwithstanding, the school continued to seek alternative ways to address this problem.

In the summer of 1965, Illinois began an experimental program to promote and invest in the academic preparedness of minority students that graduated from disadvantaged high schools. The University required each student to be placed in their top high school percentile rank, ACT score, and completed academic curriculum.<sup>18</sup> The program was operated under the College of LAS and it lasted for eight weeks. As years progressed and the program continued it was named the "Transition" program, and its main focus was to prepare minority students for the freshman academic year and improve their academic deficiencies from high schools. In the following school years, the university began the summer program early and provided support services for black students.

Before the fall semester of 1968, Illinois appointed a new chancellor, Jack Peltason. During early 1968, the university was in the process of creating a program that enrolled two hundred black students in the 1968-1969 academic years.<sup>19</sup> This program did not proceed because administrators were worried about the affect the campus might have on the students. After analyzing the Spencer Report, the university developed a plan to implement a program that would increase the black student enrollment during the years 1969 to 1973. The Spencer Report was a report written by Professor Roger Spencer that focused on the increase of black student

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 64.

enrollment and retention.<sup>20</sup> The report analyzes the academic performance between black and white students that were admitted to the U of I. It emphasizes that white students regularly outperformed black students, especially Black students from segregated Chicago high schools.<sup>21</sup> The Spencer Report also suggested that the university modify criteria in various areas like academic probation, reduction in freshman courses, and the implementation of support services. Lastly, the report stated specific enrollment numbers for “Negro and culturally deprived students” for several years.<sup>22</sup> The program’s goal was to increase the enrollment figures by five to six hundred, or ten percent, and graduate thirty percent of the students. But the university plans changed after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. King’s assassination forced Illinois to immediately focus on the racial context around the US, especially on campus.

With the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and black students’ demands for racial equality on campus, the university changed the enrollment program and announced the plan in a public news release one month after the assassination and two months after the Spencer Report. On May 2, 1968, the university announced the establishment of the Special Educational Opportunity Program (SEOP or Project 500) for the fall semester of 1968. The SEOP became one of the largest programs that were started by an all white institution of higher education because it proposed to admit five hundred black students from predominantly low income black high schools.

The program focused on the university’s five goals: 1) To provide the education opportunity for underprivileged students; 2) to increase the number of minority students on campus; 3) to develop programs to aid disadvantage students; 4) To expose non-SEOP to cultural and social experiences in understanding different cultures; and 5) to develop information about problems affecting students with disadvantaged backgrounds.<sup>23</sup> As the program was in the organizing stages, the U of I became a reflection of the social problems occurring throughout the nation during this time. War protest, freedom of speech rallies and black power demonstrations

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 67.

were ever-present, and the campus, accordingly, was perceived as being unstable and desultory for academic standards.

The university had requirements for enrolling black student through the SEOP. Illinois sought black students or underprivileged students who were ranked in the top of their graduating class; met subject requirements, ranked in the third quarter of their class; had an ACT score of 19; or ranked in the bottom quarter of their graduating class and had a composite ACT score of 21.<sup>24</sup> The Black Student Association (BSA) worked closely with the Office of Admission in finding qualified students from underrepresented backgrounds from throughout the state and nation. The BSA invited eighty black students from Chicago, East St. Louis, and Holmes County, Mississippi to experience the campus environment and participate in different activities.<sup>25</sup> Once students were enrolled, the Black Student Association continued to assist incoming students with academic and counseling resources available at the university.

After enrolling SEOP students, the university focused on creating resources that would give the students a chance to graduate in five years. The university encouraged departments to change their curriculum for various courses to benefit the academic needs of SEOP students. For example, the Department of Mathematics created Math 101, which helped students understand high school algebra at a comprehensible level.<sup>26</sup> These courses provided SEOP students with a foundation that encouraged them to push and strive for academic success. As SEOP continued to pursue the enrollment of underrepresented students, some SEOP students found interest in the field of secondary and post-secondary education. In the College of Education, the Alternative Teacher Education Program was offered to all SEOP students who aspired to become future teachers.

### **The Early Years of ATEP (1968-1972)**

The Alternative Teacher Education Program (ATEP) began in the fall semester of 1968 in the College of Education. A graduate student, James Anderson, and a professor, Arthur Davis, proposed it. Dean Rupert Evans of the College of Education assigned a Steering Committee to

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 76.

develop a teacher training program for the fall semester. The program's focus was to enroll minority students with an interest in teacher education.<sup>27</sup> The program provided: 1) students early contact with school children; 2) guided classroom instruction related closely to the work with children and material; 3) opportunities for the discussion and evaluation of important social issues with an interracial group of students and faculty; and 4) a close working relationship with faculty and graduate students.<sup>28</sup>

ATEP was available to all students, but the program's primarily enrolled SEOP students. As the plans for the program developed, ATEP administrators acknowledged their goal of admitting 1/3 and 2/3 SEOP. As one administrator wrote, "because we believe that the proposed program is a viable one for perspective teachers and because we believe very firmly in the need for an integrated program, we feel that the special course which will be proposed should contain no less than one-third black students and no more than two-thirds."<sup>29</sup> After approving the budget and the participation-observation seminar, acceptance letters were sent out to SEOP and non-SEOP students with information regarding the incoming freshmen year. In the 1968-1969 academic year, ATEP enrolled seventy-three SEOP students and twenty non-SEOP students. Half of these students were black and the students themselves wanted to dispel the idea that it was a mere educational program of SEOP. Again, as one administrator deduced, "since the SEOP students themselves wanted to drop that label as quickly as possible, that coincidence was not happy event for anymore. Fortunately, the students are an extremely reasonable group and after the problem was explained, they went on the task at hand."<sup>30</sup> This encouraged ATEP freshmen students to focus on the curriculum that loom in the academic year.

The College of Education made changes in various classes that were specifically focused on ATEP. The Steering Committee "felt that a weakened curriculum would be a disservice to the

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<sup>27</sup> "The Alternative Teacher Education Program: One segment of the Special Educational Opportunities Program," Alternative Teachers Education Program file folder, Dean's Office Papers, series 10/1/5, box 9, obtained in the University of Illinois Department of Archives. Hereafter referred to as "Alternative Teacher Education Program".

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> "School of Education: Committee on 500 students: Report to the Dean," Alternative Teachers Education Program file folder, Dean's Office Papers, series 10/1/5, box 9, obtained in the University of Illinois Department of Archives. Hereafter referred to as "School of Education".

<sup>30</sup> "ATEP papers" Special Educational Opportunities Programs, 1967-73, series 10/15/20, box 1, obtained in the University of Illinois Department of Archives. Hereafter "ATEP papers".

university, the students, and to the teaching profession. This did not mean that the College of Education could not change its structure or its curriculum, but it did mean that any change undertaken must be consistent with an improved program for educating and training teachers.”<sup>31</sup> With the committee’s support, ATEP coursework centered on practical experience, while helping to develop conceptual tools to analyze and understand the experience. First years ATEP students received a total thirteen credit hours for the fall semester, and a total of 15 for the spring semester. ATEP students attended courses such as Education 100, Rhetoric 100, and English 101, which focused on covering university and major requirements.<sup>32</sup> However, the problem with organizing this program and these courses was finding professors and funding.

Due to the early initiation of ATEP in the fall semester of 1968, staffing for the program became hard to find because many professors were working for multiple departments and was not aware of the program’s curriculum. As one administrator reported, “The staffing of the classes was one of the major problems. Department chairmen could not release the faculty members who volunteered to teach. The faculty members had already been assigned teaching loads and the department chairmen could not rearrange teaching assignments nor hire assistants to pick up the load. No salaries were paid to the professors for their services to the program.”<sup>33</sup> Despite these issues, there were eight professors and teaching assistants that were on the ATEP budget—overall ten professors and 15 teaching assistants participated in the first year. Professors, such as Paul Violas, Walter Feinberg, and Roland Payette volunteered their time to aid in the program’s development. They firmly believed in the need for the program to be successful. Most of the professor enjoyed working with ATEP students. Each acknowledged the potential ATEP students had and what they had to offer to Illinois. After the first academic year of ATEP, certain professor left the program due to course overloads and prior commitments. “All professors taught on an overload basis. Almost all the respondents agreed that they enjoyed their experiences in the ATEP, but will not return to teach in the program next year. The respondent’s main reason for not being available is because to teach on overload basis caused them to get further behind in their own reading and research.”<sup>34</sup> But this cycle of an unbalanced faculty commitment continue to resurface as the program experienced budgetary cuts.

<sup>31</sup> “Alternative Teacher Education Program”.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

In the 1969-1970 academic year, ATEP began to experience problems with the budget, faculty, and SEOP students' enrollment. "The effect of the budget cut will prohibit us from recruiting non-SEOP students, and this will be unfortunate to all concerned. It will: 1) decrease the desired degree of interaction between different groups of students; 2) It will give a false image of a two-track program to the College of Education; 3) It will prohibit the SEOP student from seeing just how well he can do in competition with non-SEOP students and from seeing just how valuable his own talents are; and 4) It will reduce the effectiveness of the program in providing a model and an impetus for other innovations in undergraduate education"<sup>35</sup>. There were forty incoming SEOP freshmen and zero non-SEOP students. The freshmen and sophomore SEOP students totaled 106. The decrease in professional seminar were only limited to four for freshmen and sophomores. Professors decrease as well, leaving an overall total of three for the entire program. A total of four teaching assistants returned to the program, but only three were hired. One teaching assistant served as the coordinator while the other two taught the sophomore level courses—due to the fact the program did not have any professor at that level. Challenges were everywhere. As it was reported to the Dean of Education, "The academic and professional support for ATEP has decrease. The ATEP is in declining stage and appears to be in a process of being phased out."<sup>36</sup> In a fact sheet from the College of Education, ATEP was referred to a "piecemeal program" due to the problems that had occurred.<sup>37</sup> Despite these problems, ATEP students continued to perform well in their courses, and the program was known to many as the most successful SEOP program.

In 1971, two alternative programs were proposed to integrate inside ATEP. The first program was the Alternate Special Education Program. The program was centered on minority students that had interest in special education. "Such a program might be to incorporate one special education course per semester as well as an additional education course, perhaps in the

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<sup>34</sup> "The Full-Dimension of the Alternate Teacher Education Program: The Degree to which Special Accommodation should be continued for SEOP students in the College Education," Alternative Teacher Education Program file folder, Dean's Office papers, series 10/1/5, box 9, obtained in the University of Illinois Department of Archives. Hereafter referred to as "Full Dimension of the Alternative Teacher Education Program".

<sup>35</sup> "ATEP papers".

<sup>36</sup> "The College of Education: Alternate Teacher Education Program: Fact Sheet: A Comparison of Academic Years," James D. Raths Papers, 1967-87, series 10/15/20, box 1, obtained in the University of Illinois Department of Archives. Hereafter referred to as "Fact Sheet".

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

area of educational psychology (the sociology of education, learning theory, behavior techniques, group techniques etc.)”<sup>38</sup> It scheduled proposal was for the fall semester of 1971-1972, but the College of Education could not developed the program due to the budget. The second program was the Alternative Programs for Elementary Education. The program focused on making changes with the regular Elementary Education program and offerings to all students through ATEP. The program consisted of three proposals: “1) Student teaching should not be assigned any letter grade. Rather, there must be a pass-fail criterion instead; 2) Student teaching must be divided into two parts that provide the student teacher with an opportunity to experience different cooperating teachers and schools; and 3) A student teacher must be confronted with a student teaching experience involved with the overlapping with other student teachers from other universities.”<sup>39</sup> Although these new programs were proposed, ATEP continued to suffer from faculty and budget problems. The College of Education administrators were distracted by these problems and began the process of alleviating these issues for ATEP.

The College of Education administrators decided to place ATEP within the Department of Elementary Education. This move occurred because of ATEP inability to function as an independent program. ATEP was to provide the same assistance to SEOP students, but enrollment was available to all students. In the 1971 and 1972 academic years, the university issued letters to each College and department addressing the ten percent reduction in state money.<sup>40</sup> This was terrible news for the ATEP, because the faculty and funds were already declining yearly. Faculty members and original administrators like Professor William Shoemaker left ATEP because of the shift into the Department of Elementary Education. These were the new goals as ATEP made its transition into the Department of Elementary Education: 1) principle responsibility for the ATEP would shift from the College (Dean’s Office) to the Department of Elementary Education; 2) the coordinator for the program will be selected by the Department of Elementary Education; 3) it will continue as an alternate to other programs; 4) a

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<sup>38</sup> “Alternate Special Education Program”.

<sup>39</sup> “Alternate Program for Elementary Education,” College of Education—ATEP/SEOP 1970-73 file folder, James D. Rath Papers, 1968-87, series 10/15/20, box 2, obtained in the University of Illinois Department of Archives. Hereafter referred to as the “Alternate Program for Elementary Education”.

<sup>40</sup> “Budget Planning: State Monies only,” College of Education—ATEP/SEOP 1970-73 file folder, James D. Rath Papers. 1968-87, series 10/15/20, box 2, obtained in the University of Illinois Department of Archives. Hereafter referred to as “Budget Planning”.

purposeful mix of interracial groups will be maintained in a fashion which will facilitate of racial and ethnic difference so that whites may better understand other cultural views of the educational process.<sup>41</sup> With the shift into the Department of Elementary Education and the uncertain direction of ATEP, the program reached the middle years of operation.

### **The Middle Years of ATEP (1972-1975)**

The middle years of ATEP became a time when the program began to decrease in SEOP students, faculty, and funding. ATEP was forced to change objectives, as the program became a part of the Department of Elementary Education. Professors and administrators left ATEP as the program struggle to find stability for all areas. For all the problems ATEP faced, the administrators, faculty members, and students continue to perform well with the limited resources that were available.

In the 1971-1972 academic year, ATEP administrator were encourage to lead the program into the right direction by seeking faculty members that were dedicated to working with the program. “In order to add an element of stability, insure more responsiveness to increased student needs and concerns, and further augment the possibility of the program becoming an integral and active part of the College of Education, it was deemed necessary that ATEP should have the steadying influence of regular faculty whose primary role and function would be to focus on the program and its problems.”<sup>42</sup> They were able to find five instructors and that became the nuclei for future development and redefinition. The role of graduate assistants became vital as their role focus more on three specific services: counseling, teaching assistance, and observation in schools.<sup>43</sup> Also students were required to four counseling meeting per semester.

ATEP administrators continued to provide support services for all field studies despite the budget crisis that plagued the program. In the 1971-1972 academic years, ATEP students continued the on-site classroom experience. During this year, ATEP students experienced a great

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<sup>41</sup> “Summary Understanding regarding ATEP,” Program Description file folder, James D. Rath Papers, 1967-87, series 10/15/20, box 1, obtained in the University of Illinois Department of Archives. Hereafter referred to as “Summary Understanding regarding ATEP”.

<sup>42</sup> “Alternate Teacher Education Program: Annual Report: Elementary Education Department, 1971-1972,” Alternative Teacher Education Program file folder, Dean’s Office, series 10/1/5, box 9, obtained in the University of Illinois Department of Archives. Hereafter referred to as “Annual Report, 1971-1972”.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 2.

opportunity, as they were able to work closely with teachers and principals. A total of ninety-seven teachers and nine principals participated in the program.<sup>44</sup> The student-principle component was new to the ATEP program and it provided students with a realistic view of the complexities of the educational process. “To fulfill the four hour weekly requirement of the program, participating students alternated between the classroom and the principal’s office, two hours with the teacher and pupils in the classroom and two hours under the direct supervision of the principle, becoming acquainted with the many roles and administrative duties of that office.<sup>45</sup> In that same year, students also were able to participate in pre-school centers and the Leal School Mathematics Laboratory Project that was directed by Dr. Jack Easley. In the project, ATEP students worked and taught elementary students in small groups or one to one basis. The method was based on Piaget’s theory of intellectual development.<sup>46</sup>

Budget changes continued to have a significant affect on the program as it experienced decreases in students and funds. For the 1971-1972 academic year, the ATEP had a total of one hundred forty-six students. Of this number, seventy-one were freshmen; sixty-three were sophomores, seven juniors, and five seniors.<sup>47</sup> From the freshmen class, only thirty-five were SEOP students: thirty-one black females, two black males and two white females. Also the sophomore class consists of sixty-three students, twenty-one were SEOP students. Although ATEP experienced up and downs, it continued to strive for excellence. In that academic year, the freshmen mean grade point average was 3.38 based on a mean credit hour of 16.68, and the sophomore mean grade point average was 3.47 with a mean credit hour of 41.50.<sup>48</sup>

The teacher field experience suffered financial difficulties as they struggled with funding for student transportation. ATEP administrators were forced to change transportation companies due to the increase number of participating ATEP students and cost. “However, an increase in the number of participating students, unsatisfactory service provided by the company, and major discrepancies in cost coupled with economic realities, forced the program to terminate its

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

transportation agreement with the company.<sup>49</sup> The program soon found another company that was reasonable for its limited transportation budget.

Towards the end of the 1972-1973 academic year, ATEP continued to experience administrative problems. Jim Rath, Associate Dean and leader of the Executive Committee that monitored ATEP, evaluated the state of ATEP. “Now, ATEP is not a program,” Rath concluded, “It is more nearly professors engaged in parallel play. No one that I can tell is collecting data or testing hypotheses in a way that knowledge will be gained through the experience. As a department, we are simply trying to help a small finite number of SEOP students “make-it” in the teaching profession.”<sup>50</sup> In that same year, Professor Fred Rodgers, the current director of ATEP at that time, resigned as director. In a memo to Jim Rath, Rodgers recommended three requirements for the Executive Committee to consider in finding a new director. Rodgers recommended, “1) the person must be a member of a minority group; 2) the person must have a major in elementary education; and 3) the person must have an interest and experience in operating teacher education programs.”<sup>51</sup> Towards the end of the middle years, administrators continued to search for new initiatives to incorporate in the restoration of ATEP, while the students continued to perform well in the program.

### **The Later Years of ATEP (1975-1977)**

The later years of ATEP were primarily focused on restoring the entire program and the development of new initiatives. Despite these efforts, on May 14, 1975, James Rath declared the suspension of the course Education 100.<sup>52</sup> This was the first of many actions that would eventually lead to the demise of ATEP. Rath’s motive for this decision resulted from the confused objectives of ATEP. He stated that the program’s objectives became “confused over

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>50</sup> “Plan for ATEP,” James D. Rath Papers, 1967-87, series 10/15/20, box 1, obtained in the University of Illinois Department of Archives. Hereafter referred to as “Plan for ATEP”.

<sup>51</sup> “Response to your Memo of February 15 concerning ATEP,” James D. Rath Papers, 1967-87, series 10/15/20, box 1, obtained in the University of Illinois Department of Archives. Hereafter referred to as “Response to Your Memo”.

<sup>52</sup> “Freshmen Early Experience Program,” Teacher Education/ATEP file folder, John A. Easley Papers, 1975, series 10/7/84, box 7, obtained in the University of Illinois Department of Archives. Hereafter referred to as “Freshman Early Experience Program”.

time as the characteristics of the students have shifted; personal changed; and new faculty members have directed the program.”<sup>53</sup>

In 1975-1976, there was much uncertainty regarding the continuation of ATEP beyond the academic year. The overall student enrollment hit an all-time low as the program only had eighteen students; of which on three were from a minority background. The spring semester did see an increase in enrollment due to students finishing ATEP as an area of concentration in elementary education curriculum. Only one non-student from EOP, formally known as SEOP, was enrolled in both semesters. Most of the decline in student population resulted from Rath’s decision to suspend admission to ATEP during the revised process. “The low number of students electing ATEP in 1975-1976 is partly explained by the fact that the department of elementary and early childhood education executive committee in May of 1975 requested a hiatus in admission to ATEP during which time the program would be reviewed and revised.”<sup>54</sup> ATEP’s revised process also occurred in staff evaluation.

The staff of ATEP was also affected by the executive order. In the 1975-1976 academic year, the ATEP staff included four teaching assistants, one full time director, a secretary, and advisor and EOP (SEOP) advisor. During the academic year, the goal of the staff was to promote a “spirit” of camaraderie among ATEP students and foster good relationships between black and white students.<sup>55</sup> Toward the end of the 1975-1976 academic year, Dr. Carol D. Holden, the new director of ATEP, and staff submitted a new proposal for ATEP. After a year review and reflection, the staff develop a proposal that focused on two ideas: “1) a service program designed to meet the needs of minority students and students admitted to the department under the auspices of EOP; and 2) a research thrust designed to test present practices in teacher education and try new and experimental approaches to teaching training.”<sup>56</sup> On December 3, 1975, the executive committee of the department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education did not approve the proposal. After the meeting, Dr. Holden received a letter from the committee stating the uncertainty of the 1976-1977 academic year of ATEP. “This proposal which was discussed

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> “Alternate Teacher Education Program: 1975-1976 Report,” series 10/15/20, box 1, obtained in the University of Illinois Department of Archives.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 12.

publicly on December 3, 1975, was not approved by the executive committee of the department of elementary and early childhood education. The director received a letter stating that the committee was undecided about whether or not to offer the ATEP option in 1976-77.”<sup>57</sup> From this unlikely outcome, ATEP seemed finished.

In the spring of 1976, the executive committee of the Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education decided to eliminate the early experience option. The committee stated that “the motives for this decision was the absent of rationale for a program; the dearth of “good” placements within the Champaign-Urbana area; the lack of coordination of ATEP junior program; and the inability of the Department to find faculty members willing to on the responsibility of the program were the principle factors leading to this decision.”<sup>58</sup> On June 8, 1976, James Rath issued the annual report on SEOP and ATEP to Dean J. Myron Atkin. The report analyzed every aspect of SEOP and ATEP and the effect each program had on minority students in the College of Education. The most important information in the report involved a center to study de-segregation. “Some potential uses of the ATEP monies might include the following support for the development for a center to study de-segregation. If the dollars would go primarily to minority graduate students with research skills that would be applicable to the work of such a center, then two goals could be met simultaneously-support minority students and generation of knowledge that might be or help to other institution in the State of Illinois.”<sup>59</sup> From this proposal, Dean J. Myron Atkin and the executive committee organized a science tutoring unit in the College of Education. “The College of Education should invest initially \$40,000 of the SEOP funds now located in the Department of Elementary and Early childhood Education’s budget to institute a tutoring service that would be open to all students in the SEOP program in the University”<sup>60</sup> The science tutoring unit was a program that was offered as a

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> “ATEP Report,” ATEP 1976-1978 file folder, James D. Rath Papers, 1967-87, series 10/15/20, box 1, obtained at the University of Illinois Department of Archives. Hereafter referred to as “ATEP Report”.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>60</sup> “Letter to James Rath,” ATEP 1976-1978 file folder, James D. Rath Papers, 1967-87, series 10/15/20, box 2, obtained at the University of Illinois Department of Archives.

summer program for students who planned to enroll at the University of Illinois.<sup>61</sup> The funds that supported ATEP were used to operate this program. ATEP was now officially over.

After having a brief conversation with Dr. James D. Anderson, I was enlightened on some insight information regarding ATEP. This new information is important because Dr. Anderson was one of the creators of ATEP, and he monitored the program's progress during its operation from 1968-1976. Anderson shared information regarding the ATEP's budget. He explained that the program had a private budget line from the State of Illinois. This is vital because ATEP funding should not been monitored by the College of Education. Also, he explained that ATEP continued to receive steady funding post-1977, but much of the funds were used for other College considerations. Finally, he explained that ATEP subsided because of an amalgamation of other motives and the lack of support and from administrators within the College of Education.

### **The Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Special Education Opportunities Program (SEOP) and the Alternative Teacher Education Program (ATEP) were two great optimistic programs that promoted educational opportunities for minority students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Both programs upended the university's doubtfulness regarding an increase in enrollment and program development for students from underrepresented backgrounds. In addition, SEOP and ATEP student are trendsetters that assisted in upending these concerns; they paved a way for present and future minority students like myself. These students have had a significant effect on Illinois because they experienced and overcame academic and social hurdles. They established an excellent academic tradition that was not only impressive to administrators but to future students as well.

Lastly, universities, like the U of I, must continue to promote or acknowledge programs like the Special Educational Opportunities Program (SEOP) and the Alternative Teacher Education Program (ATEP) because there is still a need for more minority students in higher education. Implementing these programs in the late 1960 was, and should have been, a new beginning for all college and universities across the campus because it would have reached the

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<sup>61</sup> "Letter to Colleagues," ATEP 1976-1978 file folder, James D. Rath's Papers, 1967-87, series 10/15/20, box 2, obtained in the University of Illinois Department of Archives.

intrinsic goal of achieving a campus that was a microcosm of society and the world—dealing with complex issues that continue surface as we live each day. SEOP and ATEP made the U of I a more diverse campus and provided opportunities for the campus to become a more inclusive and tolerate institution of higher education.

Overall, the Special Educational Opportunities Program (SEOP) and the Alternative Teacher Education Program were great programs for the enrollment of minority students. Each programs' dedication was outstanding as students in both SEOP and ATEP excelled from the dedicated services of academic successful professionals and faculty. These individuals were determined to provide minority/black students the best resources that were available at that time. Although enrollment programs like SEOP and ATEP do not exist anymore, their impact will continue to live on with the academic resources and academic success of present and future minority students.

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