



"From 1987-1990, the number of white males in-state attending UNC dropped from 944 to 846. The number of black males increased by one-half of one percent. This Affirmative Action madness has definitely got to stop!"

Affirmative Action In Higher Education

A policy designed to aid in the total economic, social and political liberation of minorities

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Colleges and universities look at numerous factors when trying to determine which students will enter freshmen classes each year. The combination of scores on the SAT and cumulative grade point average are often clear factors used in the admissions process. Letters of recommendation and extracurricular activities may also play a role in determining which students get accepted. Colleges may also pay special attention to students who come from a certain geographic region or others who have a history of overcoming substantial economic or physical disadvantages. The ability to overcome hardships is one indication that a student may perform well under the academic strains of collegiate rigor. Universities sometimes make attempts to encourage minority presence because they char-

acteristically have been under-represented in the college population. Consequently, sometimes it is necessary for colleges to use special policies such as Affirmative Action to admit students who have been denied admission in the past. Some people claim Affirmative Action is an outdated policy because blacks and whites are now given the same opportunities to succeed in the world. However, Affirmative Action is not an outdated policy as long as institutionalized racism continues to deny minority students the chance to attend college. Society has not reached a point where college admissions can be totally race-blind.

When most people hear Affirmative Action, they think about a landmark Supreme Court case involving Alan Bakke. In 1977, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a white male student had been discriminated against when he was

denied admission to medical school. However, the High Court also said that universities could still use quotas to encourage minorities to attend college. The Bakke case was extremely important for the implementation of affirmative in higher education. Since that case, the Supreme Court has been indecisive in cases dealing with Affirmative Action.

Opponents of Affirmative Action use several arguments when they attempt to argue against the policy. These arguments also support the stance of race-blind admissions. First, some people argue that Affirmative Action punishes generations of students who are not responsible for discrimination against minorities. In other words, some people say that today's white citizens cannot be blamed for the brutality blacks suffered during slavery. Those who argue this point choose to ignore a large part of history. Black people

do not blame current generations of white citizens for past historical discrimination. Blacks realize that the forefathers of today's white citizens were responsible for the past oppression faced by African Americans. Past wrongs such as slavery cannot be corrected because the people responsible for them are no longer here. However, Affirmative Action is one of the only policies that at least attempts to compensate for past discrimination. There is no way that modern American society can totally make up for the racism African Americans have faced, but a policy such as Affirmative Action shows that the country is no longer denying that institutionalized racism still exists.

A second argument used to oppose Affirmative Action is that using race as a factor in admissions allows unqualified students to enter a university. Some opponents further argue that universi-

ties have to lower their admission standards in order to admit minorities. One problem with this argument is that people automatically assume that blacks are not qualified for admissions at the nation's top universities. Blacks and other minorities are always accused of being "let in" to fill quotas established by universities. Some people refuse to acknowledge the fact that black students are not only as qualified as white students, but sometimes are even more qualified to enter college than whites. And the world knows that blacks historically were denied admission based solely on race. Yet time and time again, black students must fight against accusations that they do not belong at the top-ranked institutions of higher learning. It is ironic that no one discusses the children of alumni or certain athletes who may have been given special consideration in the admissions process.