



10 Reasons Why We Need Diversity on College Campuses

Sophia Kerby October 9, 2012

The Supreme Court will begin hearing arguments today in *Fisher v. University of Texas*, a constitutional challenge to race-conscious admission policies at colleges and universities. If the Court bars the use of race in admissions, it will erase 50 years of progress and threaten universities' attempts to make college campuses more diverse and inclusive. Conservatives hope that this case will overturn the Court's 2003 ruling in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, which allowed schools to use race as one of the many factors in achieving racial diversity in their institutions. Such a ruling, however, would adversely impact students on college campuses and would go against our nation's founding principles of fairness and equal opportunity.

As a nation we have come a long way in terms of inclusiveness—in 2008 we elected our first African American president—but our work is far from done. It's important that as a country we continue to expand opportunities for all to ensure that we are giving everyone a fair shot.

Here are 10 reasons why diversity on college campuses is crucial for all students.

1. **Our nation is changing, and our higher education institutions need to reflect this diversity.** More than half of all U.S. babies today are people of color, and by 2050 our nation will have no clear racial or ethnic majority. Communities of color are tomorrow's leaders, and we need to better prepare our future workforce.
2. **While communities of color have made great strides in closing the education gap, disparities in higher education remain prevalent.** According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2009 about 28 percent of Americans older than 25 years of age had a four-year college degree. That same year only 17 percent of African Americans and 13 percent for Hispanics had a four-year degree.
3. **It's in our national interest to invest in our future workforce.** People of color today make up about 36 percent of the workforce. According to Census Bureau projections, by 2050 one in two workers will be a person of color. As our nation becomes more diverse, so too does our workforce.

4. **Diversity in the workforce fosters innovation and competitiveness in business.** Studies consistently show that diversity drives innovation and fosters creativity. In a Forbes survey, 85 percent of respondents said diversity is crucial for their businesses, and approximately 75 percent indicated that their companies will put more focus during the next three years to leverage diversity to achieve their business goals.
5. **Fortune 500 companies agree that diversity is good for the bottom line.** More than 60 leading 500 Fortune companies—including Coca-Cola, General Electric, Hewlett-Packard, Intel, Johnson & Johnson, and many others—came out in support of race-based admission policies in an amicus brief to the Supreme Court in the Grutter v. Bollinger ruling.
6. **Diversity is a national security issue.** In the past, our U.S. armed forces have argued that a highly qualified and racially diverse officer corps is essential to the military's ability to provide national security. A top Army personnel official states that, "Diversity adds to the strength of the military as a force." In Grutter v. Bollinger a number of high-ranking officers and civilian leaders of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps urged the Court to uphold the limited consideration of race.
7. **Diversity on campus benefits all students.** Diversity on college campuses isn't just a benefit for the brown and black students. Learning with people from a variety of backgrounds encourages collaboration and fosters innovation, thereby benefitting all students. Research shows that the overall academic and social effects of increased racial diversity on campus are likely to be positive, ranging from higher levels of academic achievement to the improvement of near- and long-term intergroup relations.
8. **The implications of race-neutral policies in educational opportunities are detrimental to the next generation.** Admission policies that do not consider race are predicted to decrease representation of students of color at the most selective four-year institutions by 10 percent. Given that our future workforce is projected to be nearly half people of color, it is necessary that universities create a fair process for expanding opportunities to all students.
9. **Research show that race-neutral policies simply don't work.** Scholars have already debunked the myth that a class-based admission system is an adequate replacement for a race-based admission policy as a means of creating greater levels of diversity. A study conducted by the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Law found that after using a class-based admission system, enrollment of African Americans and American Indians fell by more than 70 percent. A wide breadth of research concludes that race-conscious practices are necessary in some capacity to achieve a level of diversity that encompasses our diverse nation.

10. The majority of Americans support race-conscious policies in higher education.

A CBS News/New York Times poll in 2009 shows that the majority of Americans are in favor of promoting diversity on college campuses through race-conscious policies—including the Asian American population, a group that is inaccurately speculated to benefit from the ban of such practices. An Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund poll found that 75 percent of Asian Americans voters in Michigan rejected Michigan's Proposition 2, a 2006 state referendum seeking to ban race-conscious policies.

As our nation becomes more diverse, it is crucial that institutions of higher education reflect this diversity. Our growing communities of color are America's future, and it is important that we not only prepare people of color as future leaders, but that we also expose all students to diversity in education so that America's students are more competitive in an increasingly global economy.

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