



**The United States Supreme Court has issued its ruling on race-conscious admissions at colleges and universities, effectively dismantling five decades of affirmative action policies aimed at promoting diversity within higher education.** The member organizations of the Higher Ed Equity Network, a collective impact network dedicated to advancing social and economic mobility through postsecondary education, that have signed on to this statement are deeply concerned about the implications of the Court's decision. We believe this ruling will be detrimental to the progress made towards ensuring equitable access, opportunity, and outcomes for all students—especially Black, Latino/a/x, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous students. Despite this setback, we are strengthened in our resolve to support colleges and universities as they strive to remove barriers faced by underrepresented students and deliver on the promise of higher education.

For much of our history, selective colleges and universities were reserved for wealthy, elite, and predominantly White Americans. Black, Latino/a/x, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous students were minoritized, marginalized, and intentionally excluded from many institutions. Race-conscious admissions policies were a vital tool for addressing historical and ongoing racial and ethnic disparities in higher education. These policies were rooted in the recognition that racial inequities have enduring effects on individuals and society by limiting access to quality education and opportunities for advancement. By allowing the nation's colleges and universities to consider race as one of many factors in admissions decisions, affirmative action led to more diverse and inclusive learning environments, promoted educational excellence, and fostered cross-cultural understanding among students.

We are deeply concerned that the Court paid little attention to decades of research on the positive impact of race-conscious admissions—which has contributed to increased access to selective institutions for Black, Latino/a/x, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous students. The benefits also extended to all students and the entire campus community.<sup>1</sup> Diverse campuses provide superior educational experiences while better preparing students to navigate diverse workplaces and make impactful contributions to a more inclusive society. They also foster critical thinking, innovation, and empathy among students.<sup>2</sup>

Inequities persist despite this progress, underscoring the importance of race-conscious admissions policies that diversify higher education. Recent studies show that historically marginalized populations continue to be underrepresented in higher education—especially at selective institutions.<sup>3</sup> Inequitable college outcomes lead to lower lifetime earnings and exacerbate the racial wealth gap.<sup>4</sup> And while the toll on individuals and families is enough to merit sustained efforts to address inequality on college campuses, the negative effects don't stop there. Historically marginalized racial and ethnic minorities represent a large and growing demographic group who are essential in social and economic progress. Without their skills and talents, our knowledge-based economy simply can't continue to thrive. More equitable postsecondary outcomes would generate nearly \$1 trillion in economic gains for society, boosting America's economic competitiveness.<sup>5</sup>

The educational and economic data often obscure the deeper human and social consequences. The ban on race-conscious admissions will weaken efforts to build a more just and equitable society. It signals that intentional efforts to address the historical and enduring effects of racism and discrimination should not be a part of a holistic admissions process. Our network believes it is essential that we affirm Black, Latino/a/x, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous students and students from low-income backgrounds and their critical contributions to colleges and universities.

Now is the time for all stakeholders to work together to create more diverse, equitable, and inclusive campuses. We refuse to accept a return to past eras of exclusion in higher education and believe we all have an obligation to remedy unjust historical and present practices that limit access to higher education.

**To policymakers:** We urge you to do everything you can in the new legal landscape to ensure equitable access and success and reject the politics of division that jeopardize hard-won progress for minoritized students. We encourage you to partner with institutions to audit and change existing policies and practices that create barriers to postsecondary access and success.

**To college and university leaders:** We stand with you as you work to create diverse campuses using all legally available tools—including expanding recruiting efforts, increasing community college transfer pathways, strengthening supports for first-generation students, ending legacy admissions, and increasing financial aid, among others.<sup>6</sup>

**To students and families affected by this ruling:** We see you, and we will continue the work of building an equitable higher education system that provides the educational and career opportunities worthy of your talent and hard work. You and your brilliance belong at our nation's best colleges and universities—and no court ruling will change that.

Make no mistake: admissions to colleges and universities have always been race-conscious. Prior to affirmative action, many institutions consciously excluded qualified applicants based on the color of their skin. In the decades since the policy was enacted, a different kind of consciousness has prevailed—one that chooses to set aside a preference for one race in favor of embracing the diversity reflected across our multicultural society. Race-conscious admissions policies have empowered colleges and universities to build stronger, more diverse campuses that benefit students and society alike. Today, they have one less tool at their disposal.

The Higher Education Equity Network remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing racial equity in higher education—ensuring equal access, opportunity, and success for all students, especially those who have been historically marginalized. We encourage open dialogue, continuous learning, and evidence-based approaches to foster educational environments that contribute to the more perfect union we are all working towards.

## Signatories

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Achieving the Dream • American Association of Community Colleges  
American Association of State Colleges and Universities • American Institute for Research  
The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program • Campaign for College Opportunity • Catalyst:Ed  
Complete College America • Excelencia in Education Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce  
HCM Strategists • Institute for Higher Education Policy • JKW Consulting • Latinos for Education  
NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education  
New America, Higher Education Program • SOVA • Strong Start to Finish  
WCET (WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies) • Young Invincibles

## How We're Responding

### *Resources & Support Across the Higher Education Equity Network*

As a collective action network, we find strength in the diverse perspectives and creative solutions from our members. The list below highlights some of the resources, research, and events available to policymakers, higher education leaders, and other stakeholders working to navigate the new reality. You are encouraged to reach out to our partners directly for support. If we can assist you in any way or connect you to the right HEEN member, contact us at [thehigheredequitynetwork@catalyst-ed.org](mailto:thehigheredequitynetwork@catalyst-ed.org).

## Events

### **NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education**

[Implications of Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard and UNC: Post-Decision Panel](#)

July 27, 1:00pm-2:15pm EST

*This June, the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) issued a decision on the future of race conscious admissions after weighing in on two pending cases filed by Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. (SFFA) against Harvard University (Harvard) and the University of North Carolina (UNC). NASPA is aware of concerns regarding the decision, and the broader implications it may hold regarding institutional efforts relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion. As such, NASPA and the NASPA Public Policy Division have coordinated informational briefings featuring experts in the field, pre- and post- the SCOTUS decision.*

### **New America**

[Affirmative Action on the Chopping Block: What Does this Mean for the Future of Higher Education?](#)

July 17, 12pm-2pm @ New America Offices | 740 15th St NW, Washington, DC.

*As part of their ongoing programming series, New America will collaborate with legal scholars, admission experts, and students—who are at the center of the debate—to raise awareness and share research and advocacy work focused on ensuring students of color have equal access to high-quality and affordable education. This event will be accessible via livestream, and will cover what industry experts are saying about SCOTUS' upcoming decision on Affirmative Action.*

## Resources

### **American Institute for Research (AIR)**

[The Future of Affirmative Action in College Admissions](#)

*Alexandria Walton Radford, senior director of AIR's Center for Applied Research in Postsecondary Education, is an expert in college admissions. In this recent article, she answers a few questions about the impending SCOTUS decision regarding Affirmative Action.*

### **Campaign for College Opportunity**

[An Open Call to Action](#)

*In this open call to action, CCO calls on Policymakers and Higher Education Leaders to urgently review current practices and policies for equity and employ evidence-based proactive practices and policies that affirm equal opportunity in higher education, such as the elimination of standardized tests in admissions, ending legacy preferences, improving need-based financial aid, and strengthening transfer pathways.*

## [Affirming Equity. Ensuring Inclusion. Empowering Action.](#)

*This collection of resources includes media toolkits in both English and Spanish, as well as a series of briefs on equitable practices in higher education that will be added to the resource page throughout the rest of the year following the SCOTUS decision.*

### **New America**

#### [Attacking Affirmative Action is a Threat to Racial Equality](#)

*As part of their ongoing listening series, New America will collaborate with legal scholars, admission experts, and students – who are at the center of the debate – to raise awareness and share research and advocacy work focused on ensuring students of color have equal access to high-quality and affordable education.*

### **Young Invincibles**

#### [The United States Cannot Afford to Forget its History, Ever](#)

*In this blog post, Young Invincibles outlines their position on Affirmative Action and shares student testimonials. Overturning years of precedent on affirmative action would be a step in the wrong direction, and we must remember how far we have come and the ways we have to go.*

### **[Research](#)**

#### **Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce**

##### [Race, Elite College Admissions, and the Courts](#)

*This report includes a legal history of race-conscious affirmative action, a look at alternatives to considering race and ethnicity in college admissions, and an agenda for reforming the K-12 education system to improve educational opportunity.*

##### [Race-Conscious Affirmative Action: What's Next?](#)

*This report demonstrates that an expected national ban on the consideration of race in college admissions will threaten the racial and ethnic diversity of students at selective colleges unless these colleges fundamentally alter their admissions practices.*

#### **Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)**

##### [The Most Important Door That Will Ever Open](#)

*This report, published June 2021, shows Affirmative Action's impact on institutional and student outcomes in higher education, as well as what's at stake in SCOTUS' 2023 decision.*

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### **Endnotes**

- 1 Diversity and higher education: Theory and impact on educational outcomes. Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin. September 1, 2002.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Racial and ethnic representation in postsecondary education. Monarrez and Washington. Urban Institute. June 18, 2020.
- 4 Wealth inequality and the racial wealth gap. Aladangady and Forde. The Federal Reserve. October 22, 2021.
- 5 The cost of economic and racial injustice in postsecondary education. Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce. May 12, 2021.
- 6 The most important door. Institute for Higher Education Policy. June 2021.