

Final Report and Recommendations to the Provost on
The School for Children at Columbia University

Faculty Task Force

Christia Mercer, Philosophy, Chair
Kyle Bagwell, Economics & Business
Karina Davidson, Medicine
Harold Edgar, Law
Dan Kleinman, Arts
Amy Liebov, School for Children
Susan Pedersen, History
Alice Prince, Pediatrics & Pharmacology
Charles Tilly, Political Science & Sociology

12 May 2005

Summary of Task Force Recommendations

Admissions to The School for Children:

Kindergarten admission: Places in kindergarten designated for Columbia children, other than those reserved for siblings or for recruitment and retention, will be offered first to children of fulltime officers of instruction of professorial rank who are engaged primarily in teaching and research (Group 1). Any places unused by that group will be offered to children of other officers of the University (Group 2).

Recruitment and retention: The Provost may reserve a limited number of places for use in the recruitment and retention of Group 1 faculty and, during a transitional period, for honoring specific representations of availability made by those authorized to recruit in the University's name. Any places not needed for these purposes will return to the general pool.

Siblings: A younger sibling of a child currently in the School will be offered admission to kindergarten, assuming the School can meet the educational needs of the child.

Lottery: If demand for places in the School exceeds the number of places available, separate lotteries will be held for Group 1 and Group 2 children to determine the order of priority. Any Group 1 child whose educational needs can be met by the School and who does not get an immediate place in the School will be put on a waiting list, in the order determined by the lottery. Places available after the enrollment of children from Group 1 will be offered to Group 2 children in the order determined by the Group 2 lottery.

No quotas: For any lottery held, there will be no quotas by school or division of the University. All children in a Group 1 lottery will have the same chance for admission as all other children in that group. All children in the Group 2 lottery will likewise have the same chance for admission as all other Group 2 children.

Admission to grades 1-8: If places are available in grades 1-8, admission to each grade will be treated in analogous fashion to kindergarten admission.

Guidance for Columbia Parents:

The University should strengthen its School Search Service to aid all Columbia parents, including newly recruited officers, in assessing alternatives among the public and private schools of the New York area. The service should be made available on both the Morningside and Health Science campuses.

Financial Aid:

Alternative models: The University should consider whether to determine financial aid per child to some extent by household income. The report lays out alternative financial aid models.

Financial transitions: If financial aid policy changes in such a way as to decrease aid to a child currently in the School, the University should cushion the impact of such a change by extending present financial aid levels for that child for at least two years.

School Administration:

Educational consultants: In light of the fundamental changes in the School project since planning for it began, the University should engage outside educational consultants to assess the performance and expenditures of the School and to assure that its future plans are based on sound financial and pedagogical policies.

Governing Board: The University should form a school Governing Board charged with overseeing school finances and personnel, and approving school policy on matters other than admissions and financial aid.

Long-term Planning:

The Columbia School cannot accommodate the children of all Columbia officers and staff. The University should plan for the long-term future and broaden the range of options for meeting the educational needs of the Columbia University community.

Introduction

Columbia University founded its School for Children as a major move in its effort to recruit and retain faculty with school-aged children. A second important goal was to foster relationships across increasingly specialized academic disciplines. The School had other ambitions as well: creating a stronger community within Columbia's Morningside Heights area, providing opportunities to collaborate with public schools, and serving as a model for national educational excellence.

In his letter of May 1, 2000 announcing plans for the School, Provost Jonathan Cole emphasized the importance of faculty recruitment and retention, especially of younger faculty:

The central reason for creating the School for children is to maximize our ability to recruit and retain the most able faculty in the world. It has become critical to the University's mission that we be able to provide both excellent housing and schooling at affordable prices so as to recruit the most talented younger faculty, many of whom are building families. A second reason is to help create a more integrated local community of Columbia scholars and others through the social patterns that develop among children and their parents during the K-8 years *

In Provost Cole's initial plan, the School was to be available to all members of the Columbia community. Planning for the School—including hiring of teachers, development of curriculum, and financial structures—was placed in the hands of a team headed by Assistant Provost Gardner Dunnan, who subsequently became Head of School.

Concurrently, however, and perhaps without adequate recognition of the consequences, the University made decisions that limited the School's flexibility in enrolling Columbia's children and weakened the School's financial base, while changing the population it was designed to serve. To secure the local Community Board's approval of the School and the new building in which it is housed, Columbia agreed to allocate places in the School equally between children of Columbia employees and children from the surrounding community. Under this agreement, community children are selected on the basis of a lottery, without regard to their families' ability to pay. Financial aid to community children is based entirely on family financial need, as determined by an outside scholarship service. For both Columbia and community children, the offer of admission is contingent on a screening by the School to indicate a reasonable fit between the School and the child's educational needs

The School admitted its first children, in grades K-4, in the fall of 2003. Grades 5 and 6 were added in the fall of 2004, with a plan to add an additional grade yearly through eighth grade.

In its first year of operation, the School had room for all children of Columbia officers of instruction as well as places for the children of officers in many other categories. By its third year, 2005-2006, demand for Columbia's allotment of kindergarten places just for officers of instruction far exceeded supply. Forced to ration places, the University selected children from the Columbia community by lot, limiting the lottery to officers of instruction and setting caps by academic division. Many members of the Columbia staff complained about this method of selection. In the controversy's wake, Alan Brinkley appointed this Task Force to recommend a revised admissions

* See appendix for entire letter.

policy for Columbia officers' children, to consider the financial aid policy for those children, and to make any other recommendations it felt appropriate.

Initial Conclusions

We quickly encountered two practical limits that constrain our recommendations: limits on the number of available places, and practical limits on total cost.

At the start, we hoped to discover that the supply of places in the School could be increased to meet the demand. A tour of the School, however, made clear that the classrooms are small and configured in such a way as to make reorganization impractical. We considered some radical plans to increase the supply, such as running double shifts, but rejected them as unworkable. We also considered the feasibility of reducing the School from K-8 to K-5. Such a reduction would increase the number of Columbia children by 10-12 per grade. There also might be some pedagogical profit in servicing a smaller range of grades. We decided that this question should be left to the School's Governing Board. Therefore, assuming that the School continues to serve grades K-8 as planned, it can accommodate no more than 68 new kindergarten students per year without overcrowding.

Under the terms of the University's agreement with Community Board 7, half of the roughly 68 kindergarten places will be assigned to community children, leaving at most 34 places available to Columbia children. This fixed supply of places is much smaller than the current or anticipated demand.

The financial constraint, while less sharply defined than the limit on available places, is nevertheless real. As currently operated, the School costs a great deal per pupil (at the high end of the range of the city's finest private schools) but without the endowment and wealthy parents that these schools enjoy. As it adds more grades and students, the School's total cost of operation will increase, even if costs per pupil drop. The University's annual subsidy of the School is already several times greater than was originally anticipated. In light of the high annual subsidy required by the School, we have concluded that we cannot responsibly recommend any solution that significantly increases the total cost to the University beyond the projected levels.

Structure of This Report

Our report centers on the problems of admissions and financial aid. Since Columbia's financial aid benefit for children in elementary school (the Primary Tuition Scholarship) could have an effect on demand for the School, we consider that benefit as well in the section on financial aid. We begin with some comments on, and recommendations about, the School's current mode of operation, and we conclude with comments on the long-term educational future of the Columbia community.

The structure of the report is as follows:

- I. School Operations
- II. Admissions
- III. Financial Aid
- IV. Transition Issues
- V. Looking to the Future

I. School Operations

As we acquainted ourselves with the School's operations, two things struck us as especially notable—first, that the School is staffed and resourced more generously than most Columbia ventures, and, second, that it has nothing equivalent to a governance board setting school policies and overseeing the School's operations.

The School models itself on New York City's top independent schools. The equipment, teacher-student ratios, and supplementary staffing levels at the School are on a par with those of the most expensive independent schools and, in some areas (especially technology), the School's equipment is more advanced. However, there are important differences between the School and other independent schools. The latter screen children in an effort to determine each applicant's ability to meet the demands of its program. The School's pupils are selected, without extensive screening, from both the community and the children of officers, bringing welcome diversity. In order to make its pedagogical program work effectively and challenge each child appropriately, the School requires intensive teaching resources. This has financial consequences. So too does the decision to admit all community children on a need-blind basis.

The School also differs from other independent schools in that its spending rests on a much weaker tuition base. Unlike most prominent independent schools, the School has no endowment. The result is a substantial gap between tuition revenues and expenses. The School will obviously require subsidization, and that was contemplated from the outset. No one expected, however, that the School, when fully enrolled, would require operating subsidies on the order of ten million dollars per year, plus three million per year in additional Primary Tuition Scholarship (PTS) benefits.

As noted, the School project has undergone fundamental changes since planning for it first began. It originally contemplated enrolling a large number of children from other New York educational and cultural institutions, whose home institutions would assure payment of these pupils'

full costs of tuition. The number of such admissions in any given year would shrink or grow, providing flexibility for Columbia admissions. As transformed, the School serves many more community children, with higher financial support from Columbia and loss of flexibility.

It is urgent that the University decide the limits of its financial support, and hold the School to strict financial standards. Financial limits are likely to have pedagogical implications too.

The Provost of Columbia University should not have the responsibility for managing the School. It is inappropriate for the Provost to have to supervise the School on matters of personnel, policy, or finances. Our first recommendations therefore are:

The University should immediately engage outside educational consultants to assess the performance and expenditures of the School and to outline a plan for its future based on sound financial and pedagogical policies.

The Provost, under advisement of these consultants, should form a Governing Board charged with overseeing school finances and personnel, and approving school policy on matters other than admissions and financial aid.

II. Admissions

In our deliberations regarding admissions policy, three questions emerged as critical. Given the severe constraints imposed by the size and structure of the School (at most 34 kindergarten places for Columbia children each year), can the School serve any of the purposes for which it was designed? Should there be a lottery? Should we set priorities by category among Columbia officers?

We concluded that the School can, and should, fulfill the “central reason” for its creation: the recruitment and retention of faculty. After extensive effort to avoid the need for a lottery, we concluded that a lottery was inevitable and, if properly timed, offered some advantages. We also decided to establish two priority groups for the lottery, while eliminating no officers entirely. However much we wished to accommodate all those officers who contribute so significantly to the University’s mission, the severe restrictions of the School forced us to distinguish between groups.

A. Principles

Three principles guided our deliberations:

1. The ability to recruit and retain outstanding faculty is, in the long run, the most important determinant of the excellence of Columbia University. The School should enhance faculty recruitment and retention.
2. Among faculty, those that engage in both teaching and research are the core group on whom the University’s reputation and ability to attract the best students as well as the best future faculty principally depend. The School should focus particularly on the needs of that group.
3. The admissions process should be as fair and transparent as possible.

B. Advantages and disadvantages of a lottery

We tried to construct an admissions system that would obviate the need for a lottery among eligible Columbia officers. We were moved to do this for two reasons. First, the existence of a lottery produces both uncertainty and unpredictability. Second, the use of the lottery in deciding admissions for the fall of 2005 generated widespread ill feeling.

In the end, after considering various eligibility criteria, we realized that there was no fair and reasonable way to restrict eligibility so as to guarantee that all eligible children could be admitted. With places in kindergarten limited to no more than 34 per year, it became obvious that demand could outstrip availability in any year. Whenever this happens, the use of a lottery to allocate places seems to us both fair and practical.

We see two advantages to a lottery.

- *Fairness.* The lottery guarantees that everyone within a priority category is treated the same. The bad feelings generated by the lottery this year were due in part to the fact that the need for a lottery did not become apparent until after applications were received and in part to the uncertainty of how it would be employed. We believe that the use of a well-defined, annually scheduled, public lottery maximizes fairness.
- *Educational fit.* Navigating the sundry options of the New York City schools, public and private, is an arduous process. Because many Columbia parents assumed that admission to the School was guaranteed, many did not consider other school options. However, if the lottery is timed to take place in February, when other schools normally announce their admissions decisions, then consideration of other schools cannot be avoided. This is not entirely a bad thing. It encourages Columbia parents to look seriously at other schools and to evaluate more critically the School as a place for their children. Some parents will find alternatives that are better for their children, and demand for the School will decrease accordingly. Moreover, many parents will rightly see the choices as close ones, and thus the sense of loss if the School is not available to their child after a lottery will be diminished.

Despite the advantages of a lottery, we recognize the difficulty it presents for Columbia parents. Because no eligible child is guaranteed admission, parents must consider other schools. In order to ease the burden of this process, we offer a third recommendation.

The Provost should immediately expand and invigorate the School Search Service. The Service must employ people who are knowledgeable about the public and independent schools in the City, well connected with those schools, and capable of giving well-informed and realistic advice to parents about the proper educational fit for their children. This Service should be entirely independent of the School, easy to use, and committed to making the process of selecting schools a much less time-consuming and difficult task. It should be available to all parents who are fulltime Columbia employees, both at the Morningside and the Health Science campuses. We urge that the expanded Service be in place by September and that the Provost publicize it widely.

C. Admissions priorities for kindergarten:

1. The Provost may reserve a limited number of places, estimated to be no more than 10 each year, for use in the recruitment and retention of Group 1 officers, as defined below, and to fulfill prior obligations, as discussed in the section on transitional arrangements. (It is assumed that the children of recruited and retained officers will be submitted to the same screening process as all other children in the School.)
2. Younger siblings of children in the School, estimated to be 6-10 per year, will be admitted prior to any lottery. After considering the issue in some detail, we find the case for sibling admission to be compelling because of the burdens a contrary policy would place on families. However, admission for siblings is *not* automatic. Admission will depend on the educational appropriateness of the School for the child (the normal screening process for all entering children) and on facts about the precise relation between the siblings (e.g., the age difference between the applicant and older sibling). These criteria should be described in as much detail as possible by the Governing Board of the School.
3. Kindergarten places not reserved by the Provost or taken by siblings will be distributed by lottery to children of officers, with priority given first to children of officers in Group 1 and then to children of officers in Group 2.

Group 1:

Officers who reside in one of the five boroughs of New York City and who fall into one of the following categories.

(a) Full-time tenured officers of instruction of professorial rank in all units of the university.*

(b) Full-time officers of instruction of professorial rank on the Health Sciences Campus who, regardless of title, spend the majority of their time engaged in the scholarly activities of research and teaching. This should be documented by the receipt of extramural salary support equivalent to sixty per cent or more ($\geq 60\%$) of total salary (where extramural support is defined as grant support from government agencies such as NIH or NSF, private foundations or research institutes, or private industry) or documentation from the department chair of university-supported research activities equivalent to sixty per cent or more ($\geq 60\%$) of total salary.

(c) Full-time non-tenured officers of instruction of professorial rank with unmodified titles** on the Morningside Campus, excluding those appointed for a limited term to cover faculty leaves, short-term teaching needs, fill temporary vacancies, replace administrators, etc.

(d) Full-time practice and clinical officers of instruction*** on the Morningside Campus.

*This group includes any officer of instruction with tenure.

** This group includes: assistant professor, associate professor, professor, and an instructor who will automatically be promoted to assistant professor upon award of the doctorate.

*** Assistant professors of professional practice, associate professors of professional practice, professors of professional practice, assistant clinical professors of law, associate clinical professors of law, and clinical professors of law.

Group 2:

All other Columbia officers who reside in one of the five boroughs of New York City. (As officers of administration, the teachers of the School are included in this group.)

Children with one parent in Group 1 and one parent in Group 2 will be in Group 1.

D. Rules for a lottery

- (a) The lottery for places in kindergarten will be held in February, that is, at roughly the same time that other selective schools (private and public) announce their admissions decisions. Any parent in Group 1 or Group 2 may apply, providing that both parent and child reside in one of the five boroughs of New York City at the time the lottery is held. Parents of children who are candidates for admission must successfully complete the application and children must undergo the School's usual screening to determine that the School is educationally appropriate for the child. Only children whose applications have been successfully completed and who have passed the screening process will be *eligible*. Only eligible children will be included in the lottery. (The screening is identical for Columbia and community children.)
- (b) The lottery will be open to the public. All parents of eligible children will be invited to attend.
- (c) In those years when the number of eligible children in Group 1 is less than the number of available places, all eligible children in Group 1 will be offered enrollment and there will *not* be a lottery. In other years, a lottery will be held and every eligible child of an officer from Group 1 will receive a number in the lottery, which will determine priority. When a child's number exceeds the number of available places, the child will be placed on a waiting list in order by lottery number.
- (d) If children offered places decline or if places reserved for the Provost are released, waiting list children will be offered admission in order by lottery number. We encourage the Provost to release places as early in the academic year as possible.
- (e) There will be a separate lottery for all eligible Group 2 applicants. In those years when a lottery is held for Group 1 eligible children, both the Group 1 and the Group 2 lotteries will be held at the same time. When kindergarten places are available for eligible Group 2 children, places will be offered in order by lottery number.
- (f) When a family has more than one child applying for kindergarten, the children will be treated as a single applicant in the lottery and will receive one number.
- (g) The admission process will continue until the School is filled. In the unlikely event that any Columbia places go unclaimed, they can be filled with community children according to their lottery number, thus increasing the number of places available for Columbia in the following year.

- (h) There will be no quotas by unit or division of the university for any lottery held. All children in the Group 1 lottery will have the same chance for admission as all other children in that group. All children in the Group 2 lottery will likewise have the same chance for admission as all other Group 2 children.

E. Admission to grades 1-8:

If places are available in grades 1-8, admission to each grade will be treated in analogous fashion to kindergarten admission. A lottery then will be held for the grade.

III. Financial Aid

Financial aid is important in this report for two quite different reasons: first, because it affects the relative attractiveness of the School to Columbia parents at different career stages and income levels; second, because it affects overall demand for places at the School, relative to places in public schools and other private schools.

The equity of financial arrangements the University makes with Columbia parents at the School looks different depending on which group we compare them to: community parents of children in the School (who attend with financial aid based on need), Columbia parents who receive Primary Tuition Scholarship (PTS) for children in other private schools, Columbia parents with children in public schools, or faculty parents at other major research universities. In most of these comparisons, Columbia parents whose children attend the School currently receive a very attractive financial benefit. For officers from lower income households, the current comparison to community parents of similar income levels is less favorable, because community parents receive need-based aid.

For Columbia parents interested in private education for their children, the financial attractiveness of sending a child to the School depends on 1) the annual tuition and 2) the level and form of tuition assistance granted, both at the School and at other private schools. At present, Columbia officers who send children to the School are awarded tuition aid of 50% through the Primary Tuition Scholarship (PTS). The PTS program offers a much smaller benefit (generally 10% of tuition) to parents of children in other private schools.

In his original letter of May 2000, Provost Cole announced that he was considering two tuition models: one "would have all Columbia officers receive a 50 percent discount from the full cost of educating each student," while the other would scale financial aid for Columbia officers "to personal or household income." When the School opened its doors in the fall of 2003, the first model had been selected. Thus, in 2004-05, the PTS benefit was \$11,550 for each Columbia officer whose child is at the school. In that year, roughly 40% of Columbia parents at the School were officers of administration, athletics, the libraries, or research and not officers of instruction; a majority of all Columbia parents came from the medical campus. Higher income households are well represented in this population. This pattern may reflect a number of considerations: the large share of Columbia parents from the medical campus, the possibility that senior faculty may be more likely to have school-aged children, and the probability that even with 50% tuition remission the School is too expensive for many lower income households.

In this section, we present four alternative financial aid policies and describe the advantages, disadvantages, and probable effects and costs of each. We recommend that the Provost consult with

University deans, chairs and other affected parties before selecting from among these alternatives.

A. The cost of the School

Before turning to the alternatives, we wish to make three observations concerning the cost of the School.

1. It is highly probable that the School, when full, will cost Columbia \$9-10 million a year in operating subsidies plus additional PTS benefits of \$3 million. We have heard from many members of the Columbia community who feel that the University is already spending more than it should. We have assumed, therefore, that no model for financial aid should be adopted that costs much more.
2. At \$23,000, the School's tuition is lower than many private schools in Manhattan. Given the population of the School (faculty and community children), however, it did not seem to us appropriate to raise its tuition beyond standard annual tuition increases, especially since most of that increase would simply be passed along to Columbia in increased financial aid.
3. While financial aid to Columbia officers will remain costly under any system, it is almost certain to cost less per child than will financial aid to community children. We are uncertain how to weigh this fact. On the one hand, we feel that Columbia should be proud of its work in offering a high-quality education to community children regardless of their financial circumstances. On the other hand, given the University's commitment to financial aid for community children, we are reluctant to recommend that the University diminish its support for Columbia children.

B. Four models for financial aid

The four plans sketched here all assume that tuition remains at its present level. *Status Quo* continues the present level of financial aid. *PTS Equal* offers the same benefit to all Columbia children who attend private school, whether the Columbia School or any other. *Income Based* adjusts financial aid to household income. *Mixed* lowers the flat tuition benefit but offers supplemental assistance based on household income.

1. *Status Quo*: Columbia parents of admitted children pay 50% of tuition, while parents of children in other private schools receive PTS at or near 10%.

Probable effects: The School will be attractive to officers in higher income households. Such officers may have a particular incentive to send their children to the School, since the financial policies of other private schools usually tie financial aid to income. Many officers from lower income households, however, will find the School unaffordable. Single parents and junior faculty, especially in the Arts and Sciences, may face particular difficulties in covering the cost of the School.

Probable cost: In 2006-07, when the School is full, the 50% tuition remission will amount to about \$3 million per year over the otherwise applicable PTS benefits payable for these children. PTS benefits for children of Columbia officers in other private schools will be about \$1 million.

Advantages: This option has proved valuable in recruiting senior faculty with children to Columbia. Because it maintains the existing financial aid model, it minimizes the possibility of an unpredicted and large change in the demand for the School. Also, because this option has been contemplated from the beginning, adhering to it minimizes the number of people who can claim that changes in University policy disrupted their plans. Finally, the higher-salary schools (e.g., business, law, medicine) contribute disproportionately to the fringe-benefit pool out of which the School is funded. Their programs would see little recruitment advantage if higher income households received little or no tuition subsidy.

Disadvantages: The School will be unaffordable to most lower income households, in contradiction to one of Provost Cole's original goals: "to recruit the most talented younger faculty, many of whom are building families." There will also be resentment on the part of those higher income officers who are excluded, either because of the priority restrictions or because the lottery excludes them. Once excluded, these higher income officers will face higher tuition costs at other independent schools.

2. *PTS Equal:* The Primary Tuition Scholarship Program would offer the same subsidy for children attending any other private school as it does for children attending Columbia's own school. Equality in the subsidy could be achieved in several ways: the rate of tuition support for officers with children at the School could be brought down to the 10% granted to those at other schools (Low Subsidy); the support at other schools could be raised to the 50% granted those at the School (High Subsidy); or the benefit might be set at some intermediate rate, such as 25% (Intermediate Subsidy).

Remark on High Subsidy: High Subsidy would result in large additional costs for Columbia. We spoke with Provost Brinkley, and he confirmed that this plan is not feasible. We thus did not consider it further.

Probable effects: Intermediate Subsidy would eliminate or moderate the financial incentive of the School and thereby shift demand away from the School toward competing private schools. It would almost certainly encourage more officers to apply to private schools. Low Subsidy would make the School available only to the highest-income Columbia households and unaffordable to lower-income ones.

Probable cost: Low Subsidy would reduce the cost of PTS benefits for Columbia children attending the School to less than \$1 million, and keep constant the PTA benefits paid for children in other private schools. Intermediate Subsidy would lower PTS benefits paid for Columbia children at the School, but it would increase the PTS benefits paid to all other eligible Columbia children who presently attend private schools other than the School. In addition, it would motivate more officers to consider and perhaps enroll their children in other private schools. While we cannot be certain of what the effect will be, we think it likely that it will increase the total subsidy cost to Columbia.

Advantages: We have received several suggestions that, for reasons of fairness, Columbia's private school tuition benefit should be the same for all private schools, including the School. For those officers whose children are excluded from the School (either due to their priority group or to their lottery number), this alternative will seem particularly fair. In brief, *PTS Equal* would be seen to maximize fairness.

Disadvantages: All Columbia officers are eligible for PTS. If Intermediate Subsidy were adopted, then there would be additional incentive for eligible officers to send children to independent schools. That is, more officers would opt for private school education, a quarter of which would be paid by Columbia. The cost to Columbia would be significant. If Low Subsidy were adopted, only the highest income families could afford to send their children to the School.

Recommendation: Although we were not unanimous about other options, we are agreed that the Provost should not equalize PTS, for these reasons:

- a) Many independent schools have substantial financial aid programs and offer Columbia families (especially lower income Columbia families) attractive aid packages already. We see no reason to shift the cost of such aid away from these schools and on to Columbia.
 - b) It is appropriate to preserve an incentive towards and advantage for enrollment at the School, given its aim of fostering social and intellectual contacts across faculty who are increasingly specialized, as well as helping to create a heightened sense of community among the Columbia community generally.
 - c) The cost of "leveling up" with a high subsidy is prohibitive, and the savings of "leveling down" with a low subsidy (e.g., 10%) is unlikely to be worth the negative impact on morale.
3. *Income Based:* Except for the minimum 10% PTS benefit, tuition paid per pupil by Columbia families at the School would depend entirely on household income, calculated on the same basis as community children.

Probable effects: Such a plan would greatly increase the School's attractiveness to officers in lower income households and decrease its attractiveness to higher income households. The increase in the Schools' attractiveness to lower income households might make the lottery necessary for Group 1 officers every year.

Probable cost: We cannot predict the probable cost since there is no present information with which to determine the household income of Columbia officers. If there are very many officers in Group 1 whose household income is low, then this tuition option would be more expensive. If there are not many, then a need-based system would cost little more than the present need-blind system of financial aid.

Advantages: The School would be more attractive to many lower income Columbia households because it would not be prohibitively expensive for them. The School would play a more important role in the recruitment and retention of junior faculty.

Disadvantages: This option would force upon the Columbia community a significant recalibration of expectations. Higher income Columbia households would no longer find the School as appealing. This would lessen the attractiveness of the School to better-paid senior faculty with young children and thereby diminish the role of the School in the recruitment and retention of senior faculty and officers from higher income households. Moreover, this financial aid option might cause concern at the higher salary schools. These schools' programs contribute heavily to the fringe benefit pool from which the subsidy for the School is derived and yet their personnel would neither easily afford the School, nor easily use it as a recruitment and retention tool.

4. *Mixed:* A number of other possible plans would involve some measure of need-blind and some measure of need-based aid. For example, all Columbia parents at the School could receive a minimum 40 percent tuition benefit, with supplemental need-based benefits bringing the level of aid for families up to that recommended by the financial assessment service.

Probable effect: Such a plan would significantly increase the School's attractiveness to lower income households and somewhat decrease its attractiveness to higher income ones.

Probable cost: The effect on higher income households is likely to be modest, but there would be a significant inducement for lower income households to enroll their children. Thus, it is likely that a mixed system would be more costly than the current system.

Advantages: This option would make the School affordable to lower income households and hence to many junior faculty while preserving much of the value of the School in recruiting senior and higher income officers with young children.

Disadvantages: By making the School more attractive to more junior and lower income households without significantly lessening its attractiveness to higher income officers, it will make the lottery more likely for Group 1 officers.

Obviously we could produce a large number of variants on these plans by adjusting PTS, changing the relationship of need-based to need-blind aid, and so forth. Nevertheless, the four plans identify the major alternatives: keep the present system, move toward equalizing benefits between the School and its competitors, replace need-blind with income-based benefits at the School, or try to find some compromise between need-based and need-blind aid.

We are persuaded that Columbia should not seek to equalize PTS benefits across the board; the additional expense does not seem justified. We agree on the likely costs, advantages, and disadvantages of the *Status Quo*, *Income-Based*, and *Mixed* alternatives. We disagree, however, on the overall merits of the three plans. We recommend that the University consider the relative advantages and disadvantages of a need-based, need-blind, and mixed system, with attention to such values as recruitment of junior and senior faculty, equity (whether defined as between schools, between income groups, between ranks, or between Columbia and community families), and the health and stability of the School. We believe the University should take the advice of the deans

of the various schools, the department chairs, the appropriate faculty committees, the Senate, and the Trustees before making any final decision.

IV. Transition Issues

A. Admissions

The School has evolved in a way that makes it impossible for the University to meet each and every person's expectations. The plan was to make admission nearly automatic for all children of Columbia officers who wanted to attend. Assuming automatic admission, officers throughout the university might have changed their plans to a) leave the University for positions elsewhere; b) move to the suburbs; c) move to the city from the suburbs; d) have more children. These are no doubt illustrative rather than exhaustive examples.

As a practical matter, the University cannot organize a sound policy for the School's future without rejecting categorically claims to special entitlement from each person who might have made plans based on the prospect of School admission. Benefit programs can and do change. The availability of a benefit at one moment in time is not a promise to maintain it for the future, whatever the desirability of making adjustments with awareness of transitional needs. In this case, the initial plan for the School cannot be accomplished. Although the experience with the School proves the importance of schooling issues within the community, any attempt to make a school benefit of comparable value available to all officers residing in the five boroughs of New York City, let alone all officers, is fiscally impossible.*

We believe, however, that it would be unfair to those faculty who were recruited or retained with specific representations about the availability of the School to their children, made by persons responsible for recruitment, for those faculty to be told now that the representations were unauthorized. Such persons came to Columbia, or stayed here, in significant part because of recruitment promises similar to those the Provost will make in future years. Some mechanism must be found to take account of their situation. The difficulties we have in evaluating what to do about such people are these:

- 1) we are unsure how many people fall in this category, and thus the number of places at issue is unclear;
- 2) the University is not organized in a way that permits easy investigation of who made what representations; and

* We do not think the fact that the School benefit is paid from the fringe pool is important in rejecting this extension of schooling benefits. First, the School serves the University's academic purposes by fostering interdisciplinary community among faculty. This alone justifies subsidizing this one group of children at a financial level greater than that available for a child in a school unrelated to Columbia. Second, and more importantly, the fringe pool supports benefits that differ considerably turning on an officer's job title, family circumstances, place of residence, date of service, etc. The fringe rate is an important part of program costs. The fact that benefits are paid from funds raised by taxing programs on the basis of their personnel cost does not, in and of itself, create a basis of individual entitlement.

- 3) we believe there should be a strict time limit on claims of this kind. In particular, such persons cannot be privileged over their colleagues throughout their careers (for example, claiming preference for children who are not yet born) for a benefit revamped years before.

Last year, relying on the recommendation of a Senate Subcommittee, the Provost did grant special preference to children whose Columbia parent was recruited between May 2000 and September 2004, or was retained during this period at the University by a formal retention letter. Instead of granting such a blanket preference going forward, we suggest that the Provost provide a date by which any officer, who believes that his/her recruitment to or retention at Columbia was based in part on a decanal or departmental promise that the School was part of his/her employment offer, can submit the following: (1) a claim that such a promise was made and (to the best of his/her recollection) who made the representation and when, and (2) the names and birth dates of those children whom the officer would like to be considered for enrollment in the School.

The desirable response to this information will depend, to some extent, on how many claimants and children are at issue. If there are four or five kindergarten children a year who fall into this category, then we believe they should be given preference in the lottery, if a lottery is needed in any given year. Such persons will draw down the places available to the Provost for new recruitments. In effect, the Provost's slots would be used to redeem these past recruitment and retention efforts.

B. Financial Transitions

If the University chooses the *Status Quo* alternative, there is no need for financial transitions. If the University chooses another alternative, the Committee recommends that everyone with children either presently in the School or with children beginning this fall (05), and who elects to do so, may keep their 50% tuition for at least two years before they become subject to the new financial aid program chosen by the University (that is, the new tuition aid program need not apply to parents until the academic year 2007-08).

We also recommend that the flat benefit at the School (whatever level it is set at) be defined as a benefit for employees who have children in the School, when such child is not already subsidized by PTS benefits. The Committee believes the current situation whereby tuition for children of two Columbia parents is subsidized twice is inappropriate. For such children, we recommend that the benefit program be changed so that one parent be awarded the normal tuition benefit offered at the School while the other receives the same PTS benefit of non-School officers (currently the rate is 10%). This change would affect several children in the School who have two Columbia parents and who therefore currently receive a subsidy of 100%. For those children, we recommend at least one additional transition year (2007-8) in which the subsidy would be 80%, after which the subsidy would be the same as for newly entering children of two Columbia parents. In addition, there may be circumstances in which additional transition arrangements may be appropriate so as to allow parents to keep their children in the School. We leave such arrangements to the discretion of the Provost.

IV. Looking to the Future

We were asked to propose a new admissions procedure for the School, and to consider the most obvious implications of that procedure as it affects the School's fairness and goals. We have come

to believe that the School's admissions, governance, and financial aid options should not be seen in isolation from other University and community concerns, both financial and educational. In this final section of our report, we present some issues for future consideration.

A. Future Finances

The School will continue to cost Columbia a great deal of money. Regardless of the model of financial aid selected, the University will spend millions each year to support the School. While it is not our task to make decisions about its long-term financial future, it seems appropriate to pose some questions.

- Given how few children of Columbia officers benefit from the School at any given time (300+), are the expenditures appropriate ones?
- The School was designed to solve the serious problem of recruitment and retention. Is this way of solving the problem worth the price? Are there other ways of solving the problem that are more cost effective?
- Members of the School PTA have suggested the possibility of growing an endowment for the School. This seems an unlikely option given the make-up of the School (there will be few families of wealth in either the Columbia or the non-Columbia community), but is it one worth considering?

B. The Columbia Community, the Public Schools, and the Future

When first imagined, it was assumed that the School would educate all the children of interested Columbia officers. We now know that this is impossible. There will be many children of Columbia officers who will not be able to attend the School.

It is beyond our charge to recommend specific plans for the longer term. However, we have learned much that will be useful in framing future considerations of the topic. Here we present information about changes in public school policy and their possible impact on the Columbia community.

1. Columbia and the Public Schools

In March 2000, when Provost Cole recommended to the Trustees the creation of the School, he reported that there were 900 K-8 aged children of Columbia officers residing in the five boroughs of New York City. Of those, roughly 600 lived in Manhattan and roughly 400 attended public schools in that borough. Although Morningside Heights straddles Public School Districts 3 and 5, Columbia officers have traditionally used the schools in District 3. Because that district contains some very attractive elementary and middle school options and because it allowed children to attend schools outside their catchment area, it was common for Columbia affiliates to send their children to non-catchment schools. The vast majority of the 400 Columbia children who attended public school in 2000 were enrolled in schools outside their catchment area.

The creation of the School probably reduced the level of public school participation somewhat. However, given that the School is too expensive for many lower income officers and given that the majority of students attending the School are children of higher income officers, the School has probably drawn more children from the pool of those who would have otherwise applied to independent schools than from public ones. Therefore, we do not believe the School has significantly decreased the number of children of Columbia officers in the public schools of Manhattan.

2. Public School Choices

Columbia faculty and staff have benefited from the excellent public schools in the Upper Westside. Members of the Columbia community have been able to choose among the most successful of these public elementary and middle schools. District 3 schools allowed parents to tour schools, apply for admissions, and find the public school that best suited the educational needs of their children.

The public school system has recently undergone a reorganization so that the Morningside Heights area is now in Region 10 (which administratively has subsumed Districts 3 and 5). The expressed policy of School Region 10 is to encourage elementary school children to attend their catchment school. Region 10 schools will admit non-catchment children on a lottery basis after all children in the catchment area have been served (that is, non-catchment children will no longer be admitted on the basis of academic abilities or related criteria). Although the admission policy of District 3 remains somewhat in flux, there has been considerable public press indicating that, within the next two years, it will become much more difficult for children of Columbia officers to attend schools outside their catchment area. As good as the local catchment schools may be, this reorganization will greatly diminish the educational options for Columbia parents.

We have offered the Provost four financial aid alternatives to choose among. Whatever alternative is eventually selected, a large proportion of the Columbia faculty children will continue to be educated either at local public schools or in those independent schools that offer sufficient financial aid. The uncertainty of access both to slots at the School as well as the most desirable public schools in the city will likely become a negative factor in the ability of Columbia to recruit and retain the best faculty, particularly at the junior and associate level.

3. Planning for the Long Term Future

Given that the Columbia School cannot accommodate the children of all Columbia officers and staff, that it will cost the University millions of dollars every year, and that the reorganization presently underway in the public schools will greatly restrict the public school options for Columbia parents, the University must think creatively about the long-term nature of the School and consider ways to increase the educational options of its children.

We conclude this final section of our report with a general recommendation for long-term planning.

The University should think creatively about the long-term nature of the School and seek ways to broaden the available options for meeting the educational needs of the children of Columbia's faculty and staff.

Appendix A

May 1, 2000 Letter from Provost Jonathan Cole to the University Community

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

PROVOST-DEAN OF FACULTIES

May 1, 2000

Dear Colleague,

I am pleased to report that at its meeting of March 3, 2000, the Columbia University Board of Trustees unanimously approved moving forward to create a K-8 Columbia University School for children. I write to provide you with some details of our current plans.

The central reason for creating the School for children is to maximize our ability to recruit and retain the most able faculty in the world. It has become critical to the University's mission that we be able to provide both excellent housing and schooling at affordable prices so as to recruit the most talented younger faculty, many of whom are building families. A second reason is to help create a more integrated local community of Columbia scholars and others through the social patterns that develop among children and their parents during the K-8 years.

Summarized below are some of the key features that guide our development of the Columbia University School.

- The K-8 school will have roughly 700 students when it is fully enrolled.
- Approximately fifty percent of the students would be children of officers who are affiliated with Columbia; ten percent would be children from local school districts; twenty percent would be children of parents working at other non-profit institutions in New York; and another twenty percent would be from other families in the City who are interested in sending their children to the Columbia University School.
- The School will most likely be located at the corner of 110th Street and Broadway, where we expect to build faculty housing.
- We are working with two tuition models. The first would have all Columbia officers receive a 50 percent discount from the full cost of educating each student – the full cost is about equal to the tuition that is charged by other leading independent schools in the City. We anticipate that the ten percent of students coming from the local public school districts will receive full financial aid, and that the other 40

percent would pay the full cost (although the parents might receive some form of scholarship support from their own employers). The second model is the same as the first with one difference – financial aid for Columbia officers would be scaled to personal or household income, to help make the school even more affordable for those with comparatively lower incomes. The “pricing” issues involved are one of the complicated aspects of this initiative that we need to work on over the coming year.

- Admission to the School for children of Columbia officers would be “as of right,” except in those rare cases where the School is unable to meet the special needs of a particular child. This would eliminate the time, anxiety, and uncertainty associated with application to either the best public or independent schools in the City, where (as you may have recently read in the New York Times and the Observer) the current volume of applications far exceeds the number of available slots for children. For those who are not affiliated with Columbia, admissions would be based upon interviews and would be what is called “service based,” which means that selection will be portfolio-based and will not require the use of standardized tests.
- In addition to involving our own faculty and staff in the process, an Advisory Board will begin work this Summer and Fall to develop ideas for the School’s curriculum. We will seek advice from national experts in the schooling of young children. We have an opportunity to develop a new school and we will want to take advantage of the best knowledge that currently exists on modes of learning, but we will also have opportunities to create new practices.
- We expect to work cooperatively with local schools, including those in our neighborhood, to link our innovative activities with the public schools in the local districts and with others in the City and the nation. We hope that the Columbia School will serve as a resource to, and development lab for, the public schools and will contribute to the revitalization of the public school system in the City.
- A business plan for the School has been developed. If the distribution of students in the School is as I described earlier (50% CU, 10% full scholarship, 40% full paying students who are non-affiliates), the cost to the University will be the equivalent of .75 of one point on the University’s non-grant fringe rate (which is equivalent to \$3.9 million in year five of the School’s operations when it has achieved “steady state”). We anticipate paying for this K-8 benefit as we do our College tuition benefit.

The goal is simple. We want to meet a critical need of our faculty and other affiliates while creating one of the very best schools for children in the nation. To achieve this goal, we will need the active participation in the planning of the School by the faculty and other officers at Columbia – both those who will benefit directly from the program and those who can help us develop new and better ideas for the School because of their academic work at the University. In short, we hope to have a very active group of parents and scholars involved in the development and implementation of the Columbia University School for Children. Those of you who would like to volunteer your help, please be in touch with me. We hope we can call on others to help with their expertise. In the Fall, we will host a series of general meetings for members of the Columbia community to come together and share ideas about the School. We will also be working with both private and public schools in the area, as well as with other community leaders, to assure that the benefits of the School extends beyond the Columbia community.

We will be moving expeditiously in the hope of opening the School in the Fall of 2003. We expect to meet that target and perhaps beat it. However, complex endeavors like this sometimes take longer than one might like; we are placing a premium on “doing this well” rather than “as soon as possible.” There is, of course, much planning to be done in anticipation of the opening of the School, and we have already begun to address the facilities, financial, and enrollment issues related to the initiative.

Finally, while the schooling of children should address one of our critical needs, it does not address the problem that faculty and other Columbia affiliates have in meeting their day-care and pre-school needs. In an effort to obtain the necessary data and information required to assess our current policy, as well as to recommend changes in it, I have asked Dr. Gardner Dunnan, who founded the School Search Service at Columbia this year and had been the Headmaster of the Dalton School for 23 years, to chair a Task Force on Child Care and Preschool needs of faculty and staff. Comprised of faculty members who are experts in this field, faculty who currently deal with the problems associated with preschool education, and administrators who are familiar with the current Columbia policy, the Task Force has been charged to make their report to me no later than the end of the calendar year. Their efforts may include the distribution of a short survey that will be used to assess the demand for preschool facilities and costs associated with supporting efforts to help families with preschool children.

At the beginning of the last century, Columbia sponsored the Lincoln School, the Speyer School, and the Horace Mann School – each having an important impact on this country’s pre-collegiate schooling. As we enter a new century, I believe the Columbia University School will rapidly become one of the nation’s leading primary schools. I hope you will join us in creating this School – whether or not you have school-age children – through your suggestions and support in the months ahead.

With best regards,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jonathan R. Cole". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Jonathan R. Cole
Provost and Dean of Faculties