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Minority college enrollment still lags behind that of whites

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of minority students enrolled at U.S. colleges and the number earning degrees continues to inch up, but still lags behind whites, according to a new study.

The report, being released Monday by the American Council on Education, brought gloomy predictions from educators worried that an increasingly minority American work force will lack needed training by the year 2000.

"The overall situation is so dismal, these small gains just do not go far enough," said Eduardo Padron, president of the Wolfson campus of the Miami-Dade Community College, the nation's largest community college system and one of the most heavily minority.

"When you look at the demographics for the next century, if

we are unable to equip these people as professionals and technicians, we are going to be in a real bind," Padron said.

The actual number of minorities going to college rose slightly in 1993 — up 1.3 percent for blacks, 3.6 percent for Hispanics and 3.9 percent for Asian Americans over 1992.

But because blacks and Hispanics also make up a growing percentage of all young Americans, the proportion in college remained flat.

Just 33 percent of all 18-to-24-year-old black high school graduates and 36 percent of Hispanic graduates enrolled in college in 1993, compared with nearly 42 percent of whites, the study said.

The number of minorities earning bachelor's and associate degrees increased in 1993 —

reflecting a spurt in enrollment in the late 1980s, and perhaps also more emphasis on keeping minorities in school, said ACE president Robert H. Atwell.

Hispanic students still drop out of high school more often than either blacks or whites, although their graduation rates are slowly improving.

About 61 percent of Hispanics ages 18-24 held a high school diploma in 1993, up 3 percent from the year before. About 75 percent of blacks had graduated and 83 percent of whites — both figures essentially unchanged from the year before.

Girls continue to finish high school more often than boys — the gender gap was 5 percentage points for Hispanics, 3.9 percentage points for blacks and 3.2 percentage points for whites, the study said.

Hospital makes fatal mistake

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — A hospital that amputated the wrong foot of one patient admitted on Saturday to a fatal error with another patient, saying a 77-year-old man died after a staff member mistakenly removed his respirator.

Lee Alfonso died March 3 at University Community Hospital after an employee believed he had disconnected another patient's respirator, the hospital said in a news release.

"A health care worker failed to properly identify the patient before carrying out a medical order," the hospital said.

The employee, who wasn't identified, did not consult Alfonso's medical chart, check his identification bracelet or follow other procedures to confirm his identity beforehand, the hospital said.

Alfonso died less than an hour later, according to Tony Cunningham, Alfonso's family attorney.

The hospital said the worker, employed for 2 years, had a clean record. The employee was suspended, pending an investigation.

On Feb. 20, a surgeon amputated Willie King's left leg below the knee, though it was his right leg that was supposed to have been removed. He has been transferred to Tampa General Hospital.

"It's almost unbelievable that this particular institution has had two incidents like this in such a short time. It's awful," said Dr. Emilio Echevarria, a surgeon on Florida's Board of Medicine. "They better quickly look at all their procedures and protocol. I'm shocked."

A report has been filed outlining the latest error with the state Department of Business and Professional Regulation and with the Agency for Health Care Administration. Both departments are expected to conduct investigations.

Brady law effective handgun control

NEW YORK (AP) — A year after the Brady law was passed, up to 45,000 convicted felons have been stopped from buying handguns by the required background checks, three surveys show.

That amount represents 2 to 3.5 percent of all applicants for handguns.

The studies were done by the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, CBS News and the International Association of Chiefs of Police in connection with Handgun Control Inc. They

were reported on in Sunday's *New York Times*.

Handgun Control is headed by Sarah Brady, wife of James Brady, the White House press secretary who was wounded in the assassination attempt in 1981 against President Reagan. The Brady law is named for him.

The law, which went into effect on Feb. 28, 1994, calls for five-day waiting periods and background checks before handgun purchases. Several categories of people are denied permission to buy the guns, including con-

victed felons, fugitives from justice, illegal aliens, juveniles and the mentally ill.

Experts are divided on whether the legislation has reduced violent crime.

"The 40,000 people who were stopped were only stopped at that store at that time," said Bill Bridgewater, executive director of the National Alliance of Stocking Gun Dealers, a trade group. "They weren't arrested. So all they had to do was go out on the street corner at midnight and pay more to get a gun."

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