Background

Number of Black and Puerto Rican students admitted to and enrolled at Haverford from 1962 to 1964:

1966: 1
1967: 1
1968: 1
1969: 3
1970: 3
1971: 2
1972: 18
1973: 28
1974: 17
1975: 10
1976: 10
At the beginning of the 1970-71 academic year, there were about **60 admitted Black students** on campus (depending how counted), including post-baccalaureate students, representing roughly **10%** of the student population of **695** students.
Timeline
Early May 1971
28 Black students sign petition threatening boycott of all athletics in protest of athletics coach Tony Zanin.

May 21, 1971
Black Students League (BSL) submit letter to Haverford’s Board of Managers highlighting the “all-pervasive imperfection of institutionalized racism” at Haverford.

Summer 1971
Haverford President John (Jack) Coleman reports to the Corporation’s annual meeting that the College had “not drawn the enrichment from [Black students] that we could, and admiring the patience that they have shown during this period of learning for us.”
June 1971
Admissions Director William (Bill) Ambler acknowledges that there is “a disproportionate number of Black students in academic difficulty.” He states later: “People talked about that but had sort of forgotten about it.”

Fall Semester 1971
Haverford’s Committee on Student Standing and Programs (CSSP) identifies 7 Black students in “academic difficulty” who are to be dropped from enrollment at the College.
Fall-Winter 1971
Unrest among Black and Puerto Rican students grows and intensifies in reaction to the racism, differential treatment received, and frustrations from alienation and faculty’s, administration’s, and Board of Managers’ silence and inaction on the issues and concerns of “minority” students. Black students start to organize to address the rising crisis.

Early December 1971
BSL drafts a statement to challenge the College’s silence and lack of response to the BSL’s issues.

January 1972
Ambler says later that “the same kind of thing” occurred as in June 1971 with respect to minority students’ academic problems.
January 24 and 26, 1972
CSSP convenes to review cases of students with “serious academic deficiencies.

February 3, 1972
Memo from a select Administrative Advisory Group to Coleman sounds crisis alarm bells and advises that the College must make an either-or “critical choice between two alternatives:

1. The College must stop admitting students with educational, social, ethnic, and economic backgrounds that put them at severe disadvantage; or
2. It must change in ways which will allow many more of these students to survive and achieve here.”

CSSP acknowledges that the College’s “commitment to these students is not strong. Far too many of them have suffered frustration, disappointment, failure, and bitterness. . . The College is doing a very bad job.”

CSSP releases statement to the faculty expressing its concern about the disproportionate number of academic failures among Black students.
February 4, 1972
The Administrative Advisory Group release to the “College Community” the statement they had given to Coleman the day before.

February 5 and 6, 1972
College Deans draft a document which becomes the College’s proposed “Educational Commitment Program” (ECP) after input from the administration, academic council, and student council on February 7. BSL has no input on the draft or the final proposed document.
February 7, 1972
BSL representative, Ghebre Mehreteab interrupts the Plenary Session of the Students’ Association and announces Black students were boycotting and suspending participation in all campus activities, including elections, except academics and campus employment. Elections are cancelled.

BSL issues its shot-across-the-bow statement to the College informing that: “We have made our complaint, our statement, before; time and discussion passed and it was business as usual. But not again . . . you know the issues, and in the coming days there will be no way you can escape them.”

February 8, 1972
The ECP is shared with BSL for the first time.
Black students picket silently against institutional racism in front of Roberts Hall. The Administrative Advisory Group sends a letter to Coleman demanding quick changes to support minority students’ success.
BSL issues a critique of the ECP entitled “The Creation of a Human Zoo: A Criticism of the ECP.” The lack of BSL input renders the ECP invalid.

BSL releases to faculty and administration “Several Concerns: or a Bill of Facts.” Eight “specific concerns” identified, and BSL questions and examines the College’s desire and willingness to create a College which reflected the diversity of the larger society in the student body, faculty, and administration. Was the College committed to developing a multicultural campus and diverse community of learning, including in recruitment, admissions, organizational structure, academic and extracurricular programs and activities, curriculum, faculty committees, budgeting, staffing, and the College’s decision-making processes?

An example of BSL concerns: “If ‘community’ at Haverford has meant the implicit understandings of white bourgeois or consciousness, then what changes in the basic structure of the institution have to be made to insure the survival and nourishment of those whose group differs from the dominant or white bourgeois group?”
February 10, 1972

The College withdraws the ECP.

BSL removes the American flag from the flagpole in front of Roberts Hall and flies the Black Liberation flag in its place.

Coleman holds a special, ad hoc meeting of the faculty to discuss CSSP’s statement (Feb. 3) and BSL’s “Several Concerns: or a Bill of Facts.” Almost all BSL members are present. When Coleman asks them to speak, they refuse and remain silent. BSL members walk out of the meeting.

Official notes of the special faculty meeting indicate that Coleman expressed his view that the issue was not academic competency, and that the BSL had presented concerns of “the greatest validity and priority.” The problem was the “serious gulf which exists between Black and white on campus.” Faculty promise “a close examination of these concerns with all parts of the community, especially the Black students, in the immediate future.”

Another faculty meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 17.
February 11, 1972
First day of lunch and dinner assemblages in the Dining Center where BSL members, and student and faculty representatives meet to dialogue about ethno-cultural diversity; how and why ethnocentrism alienates and disassociates; and how ethno-cultural pluralism differentiates, but also facilitates integration. These assemblages also held from Monday to Wednesday of the following week.

February 12, 1972
BSL members picket at houses of some faculty and administrators.
February 15, 1972

BSL holds mass, silent “stand-in”/”sit-in” vigil and protest on the steps of Roberts Hall before, during, and after Collection where Dr. Benjamin Spock addresses the rest of the College. Puerto Rican and women students join the protest. BSL and supporters message: “THINK.”

BSL, by Sam Foley, issue press release on the event and the larger protest issues and concerns.

February 17, 1972

When faculty arrive at the special faculty meeting, BSL members are already massed in place at the entrance and hold another silent vigil, with the intention of confronting in the Quaker way. The faculty meeting proceeds and faculty decide to meet in smaller discussion groups.
February 18, 1972
Acting Provost Thomas D’Andrea issues memo to “All Faculty and the Entire College Community” regarding “Faculty Discussion Groups” in which he appoints small faculty groups to meet on February 22 and 24 to discuss “the community issues raised” by BSL.

February 20, 1972
BSL issue to faculty and administration “Our Specific Concerns,” providing a more detailed critique of Haverford as an assumed “community” which values homogeneity, not diversity, and which does not support the “different individual,” such as minority students. The document concludes with a list of 12 specific “symbolic gestures of good intent” which the College was expected to make by 5:00 p.m., Friday, February 25.
February 21, 1972

Coleman issues memo to “The College Community” scheduling an all-College meeting for February 23 to “share” his “reflections” on the concerns raised by BSL.

D’Andrea issues memo to “Faculty and the Entire College Community” setting up discussion groups with Educational Policy Committee; CSSP; Administrative Advisory Group; and Academic Council to discuss issues “brought before the College by” BSL. With BSL members’ shrinking numbers, D’Andres “hoped that the [BSL] will send a delegation to each of these meetings and the Chairman of each of the Committee have invited [BSL] to send such a delegation.”

February 22, 1972

Puerto Rican Students at Haverford release statement of concerns, including 4 additional symbolic gestures, and express support for BSL’s and the deadline for the College to make all symbolic gestures.
February 23, 1972
Coleman delivers his talk, “Perspectives on the Black Students’ Concerns” at a Special Collection, and provides a detailed written statement of the talk. He promises that the administration would respond to BSL’s concerns “point-by-point by Friday, February 25.

February 24, 1972
Puerto Rican Students at Haverford request that their symbolic gestures be addressed “as one” with the BSL’s.

The Concerned Group of Women issue a one-paragraph statement “strongly” supporting BSL’s Specific Concerns.

About 400 campus members, mostly white students and faculty sign a petition stating in part: “We agree that the symbolic gestures of good intent are the necessary basis for further action. We share the BSL’s sense of utmost urgency.” The petition is presented at the special faculty meeting which began at 4:15 p.m.
February 25, 1972

Meeting is held at Coleman’s home to obtain the College’s written commitment to making the symbolic gestures ended at 4 a.m., after having started at 8 p.m. on February 24. This marathon discussion and negotiation session produces a statement jointly prepared and signed by those present at the meeting, including representatives of faculty, administration, BSL, and Puerto Rican Students at Haverford. The statement was called “Statement on Institutionalization of Diversity.”

The Collection Committee issues a memo to Coleman, BSL, and Puerto Rican Students at Haverford stating that “the concerns which the [BSL] and the Puerto Rican students have raised during the past weeks must be answered in the coming days.” The Collection Committee decides to “dissolve itself,” and recommend that an Ad Hoc Collection Committee be formed with minority representation.

The Students’ Council issues a memo to “The College” announcing it was “voluntarily” suspending “all business indefinitely as of 5 p.m. Friday, February 25, 1972, in large part because of the inability of Students’ Council to represent the diverse interests on campus.”
February 25, 1972 cont

Coleman issues draft memo prepared by 4 administrators responding to the 16 specific concerns of BSL and Puerto Rican Students at Haverford for their review of the responses before release to the campus at 5 p.m. He makes it clear that he would present to the Executive Committee of the Board and the rest of the College at 5 p.m. Coleman’s and Haverford College’s “A Response to Specific Concerns.” Instead of being a “good intent” commitment, this document qualified and conditioned the responses to specific concerns for a number of reasons. But the response was inadequate and unconvincing.

The last words of the “Response” read: “Formulation of these symbolic gestures intentionally reflects the importance placed on the process of institutionalizing diversity.” (Emphasis in original.)
February 27, 1972
Philadelphia press (Philadelphia Inquirer) is alerted to the protest at Haverford and print a story on this date, even though they had been informed about it on February 25. The protest is co-opted and falsified. The Inquirer story quoted Balthaser: “What is astonishing here, as opposed to other colleges which have had this question . . . is that everyone is more or less on the same side of the issue. The school is very emphatic about the Quaker process of rule by consensus and verbal confrontation. We try to talk everything out.”

March 8, 1972
BSL members stage sit-ins in Coleman’s and Dean David Potter’s offices as “a gentle reminder” to the conversations and promises that came before.
March 9, 1972

BSL and Puerto Rican Students at Haverford issue memo to the faculty and administration objecting to Coleman’s and the College’s “Response” because they express their unwillingness to make “radical and only radical changes in the structures and procedures for college governance.”