

they're growing indifferent to enrolling minority students in higher education," says Arthur Jackson, director of financial aid at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

As this decade began, the total of black undergraduates leveled off at about 11 percent of all college students—and now, for the first time in two decades, it is actually dropping. In the 1984-85 school year (the last for which national numbers are available) black enrollment declined 2.2 percentage points to 8.8 percent of the undergraduate population. Stated another way, this means that the proportion of blacks in college decreased 20 percent. And this happened even as the number of black high-school graduates was rising (page 16). Other minorities made significant gains. Though still underrepresented, the Hispanic student population grew by roughly one-eighth (to 4.3 percent of the total); that of Asian-Americans ballooned by more than one-third (to 3.1 percent) between 1980 and 1984.

Except for a few top-ranked black colleges, which are graduating record numbers of students (page 21), the black presence is dwindling by almost any measure. For example, black dropout rates are abysmally high at most predominantly white schools. At Southern California, where more than half the blacks leave without a degree, black graduate student Darryl Adams says bitterly, "We call it the roach motel. We check in, but we don't check out." According to a devastating annual report issued last fall by the American Council on Education, black enrollment declined fully 11.9 percent at graduate and professional schools between 1980 and 1984. And the percentage of black faculty and administrators, never much above a token, decreased by 4.3 percent in that period. The ACE report didn't hedge: "Without question, blacks are losing ground at most levels in higher education."

In chilling counterpoint to the fading numbers comes a recent tattoo of racist incidents. White cadets burn a paper cross in a black cadet's room at The Citadel. A wooden cross is set ablaze at the site of a black sorority house at Alabama. At the University of Massachusetts a beery brawl between black and white students teeters on the edge of full-scale riot. The epithet "nigger" appears in graffiti at places like Smith and AU. And at many schools there are persistent reports of harassment of blacks by campus police. "Racism is alive and well in our society," says John Slaughter, chancellor of the University of Maryland at College Park and one of

Trauma at The Citadel:
Cadets on parade (left),
harassment victim
Nesmith meets with the
Rev. Jesse Jackson
(below)

Old South/New South:
Gov. George Wallace
presents roses to a
black homecoming
queen at Alabama
last fall



CHIP COOPER—UNIV. OF ALA.

the highest-ranking black administrators in academe. "It exists on every college campus, and it exists here."

The problem does not follow predictable regional lines. Dartmouth, which was proud of having the highest proportion of black students in the Ivy League (8 percent), recorded a 25 percent plunge in black applications for the next academic year; admissions director Richard Jaeger blames the loss largely on the attention attracted by various racial episodes during the past year. Alabama, meanwhile, has compiled a relatively good record—much better than its segregationist history and recent cross-burning might indicate. Under a 1985 court order that requires all of the state's public higher-education institutions to desegregate, the university has managed to reverse a decline in black enrollment and raise it to about 9 percent this year. That beats the national average—but it's not exactly an overwhelming record in a state where 32 percent of the high-school graduates are black.

Many schools make considerable efforts to recruit minorities. They entice secondary-school students with slick brochures, visits to their high schools and well-organized campus tours. What often

defeats these efforts, some argue, is elitism—universities that limit their recruiting targets to an academically—and often financially—upscale black clientele. Says John Brannon, director of minority admissions at Duke: "There's a real fight for those black kids that are good enough."

What is the definition of "good enough"? One thing, perhaps, at Duke, and something else at somewhat less selective institutions. Schools are too busy fussing over the same exceptional 2 percent of the black student population, critics complain, to seek out and gamble on others with potential.

Financial problems also tend to work disproportionately against blacks. Most parents now buy a college education the way they buy a house—they borrow—and a recent congressional study shows just how stagger-



RUSSELL K. PACE—THE CITADEL



CURT NORMAN