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**WAKE FOREST PROFESSOR EXPLORES
HISTORY OF DESEGREGATION**

As today's schools work to meet the standards of the No Child Left Behind Act, a Wake Forest University professor has taken an historical look at desegregation and the impact of standardized testing on blacks in 20th century South Carolina.

In "Paradoxes of Desegregation," a new book published in August by University of South Carolina Press, Scott Baker documents black struggles for educational equity in Charleston and how South Carolina educational leaders responded to their demands from the 1920s to the 1970s.

High-stakes testing is a key part of No Child Left Behind legislation and Baker's study is among the first to examine the long term effects of expanding standardized testing programs on African Americans.

Beginning in the 1940s, school officials adopted standardized tests to restrict blacks' access to colleges and the professions, said Baker, associate professor of education.

"In essence, standardized testing replaced legalized segregation as a way of excluding most African Americans from white institutions," Baker said.

As massive and violent resistance to desegregation collapsed in the late 1950s, educational officials in other southern states followed South Carolina's lead, adopting test policies that have influenced the region and the nation.

“The history of school and university desegregation in South Carolina not only illuminates the new educational order that replaced the segregated caste system,” Baker writes, “it also offers an opportunity to examine the paradoxical and problematic effects of a half-century of standardized testing on African Americans and black educational institutions.”

The book examines ways state and local authorities used testing to exploit the educational disadvantages of many blacks.

“Advantaged African-Americans gained access to the most prestigious educational institutions and the most valuable programs within them,” Baker wrote, “but for a majority of blacks in the state, region and nation, standardized tests remained durable barriers to access and equality.”

His research has implications for the possible re-authorization of No Child Left Behind legislation in 2007.

“If a goal of No Child Left Behind is to narrow achievement gaps between whites and blacks,” Baker said, “then this study of a half-century of high-stakes testing in South Carolina raises questions about whether test-driven systems of public education will promote access and equality.”

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