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Benjamin Banneker Honors College- 1985

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Walker County News-Citizen 12-12-85

Banneker College in second year of programming³⁴

Prairie View -- An honors program for high-achievement minority students has entered its second year at Prairie View A&M University.

The Benjamin Banneker Honors College is one of only 15 such programs in schools throughout the country, and the first among the 107 traditionally Black colleges and universities in the United States.

Banneker students major in a range of studies including accounting, computer science, engineering and management.

But specialized training in these and related areas is supplemented "with an emphasis on discourse as a learning catalyst", according to Dr. Ron Sheehy, Dean of the Banneker School.

"Our students not only learn the foundation skills required of successful professionals, but are also exposed to those learning experiences that foster wisdom", Sheehy said.

The Banneker College was

conceived, University officials said, because of the disparity between the number of minority students who pursue advanced degrees and their white counterparts.

Latest statistics indicate that Blacks receive less than three percent of PhDs conferred throughout the country, according to Dr. Percy A. Pierre, President of PVAMU.

"We want to make a dent in that trend and the Banneker College provides exceptional

training to propel the student into advanced training so that they can be adequately equipped to assume positions of leadership in their chosen discipline", Pierre said.

Dr. Sheehy adds, "equally as important as the processes involved in advanced professional study is the capability to do the kind of subjective thinking that can translate technical skills into solutions for today's problems.

"A university must turn away from the fragmentation that results from over-emphasis on a restricted field of study at the expense of a fuller, more complex, more unified world view", Sheehy said.

He referred to a recent report of a study by the Carnegie Foundation which concludes that colleges are graduating students with too little sense of civic responsibility.

The report, edited by Frank Newman, president of the Education Commission of the States, urges research universities to overcome their antipathy toward technology and to apply "the fruits of research... to practical problems in industry, the environment and society".

Currently 150 students, freshman and sophomores, are enrolled in the Banneker Honors College programs. They come from 15 states and 15 foreign countries. Banneker has a ten percent non-minority enrollment.

Admission and academic

requirements are aimed at attracting top-ranked minority students. A high percentage of these students were high school valedictorians and salutatorians.

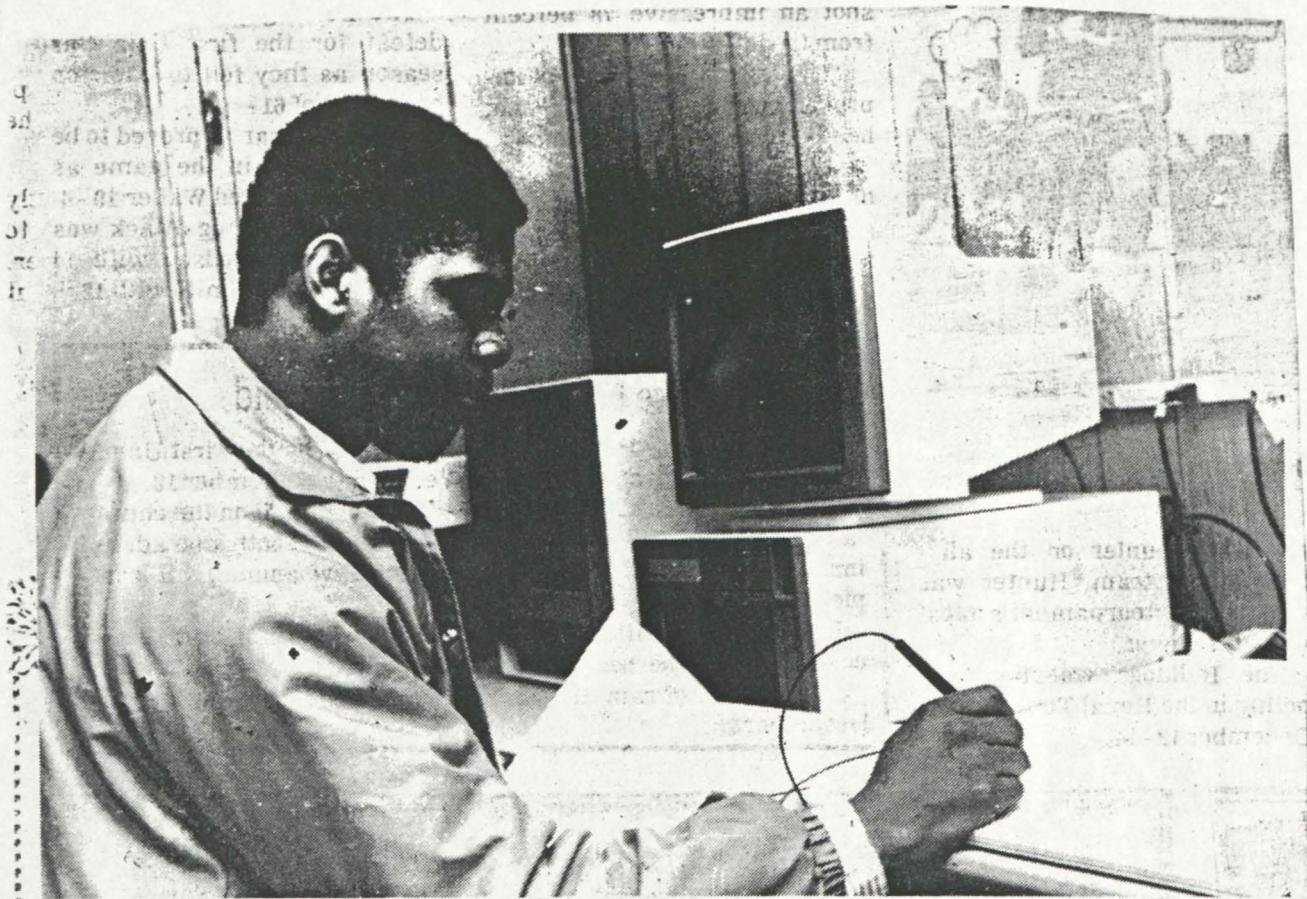
The typical Banneker student enters the program with SAT scores of 985 or on a par with black students in almost any Ivy League school, according to Dean Sheehy.

Banneker students live in one of two residence halls designed to enhance interaction with college administrators and faculty as well as among them-

selves.

Visiting professors and lecturers make presentations on a wide range of subjects, from the arts to cultural pluralism to issues in science and technology.

"We're really talking about the developing of Renaissance people," Sheehy said. "our students are encouraged to transcend mere professionalism or proficiency in one area and to see their chosen disciplines as part of the whole to which it belongs."



Above, a Banneker College student uses a computerized drafting process to draw blueprints.

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