I am Michael Rusden, a graduating senior in Civil Engineering Technology at Savannah State College. I asked for an opportunity to speak to the committee in order to give a white man's opinion of the local black institution as seen from the inside; not as in the news media. I attended Armstrong State College from September 1973 to March 1976, as a part-time and full-time student. I transferred to Savannah State College in 1976 because I became interested in its Civil Engineering Technology program. At that time it was one of two accredited Civil Engineering Technology programs in the state. The other was at Southern Tech. in Marietta. As a student of both schools, I feel that my views should be heard. I must add that my experience and course work at Savannah State has been mostly in the Department of Technical Sciences and Mathematics.

First, I want to mention the safety factor for white students at a black college. People ask me if I feel safe at Savannah State or how do the blacks treat you? I am treated by students and instructors as a student no different from any other student. In other words, my student relations at SSC are just as good as I experienced at Armstrong. Too many white people think of blacks as one big group with all the same qualities and characteristics. The news media has illuminated the negative aspects of the college while giving the positive aspects very little coverage. Therefore, one can expect the white population to have reservations about attending a black school. The truth is that the environment at Savannah State is not one of black or white culture, but of college students the same as any other college.

Secondly, I wish to reflect on the constant criticisms about Savannah State College that I receive from the white population. Most whites seem to know more about Savannah State than I do even though I am in regular attendance. They tell me about events that happen on the campus that I am not aware of and nobody else is aware of. They ask me why I am attending a school that has nothing to offer me? Yet, when I tell them about the program I am in, I hear this - What is it? How long has it been there? Is it any good? I did not know that they had such a program. This shows the lack of knowledge of the general population concerning the mission and programs of Savannah State College. They only rely on what they hear by word of mouth or the media. How many of you have ever visited the Engineering Technology Department during open house? Each year I have stayed on campus until 7 p.m. waiting for citizens to show up but only one or two appear to find out what we are all about.

My third point is that, the desegregation guidelines state that students should be attracted to each institution on the basis of education programs. This has not been done. Bad publicity and senseless criticisms has caused white students to overlook the opportunities at Savannah State College. Almost all the people who I have talked with, including engineers, know nothing about the Engineering Technology programs at Savannah State. The ones who say they know something, only know talk about the vocational training of 20 years ago. One Savannah student that I talked to said that he was going on to school to study Engineering Technology. When I asked him why did he not consider Savannah State, he said that he did not want a vocational type program. This illustrates that very little is being done to attract the white population, to traditionally black institutions.

My fourth point is the elimination of duplicated programs. In 1962, Savannah State College created degree programs in Civil, Electronics and Mechanical Engineering Technology. In 1973, these three curricula were accredited by the Engineers' Council for Professional Development (ECPD). In the same year (1973) Georgia Southern College duplicated two of these programs. Both institutions serve southeast Georgia. To me this means that each program would get half of the area's students. And each institution would get half of the funds. However, in the latter, it appears that Savannah State College has not received their pro-rated share. Also, this created and promoted
continued segregation. This duplication has prevented the growth of programs at both institutions.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I am not anti-white nor am I anti-black. I am for a combined effort by institutions to create the best educational opportunities possible without reference to either black or white. I recall an attempt for Savannah State College and Armstrong State College to form a joint graduate program in Industrial Arts Education. Savannah State had the instructors needed for the technical classes. These instructors were a racially mixed group of the highest qualifications and highly respected in their field. This program was scrubbed because Armstrong College did not like the idea of all three instructors being at Savannah State. This is the type of situation that has gone on between many institutions and does nothing to help the educational problems of the community. I feel that it is impossible to have two separate institutions in the same area and obtain adequate funding to maintain each at a level necessary to provide the best education for the area served. I also feel that if either school takes over the other, the system will not meet the public's approval for 20 years.

I believe that the main issue of concern should be how to provide the best educational opportunities for this community and to enhance existing programs, particularly the engineering technology programs at Savannah State College.