Race-Conscious Affirmative Action

What's Next

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INTRODUCTION

Anticipating the End of an Era

A seismic shift is coming to postsecondary education: later this year, the US Supreme Court is expected to issue a ruling that would ban race-conscious college admissions, a widely used form of affirmative action. Despite years of contentious debate and legal action, colleges and universities in most states are currently able to consider race as one of many factors in the admissions process. But this practice is already prohibited at public institutions in nine states,[1] and it is on the brink of toppling completely. Two cases currently before the court have the potential to mark the end of any consideration of race in college admissions nationwide.[2]

If the court rules as expected and decides that race-conscious admissions practices are unconstitutional, what would be lost? And what comes next? The answer will depend on the exact scope of the court's decision and on how selective colleges opt to change their admissions practices in response. To provide a sense of the possibilities, we examined six different admissions models and the impact they would likely have on racial/ethnic diversity if used consistently across selective colleges.

Because some opponents of race-conscious admissions have advocated for the use of class-

1. Public colleges in 11 states have at some point been prohibited from considering race in admissions. These 11 states include Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Michigan, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Texas, and Washington. The bans in two of these states were court-ordered and later vacated by the US Supreme Court. In Texas, a court-ordered prohibition of race-conscious college admissions stood from 1997 to 2003. In Georgia, a court-ordered ban prohibited the consideration of race in admissions at the University of Georgia from 2001 to 2003. Long and Bateman, "Long-Run Changes in Underrepresentation after Affirmative Action Bans in Public Universities," 2020; Baker, "Why Might States Ban Affirmative Action?," 2019.

2. *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc., v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*, US Supreme Court No. 20-1199, 2022, and *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc., v. University of North Carolina, et al.*, US Supreme Court No. 21-707, 2022.

conscious alternatives, we included among the models we evaluated some that consider the socioeconomic status background of applicants. To more fully assess the relative merits and limitations of race-conscious versus class-conscious admissions, we also investigated the likely impact of models that expand the use of race-conscious admissions practices nationwide instead of prohibiting those practices. Expanding race-conscious admissions practices is unlikely in the wake of the Supreme Court's upcoming ruling, but these models nonetheless show how the diversity obtained from admissions practices that exclude race and ethnicity compares to that obtained from practices that more fully factor race and ethnicity into selective college admissions. Finally, because the debate about racial and ethnic diversity at selective colleges has prompted discussion about colleges' commitment to socioeconomic diversity, we examined the impact that each model would have on both the racial/ethnic and the socioeconomic backgrounds of enrollees at selective colleges. Together, these models provide a sense of the possible consequences if race-conscious college admissions practices are prohibited, as well as the options available to colleges and universities in that event.

The debate over affirmative action is in part a debate about race versus class and has implications for admissions preferences given to legacy applicants, student athletes, and other privileged groups.

For decades, the use of race-conscious affirmative action has generated intense debate. Proponents of race-conscious college admissions argue that this form of affirmative action helps to level the playing field in a country in which racism still plays a formative role in people's life experiences.[3] They say that race and class play intersecting but ultimately different roles in American life, and that, to varying degrees, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American individuals of all class backgrounds experience the persistent effects of centuries of racial discrimination.[4] Opponents of race-conscious admissions claim that consideration of race is unfair and creates stigma for those it's intended to benefit, along with racial resentment among those who feel disadvantaged by it.[5] Some assert that even though race and class overlap and interact, class, not race, is the real measure of advantage and disadvantage in American life.[6] The majority of the court's current justices seem likely to side with such critics and rule in favor of Students for Fair Admissions, the plaintiff in both cases, as it challenges the race-conscious admissions practices of Harvard University and the University of North Carolina.[7]

Such a decision would be controversial and disruptive, but it would also generally align with public opinion. In a Pew Research Center poll conducted in spring 2022, 74 percent of respondents said that race and ethnicity should not be a factor in college admissions decisions.[8] A Washington Post–Schar School poll conducted in October 2022 found that the proportion of respondents opposed to the consideration of race/ethnicity in admissions was above six in 10.[9] Granted, survey respondents have also expressed some support for efforts to increase racial diversity on college campuses.[10] Nonetheless, race-conscious admissions practices just don't align with many Americans' beliefs about what constitutes fairness; to many, these practices don't seem justified as a means of expanding opportunity to students from racial and ethnic minority groups. On the whole, Americans seem to believe that grades and admissions

3. *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc., v. President and Fellows of Harvard College* and *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc., v. University of North Carolina, et al*. Brief of the National Academy of Education as *Amicus Curiae* in Support of Respondents, 2022.

4. Strauss, "Why Race-Based Affirmative Action Is Still Needed in College Admissions," 2022; Rothstein, "Race or Class?," 2014; African American Policy Forum, "13 Myths About Affirmative Action," accessed November 30, 2022.

5. *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc., v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*, Brief *Amicus Curiae* of the Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism in Support of Petitioner, 2022.

6. Kahlenberg, "The Affirmative Action That Colleges Really Need," 2022; McWhorter, "Why Affirmative Action Should Be Based on Class, Not Race," 2013.

7. We evaluated some of the arguments put forth by Students for Fair Admissions in Carnevale and Quinn, *Selective Bias*, 2021.

8. Seven percent of Americans say that race should be a major factor in college admissions, and 19 percent say it should be a minor factor. Gómez, "As Courts Weigh Affirmative Action, Grades and Test Scores Seen as Top Factors in College Admissions," 2022.

9. Anderson et al., "Over 6 in 10 Americans Favor Leaving Race Out of College Admissions," 2022. Similarly, the Higher Education Analytics Center at NORC and the AP-NORC Center found that only 27 percent of respondents believe that race should be considered in admissions. Higher Education Analytics Center at NORC and the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, "Perceptions of College Admissions Practices," 2019.

10. Indeed, Americans seem ambivalent about racial diversity and the best approach to achieving it. According to the Washington Post–Schar School poll, the same share of respondents indicating opposition to the consideration of race/ethnicity in admissions said that unspecified "programs designed to increase the racial diversity of students are a 'good thing.'" Anderson et al., "Over 6 in 10 Americans Favor Leaving Race Out of College Admissions," 2022.

test scores are the best measures of merit: as polling consistently makes clear, public support is strongest for these two admissions factors, followed by factors like community service and other non-academic activities and skills.[11]

It's possible that many Americans would find class-conscious admissions practices more palatable than race-conscious approaches. In fact, approximately six in 10 respondents to the Post–Schar School poll indicated that students from low-income families "have an unfair disadvantage" in college admissions, much higher than the share that said the same about any racial/ethnic group.[12]

Indeed, students from families of lower socioeconomic status (SES) are currently underrepresented on selective college campuses, sometimes to an even greater degree than students from racial and ethnic minority groups. This point is best illustrated using representation ratios — a group's share of the incoming class at selective colleges divided by their share of high school graduates, with values less than one indicating that a group is underrepresented and those closer to zero indicating greater underrepresentation.

For example, Hispanic/Latino students currently make up 14 percent of the incoming class at selective colleges but 24 percent of high school graduates nationwide, which results in a representation ratio of 0.58. This means that Hispanic/Latino representation at selective colleges is 58 percent of the way to equitable representation relative to Hispanic/Latino representation among high school graduates. Black/African American students make up 6 percent of the incoming class at selective colleges but 13 percent of high school graduates nationwide, which results in a representation ratio of 0.46, meaning that Black/African American representation at selective colleges is 46 percent of the way to equitable representation relative to Black/African American representation among high school graduates. Meanwhile, students from families in the lowest 20 percent (bottom quintile) of the SES distribution make up 8 percent of the incoming class at selective colleges but 17 percent of high school graduates,[13] which results in a representation ratio of 0.47. This means that representation among students from the bottom 20 percent of the SES distribution is 47 percent of the way to equitable representation relative to these students' representation among high school graduates. Thus, students from families in the bottom 20 percent of the SES distribution are substantially more underrepresented at selective colleges than Hispanic/Latino students and are approximately as underrepresented as Black/African American students.

Of course, comparisons between disadvantages tied to race/ethnicity and those tied to class status can amount to a false equivalency. Both types of disadvantages are important barriers to opportunity, and colleges and universities should strive to do better in serving students from underrepresented racial/ethnic and underrepresented socioeconomic groups. Moreover, people don't have either a racial/ethnic identity or a class status; they have both simultaneously, and dynamics related to both factors overlap and interact to affect their relative advantage and disadvantage. Taking race/ethnicity and class into consideration

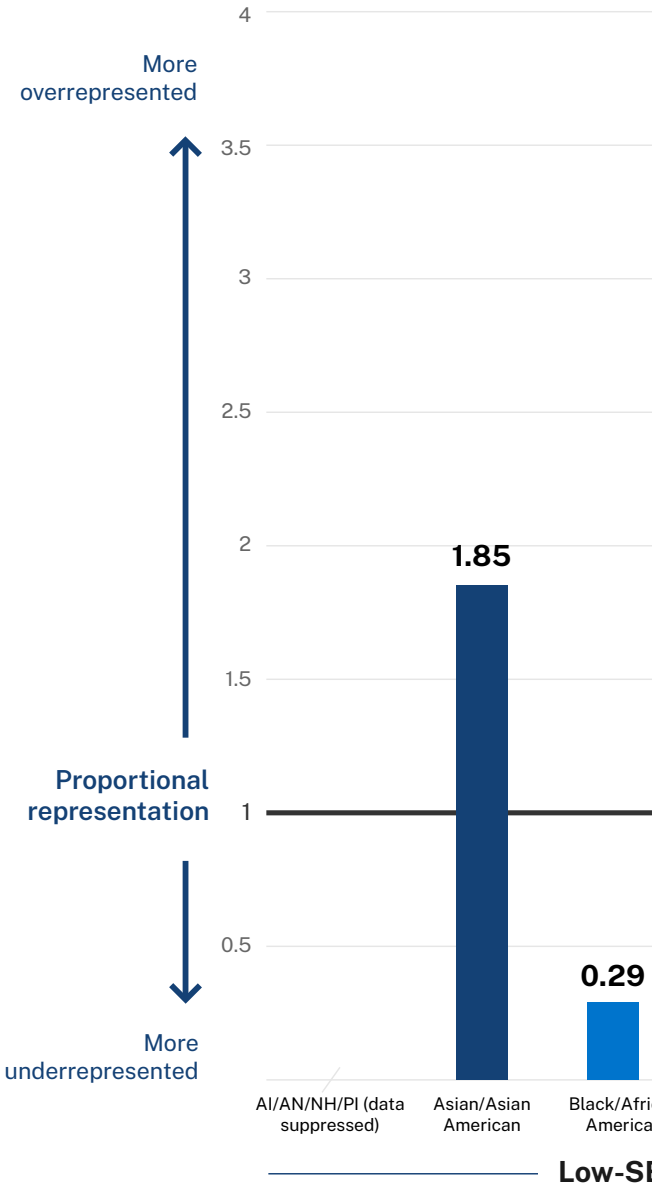
11. Gómez, "As Courts Weigh Affirmative Action, Grades and Test Scores Seen as Top Factors in College Admissions," 2022; Higher Education Analytics Center at NORC and the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, "Perceptions of College Admissions Practices," 2019.

12. The exact share was 62 percent. In comparison, 42 percent perceived Hispanic/Latino students as having an unfair disadvantage, and 40 percent perceived Black/African American students as having an unfair disadvantage. Anderson et al., "Over 6 in 10 Americans Favor Leaving Race Out of College Admissions," 2022.

13. Students from lower SES backgrounds are more likely than their higher SES classmates to drop out of high school. This explains why students in the bottom SES quintile make up fewer than 20 percent of high school graduates, while students in the top SES quintile make up more than 20 percent of high school graduates.

simultaneously reveals that all students from lower SES backgrounds, with the exception of low-SES Asian/Asian American students, are severely underrepresented at selective colleges (**Figure 1**). Low-SES Black/African American students and low-SES white students are among the most underrepresented groups at selective colleges. Among students from high-SES families, American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AI/AN/NH/PI) and Black/African American students are underrepresented at selective colleges, while students from all other racial/ethnic groups are overrepresented.

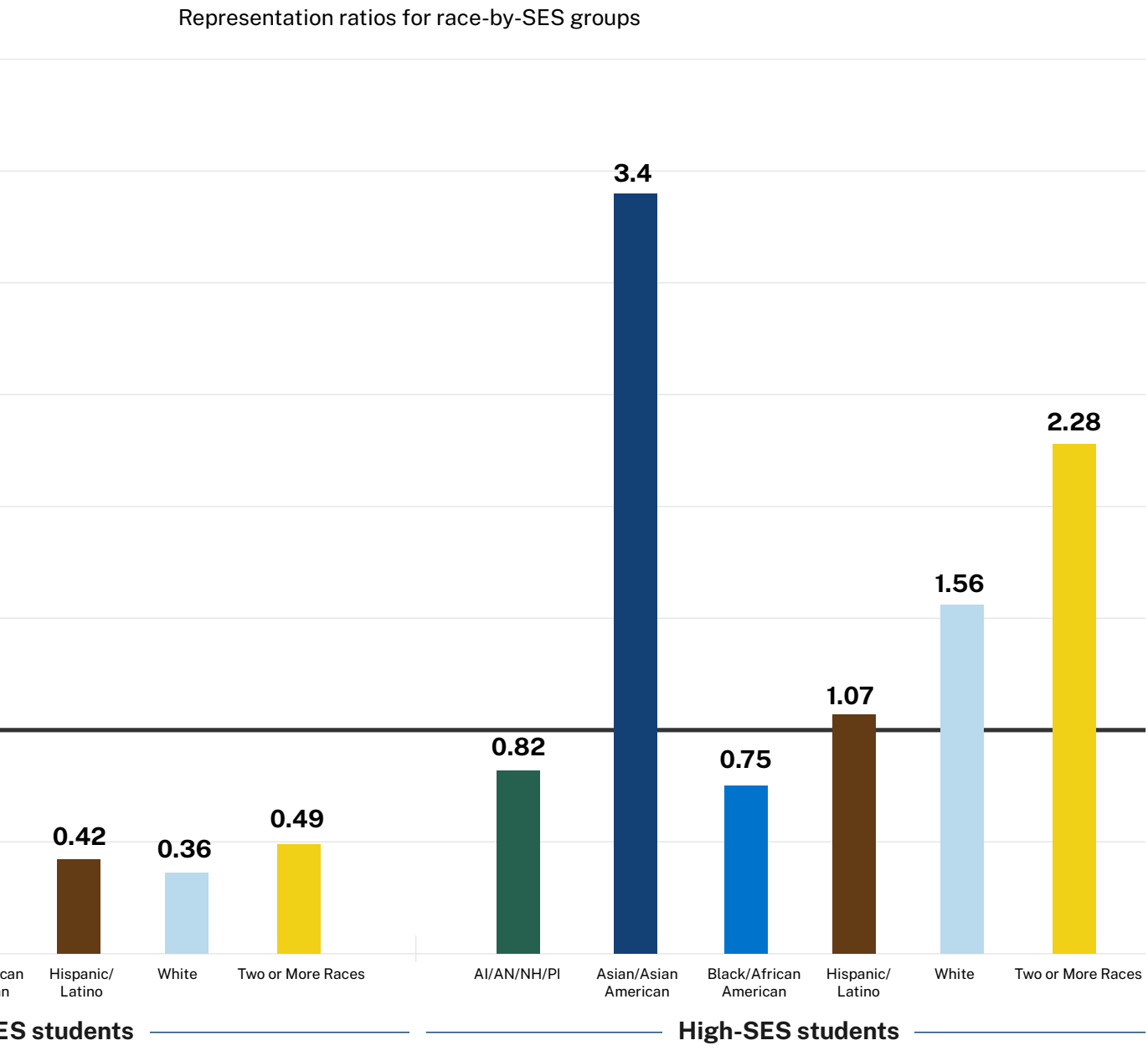
Figure 1. Students from families of lower socioeco
except for Asians/Asian Americans.



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.

Note: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 and sample attrition in follow-up survey rounds. Results for low-SES American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AI/AN/NH/PI) students are suppressed in accordance with National Center for Education Statics data security rules to protect data confidentiality. We use the median of the continuous SES distribution to distinguish between low-SES and high-SES students. For the distributions of high school graduates and selective college enrollees by race/ethnicity and SES, see Table B1 in Appendix B.

nomic status (SES) are severely underrepresented at selective colleges among all racial/ethnic groups



Because students from low-SES backgrounds are underrepresented across almost all racial/ethnic groups, concerns that socioeconomic status is overlooked as a distinct source of disadvantage have fueled cynicism about the value of race-conscious admissions policies. Some feel that white Americans from lower-SES backgrounds are being left behind by race-conscious policies. Others feel that race-conscious admissions practices that do not account for class end up benefiting economically privileged students or relatively well-off recent immigrants rather than the American descendants of enslaved or otherwise oppressed persons.[14] These arguments, which extend from well-substantiated concerns about the degree to which selective colleges have excluded socioeconomically disadvantaged students of all races as well as the descendants of American slavery and oppression,[15] nonetheless add to the cloud of suspicion over race-conscious admissions practices.

Further complicating the debate about the role of race vs. class in college admissions is contention over preferences granted to well-connected applicants, athletes, or members of other privileged groups. Selective colleges have a long history of granting admissions boosts based on these factors, a practice that tends to benefit upper-class white applicants and is thus in tension with diversity objectives.[16] These preferences are just as or even more unpopular than race-conscious admissions: across three recent polls, high proportions of respondents (between 75 percent and 89 percent) objected to the use of legacy admissions practices, which take into account whether an applicant has relatives who attended a college.[17] Nonetheless, selective colleges see connected applicants with relationships to wealthy donors as essential to the financial bottom line, and they continue to tip the scale in favor of these applicants despite public objection.[18] Colleges are also invested in their athletic teams as a source of alumni connection and give admissions preferences to applicants whose athletic skills may be stronger than their academic records.[19] Some observers have speculated that the demise of race-conscious admissions practices could lead some colleges to abandon the use of legacy preferences,[20] but such an outcome seems unlikely given colleges' reliance on these preferences. It is unclear how much racial/ethnic or class diversity can be achieved if colleges continue to factor these preferences into their admissions decisions.

So, what comes next if race-conscious college admissions are banned nationwide? Will racial and ethnic diversity on selective college campuses suffer, or can campuses maintain or expand their levels of racial and ethnic diversity without directly considering race? Do class-conscious admissions models offer an alternative pathway to achieving racial diversity in selective colleges? Or will selective colleges, still deeply rooted in their historical role as bastions of a white elite,[21] become even less likely to serve as engines of opportunity for students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups?

14. Fryer, "Affirmative Action in College Admissions Doesn't Work—But It Could," 2022; Cherry, "Affirmative Action Helps Black Immigrants, but Not Black Americans," 2022.

15. For example, the scholars Lani Guinier and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., have drawn attention to the large proportion of Harvard University undergraduates who were the children of immigrants or immigrants themselves, expressing concern that while Harvard had increased representation among Black/African American students, relatively few of those students were descended from persons enslaved in the United States. Rimer and Arenson, "Top Colleges Take More Blacks, but Which Ones?," 2004.

16. Jaschik, "Will Affirmative Action Debate Kill Legacy Admissions?," 2022.

17. Gómez, "As Courts Weigh Affirmative Action, Grades and Test Scores Seen as Top Factors in College Admissions," 2022; Anderson et al., "Over 6 in 10 Americans Favor Leaving Race Out of College Admissions," 2022; Higher Education Analytics Center at NORC and the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, "Perceptions of College Admissions Practices," 2019.

18. Castilla and Poskanzer, "Through the Front Door," 2022.

19. Arcidiacono et al., "Divergent," 2022.

20. Jaschik, "Will Affirmative Action Debate Kill Legacy Admissions?," 2022.

21. In 2020, white students made up 52 percent of the high school graduating class but 57 percent of entrants to selective colleges, thus maintaining their centuries-long overrepresentation on selective college campuses.

Evidence suggests the probable effects of a nationwide ban on race-conscious admissions.

We already have some evidence of what impacts could materialize based on what has happened in the states that have banned race-conscious admissions. A 2020 study found that in almost all states in which race-conscious admissions have been banned, the representation gaps for Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American students — that is, the difference between their representation in the high school class and their representation at selective colleges — widened after the bans took effect, resulting in greater underrepresentation for these groups.[22] Another recent study found that the ban of race-conscious admissions in California deterred thousands of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students from applying to institutions in the University of California system and resulted in many others attending less-selective universities when they might otherwise have attended flagship institutions. This in turn lowered their chances of graduating and their earnings in adulthood.[23]

These two studies stand in contrast to an earlier study that found that many public flagship universities maintained, and in some cases increased, the representation of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students after state-imposed bans by replacing race-based admissions preferences with class-based ones.[24] However, unlike the later studies, the earlier study did not account for the growth in racial/ethnic diversity within the college-age population that has occurred in states with race-conscious admissions bans. In other words, the studies differ in how much emphasis they give to the broader context of demographic change in society, with the later studies emphasizing the need for institutions to adjust their goals to account for changes in the general population. This difference likely explains the studies' different conclusions.

How much does the context of demographic change matter? Some might argue not at all: the Supreme Court has made clear that whether selective colleges reflect the racial and ethnic composition of society is not germane to whether race-conscious admissions are constitutional.[25] Nonetheless, the comparison is important when evaluating the effects of past and potential bans on race-conscious admissions practices in an increasingly diverse society. That's because, as the country grows more racially and ethnically diverse, selective colleges may find it easier to enroll students from racial and ethnic minority groups. Thus, simply comparing the share of students enrolled before versus after a ban can

22. Long and Bateman, "Long-Run Changes in Underrepresentation after Affirmative Action Bans in Public Universities," 2020.

23. Bleemer, "Affirmative Action, Mismatch, and Economic Mobility after California's Proposition 209," 2022. In an amicus brief for the Students for Fair Admissions cases, representatives of the University of California confirmed that the system has struggled to achieve racial diversity that is either representative of state demographics or adequate to support the educational benefits of diversity, especially at its most selective campuses; *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc., v. President and Fellows of Harvard College* and *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc., v. University of North Carolina, et al.* Brief for the President and Chancellors of the University of California as *Amici Curiae* Supporting Respondents, 2022.

24. Kahlenberg and Potter, *A Better Affirmative Action*, 2012.

25. Kahlenberg and Potter, *A Better Affirmative Action*, 2012.

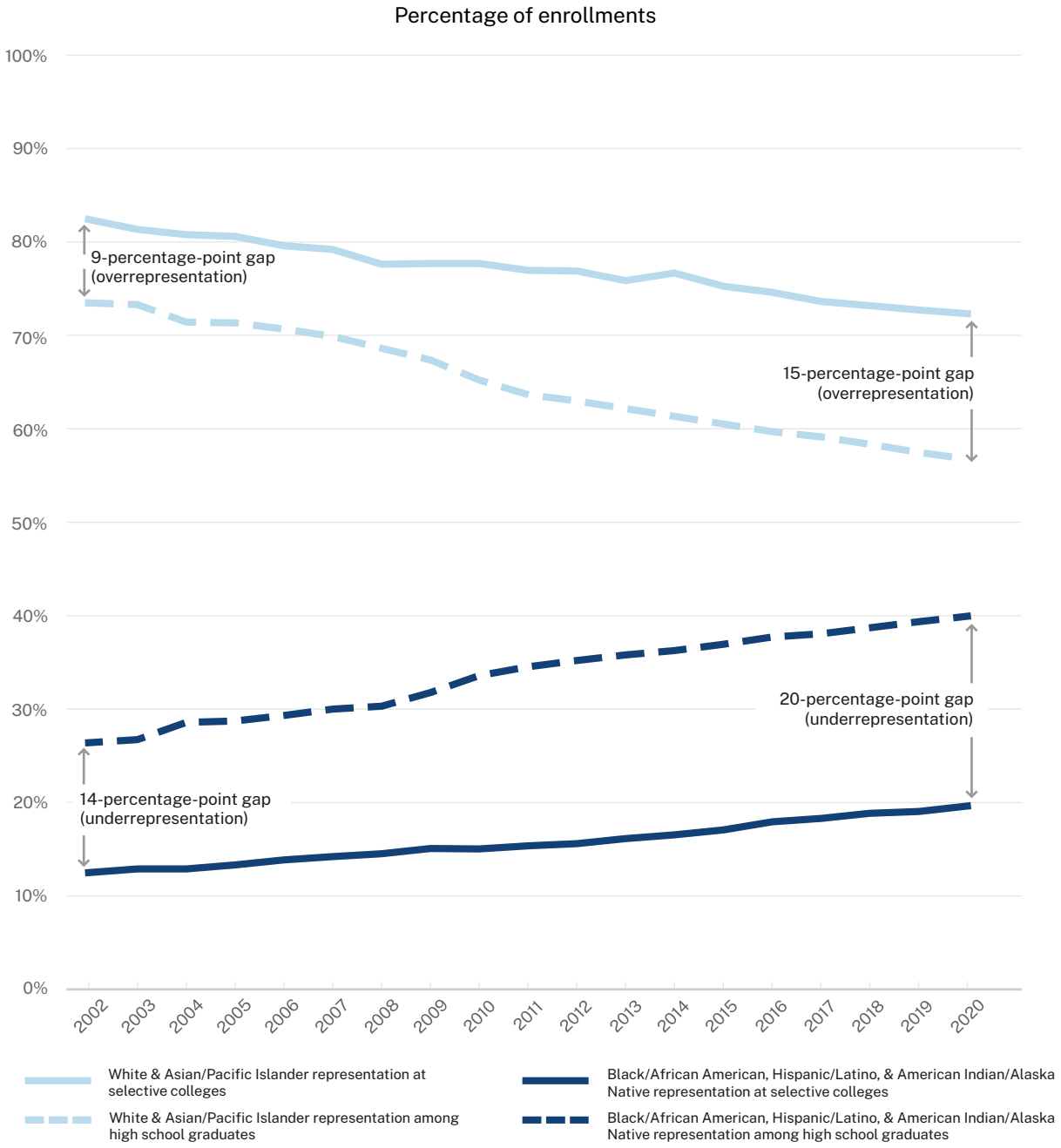
mask the fact that selective institutions are losing ground when compared to the current demographics of the college-age population.

The demographics of the college-age population are essential when evaluating the impact of bans on race-conscious admissions practices — the primary focus of this report — as opposed to whether such practices are constitutionally permissible. To be sure, using quotas to achieve a student body with a specific demographic distribution is already illegal, and race-conscious practices used as part of a holistic admissions process may soon be prohibited as well. Nonetheless, a student body whose demographics mirror the demographics of the eligible population is a sign that applicants have fair chances of attending a selective college regardless of their racial identity or class background. Therefore, we consider the demographics of graduating high school students (1) as a point of comparison by which to judge whether students of various racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds are over- or underrepresented at selective colleges, (2) as a measure of whether societal barriers to opportunity vary by race/ethnicity and class, and (3) as a means of considering the extent to which a national ban on race-conscious admissions would make selective colleges less representative of the traditional college-age population.

At a national level, even as race-conscious college admissions practices remain permissible in most states, many students from historically marginalized groups are increasingly underrepresented at selective colleges. Since 2002, the combined share of enrollments of white and Asian/Pacific Islander students at selective colleges has fallen, from 82 percent to 72 percent, but it has not fallen as fast as these groups' representation among all high school graduates, from 74 percent to 57 percent over the same period.[26] At the same time, the collective representation of Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native students at selective colleges has risen (from 13 percent to 20 percent), but not as fast as these groups' representation among all high school graduates (which increased from 26 percent to 40 percent over the same period). Thus, the underrepresentation gap for Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native students increased from 14 percentage points to 20 percentage points from 2002 to 2020. For traditionally underserved groups, underrepresentation at selective colleges has grown over the last two decades, despite these groups' overall enrollment gains at selective institutions (**Figure 2**).

26. We defined selective colleges as the 193 colleges in the top two tiers of selectivity, identified using the 2014 NCES–Barron's college admissions competitiveness selectivity rankings. Our data for this analysis did not allow us to disaggregate Asian/Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander groups as we did in other analyses used in this report.

Figure 2. White and Asian/Pacific Islander students have become more overrepresented at selective colleges since 2002, while Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native students have become more underrepresented.



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Digest of Education Statistics Table 219.30, 2021; NCES–Barron's Admissions Competitiveness Index Data Files, 2014; and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Fall Enrollment Data, 2002–20.

Taken together, then, the best available empirical evidence suggests that bans on race-conscious admissions harm outcomes for Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students and cause public flagship universities to become less racially and ethnically representative of their state's high school class. Moreover, as Figure 2 illustrates, enrollments at highly selective colleges are growing less reflective of the racial/ethnic composition of the college-age population, even as race-conscious college admissions practices remain permissible in most states. In part, that may be because only around 60 percent of selective institutions use race-conscious admissions practices, a smaller proportion than the share that is legally permitted to do so.[27]

This evidence is dispiriting to those who care about racial and ethnic diversity, and it gives us a sense of the dynamics at play if the Supreme Court outlaws race-conscious admissions. At the same time, this evidence doesn't speak directly to what a national ban on race-conscious admissions would mean for racial and ethnic diversity on both public and private selective campuses, nor does it tell us if other changes to admissions practices could mitigate losses of racial/ethnic diversity in the event of a national ban.

In this report, we attempt to address these information gaps by discussing four alternative admissions models that selective colleges might use if race-conscious admissions practices are banned, alongside two models that represent what could theoretically happen if race-conscious admissions practices were expanded nationwide instead. In addition, all six models assume the elimination of preferences for legacy applicants, student athletes, and other groups that receive admissions preferences for reasons unrelated to academic merit, race/ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

While we expect that most institutions will continue to give preference to legacy applicants and athletes, we are unable to build these preferences into the models because our data set does not include information about these factors. Previous research has suggested that these preferences tend to benefit upper-class white applicants.[28] We therefore present our findings with an important caveat: unless selective colleges eliminate admissions preferences for legacy applicants, student athletes, and other privileged groups, they will be unlikely to achieve the levels of racial/ethnic and class diversity that our models suggest are possible.

With this caveat in mind, we present the expected impact of all six models on both the racial/ethnic and socioeconomic compositions of students enrolled at selective colleges and universities. We find the following:

Finding 1: Among the models we tested, those that expand rather than prohibit race-conscious admissions practices come the closest to mirroring the racial/ethnic composition of the population graduating from the nation's high schools. Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander[29] (AI/AN/NH/PI) students are deeply underrepresented on selective college campuses, and they would remain so under all the admissions models we examined that excluded consideration of race/ethnicity. For example, the model that factors academic merit and SES into the admissions process but not race/ethnicity would enroll a group of students that is 56.6 percent white, 16.6 percent Asian/Asian American, 14.6 percent Hispanic/Latino, 6.3 percent Black/African American, and 0.2 percent AI/AN/NH/PI—very similar to the current distribution. It's not possible to get considerably more racial and ethnic diversity at selective colleges without considering race and ethnicity in recruitment and admissions.

27. Espinosa et al., *Race, Class, and College Access*, 2015.

28. Arcidiacono et al., "Divergent," 2022; Jaschik, "Will Affirmative Action Debate Kill Legacy Admissions?," 2022.

29. We define Pacific Islander according to the definition established by the US Office of Management and Budget. This group includes descendants of the following groups: Guamanians, Samoans, Carolinians, Fijians, Kosraeans, Melanesians, Micronesians, Northern Mariana Islanders, Palauans, Papua New Guineans, Ponapeans (Pohnpelans), Polynesians, Solomon Islanders, Tahitians, Tarawa Islanders, Tokelauans, Tongans, Trukeses (Chuukeses), and Yapeses.

Finding 2: If race-conscious admissions practices are banned, class-conscious alternatives could be used to partially claw back, maintain, or even slightly exceed current enrollment shares for Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American students, but not for AI/AN/NH/PI students. Alternative models intended to achieve diversity at selective colleges without explicit consideration of race/ethnicity would benefit some historically marginalized groups, but not others. Every class-conscious alternative model we considered would result in a drop in AI/AN/NH/PI representation at selective colleges, from 0.3 percent to 0.2 percent or 0.1 percent (far below their 0.9 percent representation in the high school class). The exclusion of AI/AN/NH/PI students suggests that the K–12 education system is falling especially short in preparing these students for selective colleges, and that admissions models that incorporate academic merit, class, and/or other proxies for race/ethnicity do not redress their lack of preparedness to the same extent as models that also explicitly consider the race/ethnicity of applicants. Moreover, in the best-case scenario if race-conscious admissions practices are banned, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students would slightly increase their representation in selective colleges, but they would still remain severely underrepresented relative to their share of the high school class.

Finding 3: Without race-conscious admissions practices, maintaining or exceeding existing levels of representation for all underrepresented racial/ethnic groups would require upending the selective college admissions system as we know it. It's possible to achieve current or even slightly improved levels of representation for AI/AN/NH/PI students alongside Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students in selective colleges without using race-conscious admissions models. But it would require a complete overhaul of the admissions process at selective colleges in two ways: universal adoption of class-conscious admissions across all selective colleges (including extending preferences to applicants from low-SES backgrounds and removing preferences for legacy applicants, student athletes, and other privileged groups), and a significantly larger applicant pool that mirrors the racial/ethnic composition of the high school graduating class. With these two substantial changes, Hispanic/Latino representation at selective colleges could rise from 14.1 percent to 18.5 percent of the enrolling class, Black/African American representation could rise from 5.9 percent to 6.6 percent, and AI/AN/NH/PI representation could rise from 0.3 percent to 0.4 percent.

Finding 4: The most effective way of increasing socioeconomic diversity at selective colleges is to consider race in the admissions process, not to ignore it. Granted, the Supreme Court's forthcoming decision may foreclose the possibility of pursuing socioeconomic diversity through consideration of race. Nonetheless, we find that the models that consider race/ethnicity result in greater representation among students in the bottom 20 percent (i.e., the bottom quintile) of the SES distribution than those that exclude consideration of race. Under an admissions scheme that considers applicants' academic merit, SES, and race/ethnicity, the share of students at selective colleges from families in the bottom SES quintile would increase from 8.2 percent to 14.1 percent, while the share of students from families in the top SES quintile would decrease from 58.1 percent to 43.5 percent. Thus, we find no evidence that considering applicants' race/ethnicity along with their class background hampers efforts to increase class diversity at selective colleges.

Finding 5: Socioeconomic diversity at selective colleges would increase considerably if a larger and more diverse group of students applied and if those admitted received the appropriate financial support to enroll. Students from high-SES backgrounds attend selective colleges at much higher rates than students from lower-SES backgrounds in large part because they are more likely to apply.[30] Changes to policy and practice that narrow the class divide in application behavior would improve class diversity at selective colleges. Across all our models, the enrollment share for students from the top SES quintile at selective colleges (currently 58.1 percent) would decrease by 12.6 to 24.1 percentage points (to somewhere between 34.0 and 45.5 percent) if the pool of students applying to selective colleges was greatly expanded and diversified, and if admitted students with financial need received the appropriate support to enroll.

Finding 6: Achieving more racial/ethnic diversity or socioeconomic diversity at selective colleges would not likely harm selective colleges' overall performance, despite requiring the admission of students with lower grades and test scores. Admitting students on the basis of academic merit, SES, and race/ethnicity, which would achieve the greatest racial/ethnic and class diversity possible with the current pool of applicants, would lower the median SAT score from 1240 to 1190 and the median weighted high school GPA from 4.03 to 3.87. This could hurt institutional prestige but could also increase degree attainment and economic mobility for students who would otherwise not be admitted to selective institutions. Moreover, the overall performance of selective colleges would not likely decline as a result of serving more students from historically marginalized groups.[31]

In sum, when it comes to the goal of equalizing college opportunity across advantaged and disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups and across advantaged and disadvantaged socioeconomic groups, ***there is no good substitute for the consideration of race***. Without race-conscious admissions, the potential for selective colleges to play a key role in the American project of creating equal opportunity is likely to diminish.

30. Three-quarters of students who attend selective colleges are from families in the top two SES quintiles, while only 25 percent of students are from families in the bottom three SES quintiles. Eight percent of these students are from families in the bottom SES quintile.

31. Researchers have found that among high-achieving, lower-income students attending selective colleges, 92 percent graduate, which matches the completion rate of higher-income students. Giancola and Kahlenberg, *True Merit*, 2016.

Many selective colleges are about to navigate a new admissions landscape.

To understand the mechanics of what's at stake in the expected Supreme Court decision, we need to know how selective admissions currently work.

When admitting students to their incoming classes, selective colleges typically consider a variety of measures associated with academic merit, such as standardized test scores, GPA, difficulty of the high school curriculum, and performance on Advanced Placement (AP) exams. They also take into account non-academic elements, such as extracurricular activities and athletic skills, alongside demographic or personal context such as geographic origin and whether a student will be the first in their family to attend college. More controversially, selective colleges may consider family members' alumni status, status as college employees, potential as donors, or connections to public officials with some influence over the college's funding or governance. In combination, these and other factors allow colleges to evaluate students' academic merit while carefully considering the overall composition of their entering classes and pursuing institutional objectives.

At present, applicant race/ethnicity is one of the many factors that selective colleges in most states can consider when evaluating applications. Not all colleges take race/ethnicity into consideration, however, and not just because its use in college admissions is prohibited in nine states.[32] About 60 percent of selective four-year colleges responding to a survey about enrollment management practices said that they had considered race in their admissions decisions during the 2014–15 academic year.[33] Some schools say that this practice supports aspects of their institutional missions: extending educational opportunity to underrepresented groups or supporting underserved communities.[34]

Selective institutions point out that a holistic approach that includes consideration of race/ethnicity allows them to create entering classes full of highly qualified students who each bring different strengths and perspectives to the campus. It facilitates the creation of learning environments that are racially and ethnically diverse, and diverse in many other ways as well — socioeconomically and geographically, for example, and in students' skills, talents, personal experiences, and viewpoints. Experts argue that these diverse learning environments are crucial to creating welcoming campus climates for students from marginalized and minority groups, and that they strengthen the educational experience for all students by providing rich opportunities for interaction across differences.[35]

The value of diverse learning environments has long been at the heart of the legal argument for why colleges should be allowed to consider race as one factor in college admissions. In the landmark 1978 ruling in *Regents of the University*

32. Long and Bateman, "Long-Run Changes in Underrepresentation After Affirmative Action Bans in Public Universities," 2020; Baker, "Why Might States Ban Affirmative Action?," 2019.

33. Espinosa et al., *Race, Class, and College Access*, 2015.

34. *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc., v. President and Fellows of Harvard College* and *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc., v. University of North Carolina, et al.* Brief of American Council on Education et al., 2022; *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc., v. President and Fellows of Harvard College* and *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc., v. University of North Carolina, et al.* Brief of Georgetown University et al., 2022.

35. For a summary of the research describing the benefits of a racially diverse educational environment, see the American Educational Research Association's amici brief in the two Students for Fair Admissions cases. *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc., v. President and Fellows of Harvard College* and *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc., v. University of North Carolina, et al.* Brief of the American Educational Research Association, et al. as *Amici Curiae* in Support of Respondents, 2022. For a discussion of how diversity is similarly beneficial in the workforce, see Carnevale and Smith, "The Economic Value of Diversity," 2016.

of California v. Bakke,[36] which challenged the University of California's consideration of race in admissions at its medical school at Davis, the Supreme Court established (1) that campus diversity is an important component of the educational environment and (2) that colleges can take race into consideration as one of many factors in the admissions process, although they cannot use racial quotas. That philosophy withstood several subsequent Supreme Court challenges, including two 2003 decisions involving the University of Michigan, *Grutter v. Bollinger* (which upheld the diversity rationale from Bakke) and *Gratz v. Bollinger* (which struck down an admissions scoring system that gave minority applicants additional points);[37] and the two *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin* cases,[38] decided in 2013 and 2016, which found that race-conscious admissions policies required scrutiny but deferred to colleges' judgments about when they were necessary to produce a diverse student body.[39]

Arguably, a holistic approach allows for a fairer admissions process than would be possible without it. With a holistic approach, admissions officers can evaluate students' achievements within the fuller context of their lives — giving due credit to the student who became a nationally recognized dancer despite growing up in poverty, for example, or the applicant who maintained a high GPA in the face of personal tragedy. Proponents of race-conscious college admissions argue that race is one of many factors that provide important context to students' achievements. Indeed, racism in the United States is pervasive and persistent. It has taken many forms over the country's history, and it continues to influence the formative experiences of young people today, including their educational opportunities in childhood and adolescence and their pathways to postsecondary education. Proponents of race-conscious admissions practices argue that colleges and universities shouldn't be prohibited from considering that context.

A more cynical take on colleges' defense of the current approach is that holistic admissions provide a way for colleges to prop up competing goals in the absence of transparency and accountability. On the one hand, selective colleges often seek to offer opportunity to disadvantaged students as part of their stated commitment to the public good. On the other, their business model relies on students with check-writing parents from relatively affluent families who can afford elite college tuition and fees. Selective colleges are reluctant to ignore family financial contributions or potential cash flows from wealthy donors and alumni, and they fear cutting off important sources of funding by turning away connected applicants with unremarkable achievements. Although some colleges are need-blind — admitting students without regard for whether they will need financial support — the many that aren't may say they can't afford to admit too many students who would rely on the college for funding.[40] Meanwhile, college athletics — another key component of alumni relations and the business model — may depend on some skilled athletes with average or lackluster academic records, and colleges want the flexibility to offer admission to those students. Transparency about all these elements is not necessarily in the best interests of selective institutions, and holistic admissions practices provide institutions with the cover to prioritize or deprioritize admission for different groups of students as the need arises, without alienating those disfavored by their decisions.

36. *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 US 265 (1978).
37. *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 US 306 (2003), and *Gratz v. Bollinger*, 539 US 244 (2003).
38. *Fisher v. University of Texas*, 570 US 297 (2013), and *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin*, 579 US __ (2016).
39. For a complete discussion of the case history, see Carnevale et al., *The Merit Myth*, 2020.
40. Seltzer, "Do Colleges Need to Be Need Blind?," 2016.

Although holistic admissions have long been in use, the fine details of these practices have shifted considerably in recent years. One particularly notable change has been in the weight given to SAT or ACT scores. In early 2020, more than 700 colleges had test-optional admissions policies.[41] Then, at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, public health protocols led to the cancellation of many students' admissions exams. In response, many colleges and universities suspended their SAT and ACT requirements and never fully resumed them.[42] It's estimated that more than 75 percent of four-year colleges are now test-optional or test-blind,[43] with higher-scoring students more likely than their lower-scoring peers to submit their scores.[44] Colleges can use this change in SAT/ACT reporting behaviors to their advantage, as it removes a prior check on their admissions decisions while giving them the appearance of becoming more selective as their average reported SAT/ACT scores rise. The jury is still out on whether the SAT will maintain its power as a determining factor in college rankings, but it's not likely to regain its strength as an essential component of the admissions process.

The admissions landscape will change again when the Supreme Court releases its decision in the two pending affirmative action cases. But exactly what changes manifest will depend on what the court decides, how institutions respond to those decisions, and — assuming that race-conscious admissions are banned, as is widely expected — to what extent alternative models can nonetheless help selective colleges admit a racially and ethnically diverse class.

Thus, questions remain: On a national level, will it be possible for selective colleges to maintain current levels of racial and ethnic diversity without race-conscious admissions, as opponents of affirmative action claim? And if so, how far will that leave the country from the aspirational goal of creating selective college campuses that truly mirror the racial and ethnic diversity of American society?

To illuminate these questions, we built a series of models to estimate the likely racial/ethnic and class composition of students at selective institutions under different admissions regimes.[45] In the next section, we describe those models and what they tell us about the likely future of racial/ethnic and class diversity at selective colleges if race-conscious admissions practices are banned nationwide.

41. Lovell and Mallinson, "How Test-Optional College Admissions Expanded during the COVID-19 Pandemic," 2021.

42. Einhorn, "Inside the Vast National Experiment in Test-Optional College Admissions," 2022.

43. FairTest, "What Is Test Optional?," n.d.

44. College Board Research, *New Evidence on Recent Changes in College Applications, Admissions, and Enrollments*, 2022.

45. To create these models, we revised and refined the approach used in Carnevale et al., "Achieving Racial and Economic Diversity with Race-Blind Admissions Policy," 2014. For details about the current methodology, see Appendix A.

FINDINGS

The Best Way to Expand Racial/Ethnic and Socioeconomic Diversity at Selective Colleges

To estimate the effects of a nationwide ban on race-conscious college admissions, we created four models approximating admissions approaches that do not consider applicants' race/ethnicity. In addition, since not all colleges currently consider race/ethnicity in their admissions processes and its influence varies across institutions that do, we created two models that explore the potential gains in racial/ethnic diversity if all selective colleges adopted a standardized, race-conscious admissions process.

We used these six models to fill the approximately 290,000 enrollment slots available at the 193 colleges in the top two tiers of selectivity (identified using the 2014 NCES–Barron's college admissions competitiveness selectivity rankings).[46] When examining the anticipated impacts of a nationwide ban on race-conscious admissions, we modeled two different levels of adoption of class-based proxies for race/ethnicity: (1) partial adoption across selective colleges, assuming that only the 60 percent of selective institutions that consider race/ethnicity in admissions today will be motivated to use class-based proxies;[47] and (2) universal adoption across all selective colleges. Across both of these approaches, we also filled the slots at selective colleges using two different samples of students: (1) applicants to selective colleges, taking into account how application behavior would likely change under different admissions scenarios;[48] and (2) all high school graduates. We then compared the resulting racial/ethnic and class composition of students expected to attend selective colleges to that of the existing group of selective college enrollees and to that of the high school graduating class.

46. Of course, not all students admitted to selective colleges actually attend the colleges to which they are admitted. As a result, enrollment management practices are sensitive to "yield rates," or the share of accepted students who actually attend an institution. We accounted for yield rates by admitting approximately 1.5 times more students than these colleges could accommodate and estimating the final enrolling class based on differences in yield rates for different demographic groups of admitted students. For details, see Appendix A.

47. Our estimate that 60 percent of selective colleges currently use race-conscious admissions practices is based on survey findings reported in Espinosa et al., *Race, Class, and College Access*, 2015. It reflects the fact that some institutions operate in states that already impose a ban on race-conscious admissions, while others currently choose not to consider race in admissions. For details, see Appendix A.

48. Specifically, in models that assumed a nationwide ban on race-conscious admissions and in models that introduced a nationwide guaranteed admission policy by high school class rank (guaranteeing admission for the top 10 percent of each high school class), we adjusted the applicant sample to account for expected changes in application behavior in response to these policy changes. For details, see Appendix A.

To model as closely as possible the expected effect of a nationwide ban on race-conscious admissions practices, we assumed that only some institutions would adopt class-based proxies in response to a Supreme Court decision outlawing the use of race in admissions. Our partial-adoption results reflect the fact that approximately 40 percent of selective colleges currently do not consider race/ethnicity in their admissions practices, and thus, a nationwide ban is not likely to change their current practices. Likewise, to model the most likely effect of a nationwide ban on applicant samples, we estimated how the composition of students attending selective colleges would change under each model if the scope and effectiveness of recruitment efforts did not change — that is, if white students, Asian/Asian American students, and students from high-SES backgrounds remained overrepresented among applicants to selective institutions.

In contrast, we illustrate the frontier of what is possible, but not practical, with our results that assume universal adoption of class-based proxies or 10 percent plans across selective colleges and with our results that estimate enrollment if every member of the graduating high school class applied to selective colleges. The results that assume universal adoption illustrate how much additional progress could be achieved if all selective colleges followed the same approach to admitting students that accounted for SES background or high school class rank — that is, if admissions policies were standardized across institutions. Likewise, the results that assume all high school graduates are considered for admission to selective colleges shed light on another factor that is critical to achieving campus diversity: diversifying the pool of applicants to selective colleges. Indeed, the anticipated ban on race-conscious admissions has heightened attention to the importance of increasing the number of applicants from historically underrepresented groups.[49] Our results from the high school graduation sample take this expansion to the limit, illustrating the potential for increasing racial/ethnic and class diversity at selective colleges under each model if the applicant pool expanded to reflect the composition of the entire high school graduating class.

Due to data limitations, we are unable to model preferences for legacy applicants, student athletes, and other privileged groups. Thus, all six models discard the use of these preferences, which previous research has shown tend to benefit upper-class white applicants.[50] We therefore present our results with the caution that if selective colleges continue to give admissions preferences to legacy applicants, student athletes, and other privileged groups, they will likely achieve less racial/ethnic and class diversity than is reflected in our models.

49. Korn, "Colleges Weigh New Admissions Strategies," 2022.

50. Arcidiacono et al., "Divergent," 2022; Castilla and Poskanzer, "Through the Front Door," 2022; Jaschik, "Will Affirmative Action Debate Kill Legacy Admissions?," 2022.

Our six models accounted for combinations of the following factors in the admissions process:

Academic merit:

We measured academic merit by creating a composite index based on high school grades, SAT/ACT scores,[51] and Advanced Placement (AP) exam participation and performance.

High school class rank:

We estimated whether applicants were in the top 10 percent of their graduating high school class.[52] In models that considered applicants' class rank, we admitted applicants ranked in the top 10 percent of their class first.[53]

Socioeconomic status (SES):

We approximated class-conscious admissions by giving an admissions boost to applicants whose academic performance (measured using the academic merit index) exceeded expectation based on the socioeconomic status of their family of origin.[54,55]

Race/ethnicity:

We approximated race-conscious admissions by giving an admissions boost to applicants whose academic performance exceeded the performance we would expect based on prediction models that included the racial/ethnic background of each student.[56,57]

51. We accounted for applicants' likelihood of disclosing their ACT/SAT scores in the new era of test-optional admissions when constructing the academic merit index. For details, see Appendix A.

52. We estimated whether applicants were in the top 10 percent of their class because high school class ranks are not reported in the data set (the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009). This longitudinal study is nationally representative of all regular public and private high schools in the US, and of 9th grade students attending those schools. A nationally representative data set of 12th graders might lead to slightly different class ranks but would not likely change the substantive conclusions drawn from models that consider the effects of a nationwide top 10 percent plan.

53. Several states currently have guaranteed admissions policies for their public universities. Callahan, *States with Automatic or Guaranteed College Admissions Policies*, 2021. The class rank threshold varies across each of these states. We modeled a 10 percent threshold because it is the most well-known, first put into practice in Texas in 1998.

54. In applying this adjustment for disadvantage, we also accounted for a variety of other factors associated with educational advantage and disadvantage, such as high school type (regular, magnet, or private school), the share of students' high school peers receiving free or reduced-price lunch, and the share of their peers planning to attend a four-year college. For a complete list of these additional factors, see Appendix A.

55. In practice, we applied the adjustment for disadvantage by predicting the academic merit score for each student using SES and the other non-race-based factors associated with educational advantage and disadvantage. We then calculated the difference, or residual, between each student's actual and predicted score. Students with the most positive residual values gained admission to a selective college. For additional details, see Appendix A.

56. We also accounted for the other factors associated with educational advantage and disadvantage when applying the race/ethnicity-based adjustment for disadvantage.

57. In our race-conscious models, applicants from historically underrepresented racial/ethnic groups receive a boost in the likelihood of admission because their residual values are equal, on average, to those of their white and Asian/Asian American peers. In contrast, the actual academic merit scores are higher, on average, for white and Asian/Asian American students than for students of other racial/ethnic groups. In other words, the adjustment for disadvantage levels the playing field for students from disadvantaged backgrounds but does not limit the potential for students from advantaged backgrounds to perform above expectation. The same is true with respect to the SES-conscious models.

Two models standardized the use of applicants' race and ethnicity across all selective colleges nationwide. These models considered the following combinations of admission factors:

Model 1: Academic Merit, SES, and Race/Ethnicity

In this model, we admitted students whose academic performance exceeded the performance we would expect based on prediction models that included each student's race/ethnicity, family socioeconomic status, and other factors associated with educational advantage and disadvantage.

Model 2: High School Class Rank, SES, and Race/Ethnicity

In this model, we first admitted all applicants in the top 10 percent of their high school class. Then, as in Model 1, we made the remaining admission offers to students whose academic performance exceeded the performance we would expect based on prediction models that included each student's race/ethnicity, family socioeconomic status, and other factors associated with educational advantage and disadvantage.

Four models excluded race and ethnicity as admissions factors to examine the levels of diversity that can be achieved if the Supreme Court bans race-conscious admissions. These models included the following admissions factors:

Model 3: Academic Merit Only

In this model, we admitted applicants with the highest academic merit scores.

Model 4: Academic Merit and SES

In this model, we admitted students whose academic performance exceeded expectation based on their family's socioeconomic status and other non-race-based factors associated with educational advantage and disadvantage.[58]

Model 5: High School Class Rank Only

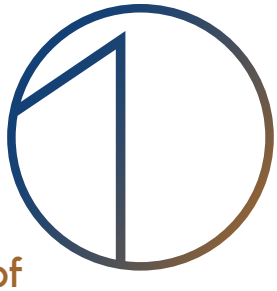
In this model, we first admitted applicants in the top 10 percent of their high school class. We then made the remaining admission offers to students with the highest academic merit scores.

Model 6: High School Class Rank and SES

In this model, we first admitted applicants in the top 10 percent of their high school class. We then made the remaining admission offers to students whose academic performance exceeded expectation based on their family's socioeconomic status and other non-race-based factors associated with educational advantage and disadvantage.

Tables summarizing the separate results of each model are available in Appendix B. These results generated six key findings.

58. Factors that may correlate with but do not directly capture race/ethnicity include such items as household size; high school type (regular or charter, magnet, or vocational/technical/alternative school); and high school level of control (public, Catholic, or other private school). For a complete list of these factors, see Appendix A.



Finding 1: Among the models we tested, those that expand rather than prohibit race-conscious admissions practices come the closest to mirroring the racial/ethnic composition of the population graduating from the nation's high schools.

At present, white students, Asian/Asian American students, and students of two or more racial backgrounds are overrepresented at selective colleges, and students of Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AI/AN/NH/PI) backgrounds are underrepresented compared to their respective shares of the high school graduating class. For example, white students made up 57.1 percent of first-time, degree-seeking students at selective colleges in fall 2020 but only 52.3 percent of high school graduates in the 2019–20 class. Likewise, Black/African American students made up 5.9 percent of students entering selective colleges in fall 2020 but 13.2 percent of high school graduates in the previous year.

Of the six models we examined under the most reasonable assumptions (partial adoption of class-conscious proxies and few changes to the applicant pool), none would be expected to enroll a group of students at selective colleges that perfectly reflects the racial/ethnic composition of the high school graduating class (**Table 1**). Most notably, Asian/Asian American and multi-racial/multi-ethnic students would remain overrepresented, while Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and AI/AN/NH/PI students would remain underrepresented at selective colleges across all six alternative admissions models.

Nonetheless, race-conscious admissions practices are essential to achieving levels of racial/ethnic diversity on selective college campuses that reflect the overall levels of diversity in society as closely as possible. For example, the model that factors academic merit, SES, and race/ethnicity into the admissions process (Model 1) is expected to yield a group of students at selective colleges that is 52.9 percent white, 12.9 percent Asian/Asian American, 16.9 percent Hispanic/Latino, 9.6 percent Black/African American, and 0.4 percent AI/AN/NH/PI (as compared to the status quo of 57.1 percent white, 17.0 percent Asian/Asian American, 14.1 percent Hispanic/Latino, 5.9 percent Black/African American, and 0.3 percent AI/AN/NH/PI). No other model would achieve greater representation of historically marginalized racial/ethnic groups, although the model that considers a nationwide expansion of race-conscious admissions by factoring in high school class rank, SES, and race/ethnicity (Model 2) comes close.

The four models that exclude race/ethnicity from consideration in the admissions process would achieve, at best, only modest improvements in racial/ethnic representation on selective college campuses compared to the current distribution. For example, the model that factors academic merit and SES into the admissions process but not race/ethnicity (Model 4) would enroll a group of students that is 56.6 percent white, 16.6 percent Asian/Asian American, 14.6 percent Hispanic/Latino, and 6.3 percent Black/African American — very similar to the current representation of students from these racial/ethnic groups at selective colleges, with slight increases in representation for Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students and slight decreases for white and Asian/Asian American students. Notably, all four models that exclude consideration of race/ethnicity would reduce the AI/AN/NH/PI enrollment share at selective college campuses. The exclusion of AI/AN/NH/PI students suggests that the K–12 education system is falling especially short in preparing AI/AN/NH/PI students for selective colleges, and the consideration of high school class rank and/or SES does not adequately redress their lack of preparedness.

Table 1. Admissions models that consider race and ethnicity are the most effective at providing selective colleg

	(1)	(2)	(3)
			Appl
			Race-Conscious Adr
			Model 1
Race/Ethnicity	High School Class	Existing (Fall 2020)	Academic Merit, SES, and Race
A. *Overrepresented at Selective Colleges*			
White	52.3%	57.1%	52.9%
Asian/Asian American	6.0%	17.0%	12.9%
Two or More Races	4.1%	5.7%	7.3%
B. *Underrepresented at Selective Colleges*			
Hispanic/Latino	23.7%	14.1%	16.9%
Black/African American	13.2%	5.9%	9.6%
AI/AN/NH/PI	0.9%	0.3%	0.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Median SAT Score	900	1240	1190
Median High School GPA (weighted, 0–5 scale)	2.90	4.03	3.87

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (N Education Data System (IPEDS) Fall Enrollment Data, 2002–20.

Notes: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the Current Population Survey October 2020 Education Supplement and the = Pacific Islander. The sample is restricted to selective college applicants. In columns (4) through (8), the sample is adjusted to account for the expected change in compos 60 percent of institutions are assumed to adopt alternative admissions policies in response to a nationwide ban, reflecting the fact that some institutions operate in state combination of high school GPA, college entrance exam scores, and AP exam participation and performance. Numbers may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

es with student bodies that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of our nation's high schools.

(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Enrollment Share at Selective Colleges *icant Pool Based on Expected Applicant Behavior*				
missions Nationwide	Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions			
Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
High School Class Rank, SES, and Race	Academic Merit Only	Academic Merit and SES	High School Class Rank	High School Class Rank and SES
51.6%	58.1%	56.6%	56.4%	55.2%
15.3%	16.3%	16.6%	16.7%	16.7%
7.4%	5.1%	5.6%	6.6%	6.6%
16.3%	14.9%	14.6%	14.3%	15.1%
9.1%	5.6%	6.3%	5.9%	6.2%
0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
1200	1220	1210	1210	1200
3.93	3.94	3.92	3.93	3.92

CES), Digest of Education Statistics Table 219.30, 2021; NCES–Barron's Admissions Competitiveness Index Data Files, 2014; and Integrated Postsecondary

e HSLS:09, and for sample attrition in follow-up survey rounds of the HSLS:09 study. AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; NH = Native Hawaiian; and PI
sition after the introduction of a nationwide top 10 percent admissions policy and/or the repeal of race-based affirmative action. In columns (5) through (8),
s that already impose a ban on race-conscious admissions and others currently choose not to consider race in admissions. Academic merit is defined as a

Finding 2: If race-conscious admissions practices are banned, class-conscious alternatives could be used to partially claw back, maintain, or even slightly exceed current enrollment shares for Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American students, but not for American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students.

Of the four admissions models we examined that don't consider race or ethnicity, all four would increase the representation of Hispanic/Latino students at selective colleges and all but one would preserve or increase the representation of Black/African American students at selective colleges, assuming the most likely changes in admissions policies (with alternative models adopted at 60 percent of institutions) and in application behavior among students. At the same time, all four models would result in a decline in representation of AI/AN/NH/PI students. For example, if students are admitted on the basis of high school class rank and SES (Model 6), the enrollment share for Black/African American students at selective colleges is expected to increase from 5.9 percent to 6.2 percent. But these admissions criteria would cause the AI/AN/NH/PI enrollment share to drop from 0.3 percent to 0.2 percent (**Table 2**). This is a substantial decrease, given that AI/AN/NH/PI students make up only 0.9 percent of the graduating high school class.

In the unlikely scenario that all selective colleges use class-conscious admissions in place of race-conscious admissions, universal adoption could in one case — when combining academic merit and SES (Model 4) — improve representation for Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American students beyond what is possible with partial adoption. The representation of AI/AN/NH/PI students would still drop from 0.3 percent to 0.2 percent, however.

The bottom line is this: increasing the representation of all historically marginalized racial/ethnic groups on selective college campuses requires the consideration of race and ethnicity in the admissions process. Moreover, even when race-conscious admissions practices are banned, the potential to increase representation for Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students is greater when institutions uniformly consider class in admissions, rather than when they operate with the discretion permitted by the status quo. Furthermore, achieving more racial/ethnic diversity at selective colleges through class-conscious admissions proxies almost surely hinges on abandoning the use of admissions preferences for legacy applicants, student athletes, and other privileged groups.

Although we are unable to model the effects of banning race-conscious admissions while preserving admissions preferences for these groups due to data limitations, this is the scenario that is most likely to unfold if the Supreme Court declares race-conscious college admissions unconstitutional. And if this reality does indeed materialize, it will likely create a system that is less racially and ethnically diverse than today because legacy applicants are less racially and ethnically diverse than non-legacy applicants.[59]

59. Arcidiacono et al., "Divergent," 2022; Castilla and Poskanzer, "Through the Front Door," 2022.

Table 2. Several models that take class but not race into consideration could increase representation of Black/A
decrease representation of American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	
				Appl
		Partial Adoption of Alternative Adm Nationwide Ban on Race-Consc		
		Model 3	Model 4	M
Race/Ethnicity	Existing (Fall 2020)	Academic Merit Only	Academic Merit and SES	Hig Cla
A. *Overrepresented at Selective Colleges*				
White	57.1%	58.1%	56.6%	5
Asian/Asian American	17.0%	16.3%	16.6%	1
Two or More Races	5.7%	5.1%	5.6%	
B. *Underrepresented at Selective Colleges*				
Hispanic/Latino	14.1%	14.9%	14.6%	1
Black/African American	5.9%	5.6%	6.3%	
AI/AN/NH/PI	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	
Total	100%	100%	100%	
Median SAT Score	1240	1220	1210	
Median High School GPA (weighted, 0–5 scale)	4.03	3.94	3.92	

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data

Notes: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 and sample attrition in follow-u
applicants. In columns (2) through (9), the sample is adjusted to account for the expected change in composition after the introduction of a nationwide top 10 percent adm
admissions policies in response to a nationwide ban, reflecting the fact that some institutions operate in states that already impose a ban on race-conscious admissions a
response to a nationwide ban. Merit is defined as a combination of high school GPA, college entrance exam scores, and AP exam participation and performance. Numbers

African American and Hispanic/Latino students relative to the status quo, but all would

(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Enrollment Share at Selective Colleges *icant Pool Based on Expected Applicant Behavior*					
issions Policies after ious Admissions		Universal Adoption of Alternative Admissions Policies after Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions			
odel 5	Model 6	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
h School ss Rank	High School Class Rank and SES	Academic Merit Only	Academic Merit and SES	High School Class Rank	High School Class Rank and SES
56.4%	55.2%	58.4%	55.2%	54.9%	53.5%
6.7%	16.7%	18.9%	16.7%	18.5%	17.6%
6.6%	6.6%	5.2%	5.5%	6.2%	6.5%
4.3%	15.1%	13.0%	15.3%	15.1%	16.3%
5.9%	6.2%	4.4%	7.1%	5.0%	6.1%
0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
1210	1200	1230	1200	1220	1200
3.93	3.92	3.98	3.88	4.01	3.94

System (IPEDS), 2021, and High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.

up survey rounds. AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; NH = Native Hawaiian; and PI = Pacific Islander. The sample is restricted to selective college issions policy and/or the repeal of race-based affirmative action. In columns (2) through (5), 60 percent of institutions are assumed to adopt alternative and others currently choose not to consider race in admissions. In columns (6) through (9), all institutions are assumed to adopt alternative admissions policies in may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Finding 3: Without race-conscious admissions practices, maintaining or exceeding existing levels of representation for all underrepresented racial/ethnic groups would require upending the selective college admissions system as we know it.

In Table 2, we present four admissions models that do not take race/ethnicity into consideration to evaluate their potential for achieving racial/ethnic diversity in the event that race-conscious admissions practices are banned. Two of these models involve the adoption of class-conscious admissions policies through direct consideration of family SES.

We find that some of the alternative admissions models would fail to maintain current levels of representation for Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American students. In particular, we find that Hispanic/Latino student representation would decrease if all selective colleges altered their admissions practices in response to a nationwide ban on race-conscious admissions and admitted students solely on the basis of academic merit (Model 3). Black/African American student representation would also decrease under this admissions policy (even if only some colleges adopted it) and if all colleges used high school class rank to evaluate applicants (Model 5). All of the models, however, would fail to maintain current levels of representation for AI/AN/NH/PI students. Moreover, AI/AN/NH/PI students would lose ground regardless of whether only some selective colleges factored the class background of applicants into their admissions decisions or if all selective colleges did so.

These findings illustrate that efforts to diversify the student body at selective colleges need to focus not only on changing how institutions evaluate applicants for admission, but also on whom colleges consider for admission in the first place. To this end, we examined the potential for achieving racial/ethnic diversity following a nationwide ban on race-conscious admissions if, in addition to adopting class-conscious admissions practices, institutions also expanded the selective college applicant pool to include every high school graduate (**Table 3**). This analysis shows the level of diversity that could be achieved if the college admissions process were overhauled in two fundamental ways: (1) by standardizing the criteria by which all institutions consider applicants for admission, and (2) by adopting a centralized process of direct admissions to selective colleges that considered every high school graduate for admission, regardless of whether or not they applied. In other words, this analysis, while not reflective of how the admissions process is expected to change if race-conscious admissions practices are prohibited, reveals the limits to increasing racial/ethnic diversity if all selective colleges

dramatically changed which students they considered for admission and how they evaluated those students.

Representation among all underrepresented racial/ethnic groups could be greater than it is today if the college admissions process changed in the two fundamental ways described above. For example, if all colleges admitted students from the entire high school class based on the combination of academic merit and socioeconomic status (Model 4), Hispanic/Latino representation at selective colleges could rise to 18.5 percent of the enrolling class, Black/African American representation could rise to 6.6 percent, and AI/AN/NH/PI representation could rise to 0.4 percent. Some class-conscious models could increase Black/African American representation even further than 6.6 percent, but would cause Hispanic/Latino representation to decline or stay the same. Still, none of the models would come close to matching the racial/ethnic distribution of the graduating high school class.

Moreover, redesigning the college admissions process would have almost identical impacts on racial/ethnic diversity as maintaining the existing applicant pool to selective colleges while expanding the use of race-conscious admissions and eliminating preferences for legacy applicants, student athletes, and other privileged groups across all institutions. In other words, if race can be considered in admissions practices, achieving a student body at selective colleges that most closely mirrors the racial/ethnic composition of the population graduating from the nation's high schools would require changing how institutions evaluate applicants for admission. But to achieve the same progress if race is prohibited from consideration, institutions would need to change both how they evaluate applicants for admission and whom they evaluate.

These changes to admissions and enrollment could put substantial financial pressure on selective colleges, which, in order to increase both enrollment and student success among underrepresented groups, would need to invest in providing financial support to students from low-income backgrounds as well as academic and nonacademic student support services. Public policy could provide leverage for such changes — for example, by offering financial incentives to institutions that reserve at least 15 percent of seats for students who qualify for a federal Pell Grant.[60] Ultimately, though, institutions would likely need to engage in capital campaigns focused specifically on supporting students from low-income backgrounds and racial and ethnic minority groups in order to establish a sustainable plan for achieving sizable diversity gains.

60. One recent proposal suggests that institutions should be required to meet a minimum threshold of 15 percent Pell-eligible students in order to receive Federal Student Aid, with an endowment tax credit offered for those that exceed the threshold. In past work, we have proposed a 20 percent minimum threshold. Pisacreta et al., "Federal Policies for Increasing Socioeconomic Diversity at Selective Colleges and Universities," 2021; Carnevale and Van Der Werf, *The 20% Solution*, 2017.

Table 3. If race-conscious admissions practices are banned nationwide, selective colleges can maintain or exce
all selective colleges adopt SES-conscious admissions policies and the applicant pool expands considerably.

	(1)	(2)
		Applicant
		Universal Ado
		Model 3
Race/Ethnicity	Existing (Fall 2020)	Academic Merit Only
A. *Overrepresented at Selective Colleges*		
White	57.1%	52.6%
Asian/Asian American	17.0%	17.7%
Two or More Races	5.7%	6.7%
B. *Underrepresented at Selective Colleges*		
Hispanic/Latino	14.1%	16.8%
Black/African American	5.9%	5.8%
AI/AN/NH/PI	0.3%	0.3%
Total	100%	100%
Median SAT Score	1240	1170
Median High School GPA (weighted, 0–5 scale)	4.03	3.87

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data

Notes: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 and sample attrition in follow-u
all institutions are assumed to adopt alternative admissions policies in response to a nationwide ban. Academic merit is defined as a combination of high school GPA, coll

eed existing levels of representation for all underrepresented racial/ethnic groups only if

	(3)	(4)	(5)
Enrollment Share at Selective Colleges *Pool Expanded to Entire High School Graduating Class*			
ption of Alternative Admissions Policies After Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions			
	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	Academic Merit and SES	High School Class Rank	High School Class Rank and SES
	51.9%	54.5%	54.9%
	15.5%	16.4%	15.9%
	7.0%	6.9%	6.9%
	18.5%	14.0%	14.1%
	6.6%	7.7%	7.8%
	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
	100%	100%	100%
	1160	1180	1180
	3.80	3.99	3.99

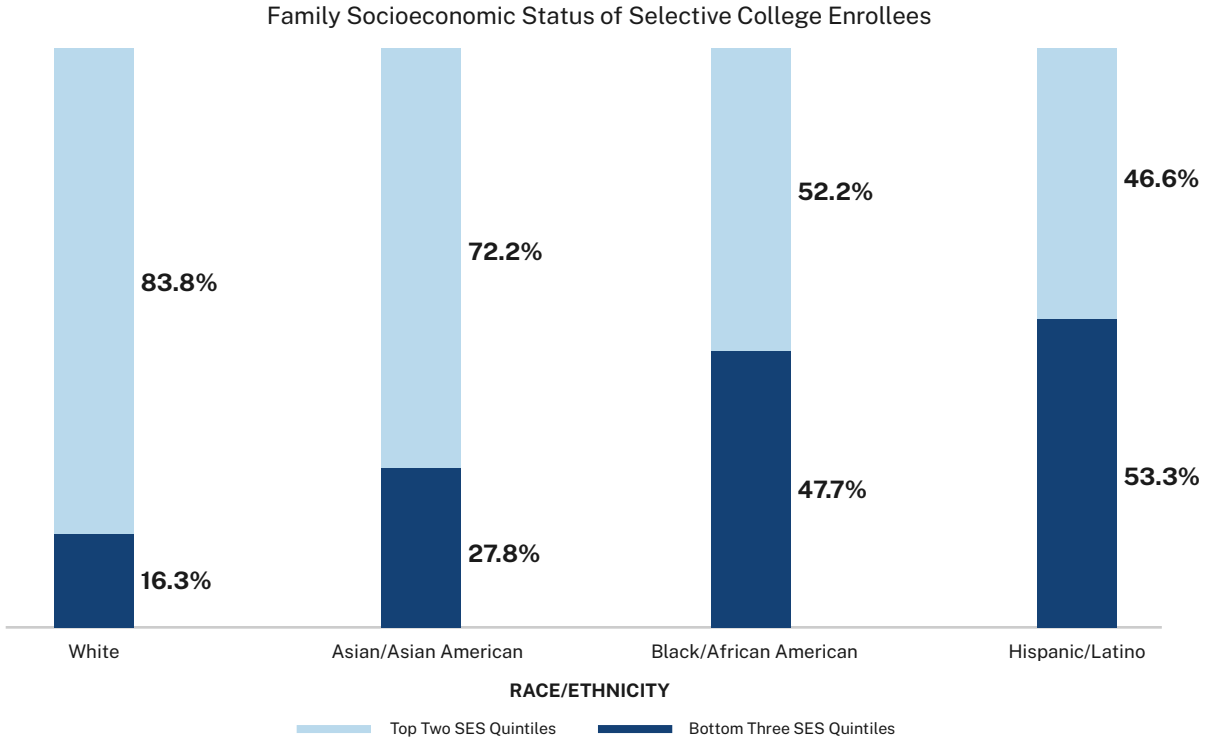
System (IPEDS), 2021, and High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.

up survey rounds. AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; NH = Native Hawaiian; and PI = Pacific Islander. The sample includes all high school graduates and ege entrance exam scores, and AP exam participation and performance. Numbers may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Finding 4: The most effective way of increasing socioeconomic diversity at selective colleges is to consider race in the admissions process, not to ignore it.

Some opponents of race-conscious admissions argue that class-based enrollment gaps at selective colleges warrant policy intervention, whereas race-based gaps do not. Some claim that class is the true measure of advantage and disadvantage in our country and that race-conscious admissions practices primarily benefit wealthy Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students.[61] The idea that race-conscious admissions practices only confer privilege on the richest members of underrepresented racial/ethnic groups does not hold up under scrutiny, however. If that were the case, we would expect Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students at selective colleges to come primarily from families in the upper and upper-middle classes. Instead, we find that approximately half of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students are from families in the bottom three quintiles (that is, the bottom 60 percent) of the SES distribution (**Figure 3**). In contrast, it is white and Asian/Asian American students at selective

Figure 3. Approximately half of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students attending selective colleges are from families in the bottom 60 percent of socioeconomic status.



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.

Notes: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 and sample attrition in follow-up survey rounds. Numbers may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

61. Fryer, "Affirmative Action in College Admissions Doesn't Work—But It Could," 2022.

62. In part, this reflects the fact that white and Asian/Asian American *applicants* are more likely to be from higher-SES families than Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino applicants. See Table B2 in Appendix B for a detailed breakdown of the socioeconomic distribution within racial/ethnic groups in the high school class, the selective college applicant pool, and the student body at selective colleges.

colleges who are primarily from families in the top two SES quintiles (the top 40 percent).[62]

Moreover, we find that considering race and ethnicity in admissions is advantageous **even if the sole objective is to increase class diversity at selective colleges**. Indeed, our models that consider applicants' SES and race/ethnicity in tandem would result in a larger enrollment share for students from the bottom SES quintile and a smaller enrollment share for students from the top SES quintile than our models that only consider applicants' SES (**Table 4**).[63]

For example, under an admissions scheme that considers applicants' academic merit, SES, and race/ethnicity (Model 1), the share of students at selective colleges from families in the bottom SES quintile would increase from 8.2 percent to 14.1 percent, while the share of students from families in the top SES quintile would decrease from 58.1 percent to 43.5 percent.[64] To be fair, considering academic merit alone (Model 3) would also achieve more class diversity at selective colleges than the status quo today — in this case, students from families in the bottom and top SES quintiles would make up 10.4 percent and 53.3 percent of the enrolled class, respectively. Still, the use of race/ethnicity in admissions would produce more class diversity than a nationwide ban on race-conscious admissions practices. In part, this is because prohibiting the consideration of race discourages some students from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups from applying to selective institutions,[65] and these students are more likely to come from low-SES backgrounds.[66] In short, race-conscious admissions practices lead to an applicant pool that is more diverse by both race/ethnicity and class.

We therefore find no evidence that considering applicants' race and ethnicity hampers efforts to increase class diversity at selective colleges. Race-conscious and SES-conscious admissions practices complement one another and would achieve the most diverse class of students attending selective colleges when used in tandem.

63. This finding concords with recent research on admissions to the University of California (UC) system during the period from 1994 to 2021, a span of years over which race-conscious affirmative action was variously permitted and forbidden and during which the state introduced top percent plans and holistic review practices to admit a diverse class of students after the consideration of race in admissions was prohibited. The research finds that race-conscious admissions policies increased enrollment among very low-income students (those whose parents' income was less than half the median for California households) by 7 percent, whereas the alternative approaches to achieving campus diversity did not have a substantive effect on the enrollment of low-income students. Bleemer, "Affirmative Action and Its Race-Neutral Alternatives," 2023.

64. The class-based composition of enrolled students is not reported in IPEDS. As a result, we were unable to adjust the enrollment proportions by SES quintile in the HSLS:09 data set to account for changes to the class composition at selective colleges over time. The reported enrollment proportions by SES quintile thus reflect the actual or simulated class-based composition of recent high school graduates who first attended selective colleges in fall 2013.

65. Bleemer, "Affirmative Action, Mismatch, and Economic Mobility after California's Proposition 209," 2022.

66. See Table B2 in Appendix A for a detailed breakdown of the socioeconomic distribution within racial/ethnic groups in the selective college applicant pool.

Table 4. Consideration of merit, race, and socioeconomic status (SES) in combination would produce the most

	(1)	(2)	(3)
			App
SES Quintile	High School Class	Existing (Fall 2013)	Race-C Admissions Model 1 Academic Merit, SES, and Race
Bottom Quintile	17.2%	8.2%	14.1%
Second Quintile	19.2%	6.6%	10.4%
Third Quintile	20.3%	9.8%	11.0%
Fourth Quintile	21.2%	17.3%	21.0%
Top Quintile	22.1%	58.1%	43.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Median SAT Score	900	1240	1190
Median High School GPA (weighted, 0–5 scale)	2.90	4.03	3.87

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Su
Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.

Notes: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the Current Population Survey (CPS) October 2020 Education Supplement a
(8), the sample is adjusted to account for the expected change in composition after the introduction of a nationwide top 10 percent admissions policy and/or the repeal of
nationwide ban, reflecting the fact that some institutions operate in states that already impose a ban on race-conscious admissions and others currently choose not to co
performance. Numbers may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

class diversity at selective colleges.

(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Enrollment Share at Selective Colleges *licant Pool Based on Expected Applicant Behavior*				
onscious s Nationwide	Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions			
Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
High School Class Rank, SES, and Race	Academic Merit Only	Academic Merit and SES	High School Class Rank	High School Class Rank and SES
13.0%	10.4%	10.0%	9.2%	10.5%
8.5%	7.4%	8.3%	8.1%	8.7%
11.3%	9.0%	10.0%	10.1%	10.5%
21.9%	19.9%	20.1%	20.8%	20.7%
45.3%	53.3%	51.6%	51.8%	49.5%
100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
1200	1220	1210	1210	1200
3.93	3.94	3.92	3.93	3.92

urvey (CPS) October Education Supplement, 2020; US Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2021; and US

and the HSLS:09, and for sample attrition in HSLS:09 follow-up survey rounds. The sample is restricted to selective college applicants. In columns (4) through
race-based affirmative action. In columns (5) through (8), 60 percent of institutions are assumed to adopt alternative admissions policies in response to a
nsider race in admissions. Academic merit is defined as a combination of high school GPA, college entrance exam scores, and AP exam participation and

Finding 5: Socioeconomic diversity at selective colleges would increase considerably if a larger and more diverse group of students applied and if those admitted received the appropriate financial support to enroll.

Across all six models, the enrollment share for students from the top SES quintile at selective colleges (58.1 percent in the sample) would decrease by 12.6 to 24.1 percentage points (to somewhere between 34.0 and 45.5 percent) if the pool of students applying to selective colleges was greatly expanded and diversified (**Table 5**). For instance, if colleges admitted students purely on the basis of academic merit but considered all high school graduates for admission (Model 3), the enrollment share for students from families in the bottom SES quintile would increase from 8.2 percent to 10.4 percent, while the enrollment share for students from families in the top SES quintile would decrease from 58.1 percent to 45.5 percent. If colleges considered both academic merit and SES in combination (Model 4), the enrollment share for students from families in the bottom SES quintile would increase to 16.8 percent (only 0.4 percentage points below their representation in the high school graduating class), while the enrollment share for students from families in the top SES quintile would decrease to 34.0 percent.

We draw two conclusions from these findings:

First, students from high-SES backgrounds attend selective colleges at much higher rates than students from lower-SES backgrounds in large part because they are more likely to apply. There are thousands of students of all social classes with strong academic qualifications who do not apply to selective colleges. This is especially true of students from low-SES backgrounds. If changes to policy and practice could narrow the class divide in application behavior, selective colleges would experience much more class diversity than they do today.

Research has shown, however, that expanding the applicant pool is much more easily said than done. Many strategies that selective colleges use to encourage students to apply — including low-cost, direct-to-student recruiting and campus visits — are ineffective in recruiting more high-achieving low-income applicants, and they perpetuate racial and class biases.[67] Ultimately, many highly qualified low-income students do not apply to any selective college at all.[68] To

67. Salazar et al., *Geodemographics of Student List Purchases*, 2022; Salazar, "Recruitment Redlining by Public Research Universities in the Los Angeles and Dallas Metropolitan Areas," 2022.

68. Hoxby and Avery, "The Missing 'One-Offs,'" 2013.

successfully draw more of these students into the admissions pool, selective institutions need to recruit them much more aggressively, looking to geographic areas beyond those where typical "feeder" high schools are located.

Furthermore, evidence suggests that students value financial certainty when choosing where to apply and enroll.[69] Thus, selective colleges need to provide students from historically marginalized groups with much clearer information about the costs of attendance before they apply, along with the financial support they need to enroll and the wraparound services that help ensure they complete their degrees. The appeal of certainty also explains, in part, why guaranteed admissions policies have increased the socioeconomic diversity of applicants to selective colleges in some contexts.[69] Limited direct admissions — by which some colleges offer students admission before they even apply[71] — could also be part of the solution in order for selective colleges to come closer to reflecting the racial/ethnic and class distribution of recent high school graduates.

Second, under a nationwide ban on race-conscious admissions practices, expanding and diversifying recruitment holds more promise for increasing class diversity than for increasing racial/ethnic diversity. Recall that if colleges admitted students purely on the basis of academic merit but considered all high school graduates for admission (Model 3), the share of students from families in the top SES quintile would decrease from 58.1 percent to 45.5 percent. By comparison, using this same admissions criterion and applicant pool to fill the seats at selective colleges, the white enrollment share would decrease from 57.1 percent to 52.6 percent, the Asian/Asian American enrollment share would increase from 17.0 percent to 17.7 percent, the Hispanic/Latino enrollment share would increase from 14.1 percent to 16.8 percent, the Black/African American enrollment share would decrease from 5.9 percent to 5.8 percent, and the AI/AN/NH/PI enrollment share would stay steady at 0.3 percent (Table 3). Encouraging more students to apply to selective colleges is a helpful strategy for diversifying the student body on selective college campuses, but it is not an adequate substitute for race-conscious admissions. The only way to increase the representation of **all** historically marginalized racial/ethnic groups on selective college campuses is to consider applicants' race and ethnicity in the admissions process.

69. Dynarski et al., "Closing the Gap," 2021; Burland et al., "The Power of Certainty," 2022.

70. Cortes and Lincove, "Match or Mismatch?," 2018.

71. Jaschik, "The Power of Guaranteed Admissions," 2018.

Table 5. Expanding the applicant pool and adopting SES-conscious admissions practices across all selective co
regardless of whether or not race is factored into admissions decisions.

	(1)	(2)	(3)
			Applicant
SES Quintile	High School Class	Existing (Fall 2013)	Race-C Admissions Model 1 Academic Merit, SES, and Race
Bottom Quintile	17.2%	8.2%	15.5%
Second Quintile	19.2%	6.6%	13.9%
Third Quintile	20.3%	9.8%	13.7%
Fourth Quintile	21.2%	17.3%	22.4%
Top Quintile	22.1%	58.1%	34.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Median SAT Score	900	1240	1160
Median High School GPA (weighted, 0–5 scale)	2.90	4.03	3.81

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Su
Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.

Note: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the Current Population Survey (CPS) October 2020 Education Supplement ar
institutions are assumed to adopt alternative admissions policies in response to a nationwide ban. Academic merit is defined as a combination of high school GPA, college

lleges would achieve considerably more class-based diversity than exists today,

(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Enrollment Share at Selective Colleges *Pool Expanded to Entire High School Graduating Class*				
onscious s Nationwide	Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions			
Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
High School Class Rank, SES, and Race	Academic Merit Only	Academic Merit and SES	High School Class Rank	High School Class Rank and SES
10.9%	10.4%	16.8%	10.8%	11.0%
11.0%	9.3%	13.9%	10.9%	11.1%
12.4%	10.5%	13.0%	11.8%	12.3%
23.8%	24.2%	22.4%	24.0%	24.0%
41.8%	45.5%	34.0%	42.4%	41.7%
100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
1170	1170	1160	1180	1180
3.99	3.87	3.80	3.99	3.99

urvey (CPS) October Education Supplement, 2020; US Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2021; and US

nd HSLS:09, and for sample attrition in HSLS:09 follow-up survey rounds. The sample includes all high school graduates. In columns (5) through (8), all
e entrance exam scores, and AP exam participation and performance. Numbers may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Finding 6: Achieving more racial/ethnic diversity or socioeconomic diversity at selective colleges would not likely harm selective colleges' overall performance, despite requiring the admission of students with lower grades and test scores.

Because access to educational opportunity is severely stratified by race and class in American society, increasing diversity along either of these dimensions would come with a tradeoff — enrolling students with lower grades and test scores. Among students entering selective colleges in fall 2020, the median SAT score was 1240 (out of 1600) and the median honors-weighted high school GPA was 4.03 (out of 5.0).[72] Admitting students on the basis of academic merit, SES, and race/ethnicity (Model 1), which would achieve the greatest racial/ethnic and class diversity possible with the current pool of applicants (**Table 1**), would lower the median SAT score to 1190 and the median high school GPA to 3.87. Expanding the pool of applicants to the entire high school class and the adoption of class-conscious admissions practices to all selective colleges (**Table 3**) would lower the grades and test scores of matriculating students admitted under this model even further.

That being said, it's notable that using an academic merit-only model (Model 3) would also lower the median SAT score and high school GPA of enrolling students. If selective colleges universally deployed a merit-only model without substantially expanding the applicant pool (**Table 2**), the median SAT score of the entering class would fall (from 1240 to 1230), as would the median high school GPA (from 4.03 to 3.98). These drops in median SAT score and GPA reflect the fact that our models of academic merit consider these factors, plus AP participation and performance, in combination rather than in isolation.[73]

A substantial drop in the median SAT score and GPA at selective colleges could mar the perceived prestige of these institutions. However, it would be unlikely to substantively harm these institutions' overall performance as reflected by their graduation rates. Researchers have found that among high-achieving, lower-income students attending selective colleges, 92 percent graduate, exactly matching the completion rate of higher-income students.[74] Our own previous research has shown that Black/African American

72. Honors weighting assigns greater value to advanced coursework, such as honors, AP, and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes. For example, a student earning a B in a non-AP biology course will typically receive 3 grade points towards their GPA, whereas a student earning a B in an AP biology course will typically receive 4 grade points towards their GPA.

73. The median academic merit index score for enrolled students increases from 0.22 to 0.25 when grades, test scores, and AP exam participation and performance are jointly considered in admissions decisions.

74. Giancola and Kahlenberg, *True Merit*, 2016.

and Hispanic/Latino students at selective colleges graduate at rates roughly comparable to those of white students at these institutions.[75] Most directly relevant is the marginal difference in graduation rates at selective colleges by test scores: students enrolled at these colleges with SAT scores above 1200 have graduation rates of 85 percent, compared to 84 percent for students with scores in the 1100–1199 range and 79 percent for students with scores in the 1000–1099 range.[76]

Thus, admitting classes with lower median SAT scores and high school GPAs would not harm selective colleges. But would it harm admitted students? The answer is no: despite a popular narrative claiming that students admitted with lower test scores and GPAs suffer from academic "mismatch" as a result of attending more prestigious schools, the evidence of such "mismatch" is weak.[77] Instead, a large body of evidence suggests that students who gain access to more selective four-year institutions benefit — not suffer — in terms of higher graduation rates and higher post-college earnings.[78] This is especially true of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students, students from low-SES backgrounds, and students with lower academic performance.[79] Furthermore, research on what happened after race-conscious admissions practices were banned in California reinforces this point: as underrepresented minority groups shifted to less-selective institutions within the University of California system, underrepresented minority graduation rates decreased across the system.[80] This is the opposite of what we would observe if concerns about academic "mismatch" were valid.

On the whole, there is little reason to believe that students from historically underrepresented groups would have worse outcomes as a result of attending selective institutions, nor is there reason to believe that these students would harm graduation rates at these institutions. To the contrary, higher education could more fully realize its potential as an engine of social mobility in American society by diversifying the student body on selective college campuses by both race and class — even if doing so means decreasing the importance of high SAT scores and GPAs in the admissions process to selective colleges.

75. Our previous research showed that Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students had graduation rates of 81 percent at the top three tiers of selective colleges, compared to 86 percent for white students. Carnevale et al., *Our Separate and Unequal Public Colleges*, 2018.

76. These statistics apply to colleges in the top three tiers of selectivity. Carnevale et al., *Our Separate and Unequal Public Colleges*, 2018.

77. Richard Sander first introduced the mismatch hypothesis in "A Systemic Analysis of Affirmative Action in American Law Schools," 2004.

78. Witteveen and Attewell, "The Earnings Payoff from Attending a Selective College," 2017; Shamsuddin, "Berkeley or Bust?," 2016; Smith, "Ova and Out," 2013.

79. Dale and Krueger, "Estimating the Effects of College Characteristics over the Career Using Administrative Earnings Data," 2014; Zimmerman, "The Returns to College Admission for Academically Marginal Students," 2014.

80. Bleemer, "Affirmative Action, Mismatch, and Economic Mobility after California's Proposition 209," 2022.

CONCLUSION

Why Race and Class Matter, Separately and in Combination

Race and class matter in selective college admissions because they matter in society. Too often, people's opportunities are circumscribed by who they are and where they are from. A kindergartner from a family in the bottom quartile of SES who scores in the top half on academic tests has only a three in 10 chance of being in the top half of SES as a young adult, compared to a 7 in 10 chance for a child from a family in the top quartile of SES who scores in the bottom half academically.[81] Meanwhile, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander young adults are less likely than their white and Asian/Asian American peers to have bachelor's degrees or good jobs during their early years in the labor market — and they are less likely to have good jobs than their white and Asian/Asian American peers with similar levels of educational attainment.[82]

These disparities among groups carry the stench of American racism and classism — a stew of discrimination and bias that has simmered for hundreds of years. Well into the twentieth century, US government and financial institutions were intentionally structured to channel economic opportunity to white Americans and deny opportunity to Americans from all other racial/ethnic groups, especially Black/African Americans.[83]

The legacy of this structural inequality persists to this day in segregated communities, educational disparities, and intergenerational wealth gaps.[84] Families with more economic and social resources — that is, those with higher socioeconomic status — are better able to set their children up for success, including by providing better educational opportunities. That's why, for example, parents with bachelor's degrees are more likely than those without to have children with bachelors' degrees.[85] On the whole, race and class are connected but different. Racism and classism are distinct but overlapping phenomena that operate most powerfully in combination.

At present, admissions officers at many colleges are able to take into account how both racial/ethnic identity and socioeconomic status might have affected an applicant's trajectory in life. Even so, students from racial/ethnic groups that have historically been underrepresented in postsecondary education — especially Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Indigenous students — remain substantially underrepresented in selective colleges. Students from lower-SES families, too, have only meager representation at these institutions.

Opponents of race-conscious admissions have argued that a racially and ethnically diverse

81. Carnevale et al., *Born to Win, Schooled to Lose*, 2019.
82. Carnevale et al., *How Racial and Gender Bias Impede Progress toward Good Jobs*, 2022.
83. Carnevale, "White Flight to the Bachelor's Degree," 2020.
84. Carnevale et al., *How Racial and Gender Bias Impede Progress toward Good Jobs*, 2022.
85. Carnevale et al., *How Limits to Educational Affordability, Work-Based Learning, and Career Counseling Impede Progress toward Good Jobs*, 2022.

student body can be achieved without directly considering applicants' race/ethnicity. They say that class-conscious admissions, top percent plans, or some combination of similar approaches could be used to successfully maintain representation of Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Indigenous students at levels at least as high as their current proportion of the student body. Whether that's true at Harvard and the University of North Carolina is a matter the courts have taken up directly in the cases currently under consideration.

Our research shows that at a national level, it may be possible to achieve and even exceed the current — and wholly inadequate — levels of representation among Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students at selective colleges without directly considering race in admissions or expanding the applicant pool, although AI/AN/NH/PI representation would drop under these circumstances. Doing so, however, would require that most selective colleges use class-conscious admissions practices and/or top 10 percent plans in place of considering race and ethnicity in admissions, and would also likely require all selective colleges to eliminate preferences given to legacy applicants, student athletes, and other privileged groups. Increasing racial/ethnic diversity to levels reflecting representation in American society is another matter altogether. None of the alternative admissions models we considered would increase the representation of all historically marginalized racial/ethnic groups on selective college campuses unless all selective colleges embraced class-conscious admissions practices and/or top 10 percent plans, and the pool of students considered for admissions expanded considerably and reflected the racial/ethnic diversity of the population graduating from our nation's high schools.

We believe that achieving the modest goal of maintaining current levels of representation for Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Indigenous students is simply not sufficient. Instead, we as a country should be striving to achieve representation at selective colleges that comes much closer to mirroring the racial/ethnic diversity and the class diversity of American society. To deliver on the American ideal of equal opportunity, we need to create a world in which a person's likelihood of being admitted to a selective college does not hinge in any way on their racial or ethnic background or on their family's socioeconomic status.

Our findings suggest that this aspirational goal will not be achievable without both race-conscious admissions and an expanded applicant pool that more closely mirrors the racial/ethnic demographics of the graduating high school class. Further, expanding race-conscious admissions and widening the applicant pool would have positive effects on class diversity in undergraduate enrollments in addition to increasing racial/ethnic diversity. Achieving greater class diversity and racial/ethnic diversity at selective colleges may result in lower median SAT scores and GPAs among enrolling students. But the investment in students with lower SAT scores and GPAs is likely to pay off in higher graduation rates and post-graduation earnings for those students.

Nonetheless, the Supreme Court is likely to declare race-conscious college admissions unconstitutional by the end of its current term. If that happens, selective institutions will need to substantially rethink their practices if they hope to play a role in creating a more just society — one in which opportunity is distributed equally and fairly rather than advantaging those who are born into privilege.

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Appendix A.
Data Sources and Methodology

This appendix describes the elements underlying the six admissions models in this report, including the data, analytic samples, assumptions about alternative admissions models, pre-simulation analyses, and simulation approach.

1. Data

We used data from four sources in our analysis. We identified selective four-year colleges and universities using the 2014 NCES–Barron's Admissions Competitiveness Index Data File. We defined 193 four-year institutions categorized as "Most Competitive" or "Highly Competitive" as selective institutions.

We calculated the racial composition of high school graduates in the 2019–20 school year using the Education Supplement of the October 2020 Current Population Survey (CPS). Likewise, we calculated the racial composition of first-time, degree-seeking students attending selective institutions in fall 2020 using data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). To determine selective institutions' current capacity for enrolling recent graduates of US high schools, we restricted the IPEDS data to domestic students who graduated high school in the 2019–20 school year.

Lastly, we used the restricted-use version of the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09) to simulate the changes in selective college enrollment that would result from each of the six admissions models. The HSLS:09 is a nationally representative, longitudinal study of more than 23,000 young adults who were in the 9th grade in 2009. Students who graduated high school on time and who seamlessly transitioned to college first enrolled in fall 2013. Students were followed during their high school

experiences and, to date, through four years following their expected year of high school graduation. During the 12th grade, college-intending students reported which colleges they applied to. Four years after expected high school completion, postsecondary transcripts were collected from institutions for students who attended college. The HSLS:09 is the most recent nationally representative data set available for examining the expected racial/ethnic and class composition of students attending selective four-year institutions under different admissions criteria.

2. Samples

We conducted the enrollment simulations on two samples of students. The first sample was restricted to expected applicants to selective colleges. Results from this sample reflect how enrollments are likely to change under different admissions criteria if colleges do not intensify their recruitment efforts, or if new recruitment efforts are ineffective. In this sample, white students, Asian/Asian American students, students of two or more races, and students from high-socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds are overrepresented among applicants to selective institutions. In models 2–6, we adjusted the applicant sample to reflect the expected change in applicant composition arising from the prohibition of race-based affirmative action and/or the introduction of a nationwide top 10 percent guaranteed admission policy.[1] Tables A1 and A2 report the racial/ethnic and SES composition of the applicant pool across each of the admissions models we considered.

1. Specifically, we adjusted the applicant pool in accordance with the estimated effects on application behavior reported in two recent studies: Bleemer, "Affirmative Action, Mismatch, and Economic Mobility after California's Proposition 209," 2022; and Cortes and Lincove, "Match or Mismatch," 2019. Bleemer finds that applications to public flagship universities in California declined by 13 percent and 11 percent among Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino individuals, respectively, and rose by 2 percent among Asian/Asian American individuals after the prohibition of race-based affirmative action. Cortes and Lincove find that receiving a guaranteed offer of admission to a public flagship university in Texas under the state's Top 10 Percent Plan increased the likelihood of applying to a qualifying college by 16 to 28 percentage points across different student groups categorized by family income and SAT score.

Table A1. Racial/ethnic composition of the baseline and adjusted applicant pools in the HSLS:09 data set

	(1)	(2)	(3)
		Race-Conscious Admissions Nation	
		Model 1	Model 2
Race/Ethnicity	Baseline (Fall 2013)	Academic Merit, SES, and Race	High School Cla SES, and R
A. *Overrepresented at Selective Colleges*			
White	60.2%	60.2%	60.0%
Asian/Asian American	9.2%	9.2%	9.1%
Two or More Races	6.3%	6.3%	6.4%
B. *Underrepresented at Selective Colleges*			
Hispanic/Latino	15.9%	15.9%	16.0%
Black/African American	7.8%	7.8%	7.9%
AI/AN/NH/PI	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (H

Note: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 and sample attrition in follow-up applicants. In models 2–6, the sample is adjusted to account for the expected change in composition after the introduction of a nationwide top 10 percent admissions poli exam participation and performance. Numbers may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
wide	Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions			
2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
ass Rank, Race	Academic Merit Only	Academic Merit and SES	High School Class Rank	High School Class Rank and SES
	62.1%	62.1%	61.5%	61.5%
	9.6%	9.6%	9.3%	9.3%
	5.6%	5.6%	6.1%	6.1%
	15.1%	15.1%	15.3%	15.3%
	7.1%	7.1%	7.3%	7.3%
	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.

p survey rounds. AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander. The applicant pool is restricted to selective college cy and/or the repeal of race-based affirmative action. Academic merit is defined as a combination of high school GPA, college entrance exam scores, and AP

Table A2. SES quintile composition of the baseline and adjusted applicant pools in the HSLS:09 data set

	(1)	(2)	(3)
SES Quintile	Baseline (Fall 2013)	Race-Conscious Admissions Nation	
		Model 1	Model 2
		Academic Merit, SES, and Race	High School Cla SES, and R
Bottom Quintile	9.3%	9.3%	9.2%
Second Quintile	9.7%	9.7%	10.1%
Third Quintile	12.2%	12.2%	12.5%
Fourth Quintile	19.5%	19.5%	20.3%
Top Quintile	49.4%	49.4%	47.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (H

Note: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 and sample attrition in follow-up in composition after the introduction of a nationwide top 10 percent admissions policy and/or the repeal of race-based affirmative action. Academic merit is defined as a c rounding.

	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
wide	Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions			
2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
ss Rank, ace	Academic Merit Only	Academic Merit and SES	High School Class Rank	High School Class Rank and SES
	9.5%	9.5%	9.4%	9.4%
	9.6%	9.6%	10.0%	10.0%
	12.4%	12.4%	12.7%	12.7%
	19.5%	19.5%	20.2%	20.2%
	48.9%	48.9%	47.7%	47.7%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.

p survey rounds. The applicant pool is restricted to selective college applicants. In models 2–6, the sample is adjusted to account for the expected change combination of high school GPA, college entrance exam scores, and AP exam participation and performance. Numbers may not sum to 100 percent due to

The second sample in our analyses included all high school graduates. Results from this sample show the potential for increasing diversity by race/ethnicity and class at selective colleges under different admissions criteria if the applicant pool reflected the composition of the high school graduating class. We consider the results from the high school graduation sample to be aspirational — representing what might be possible if institutions are able to greatly diversify their applicant pool. However, we consider the results from the applicant sample to be more probable, given the challenges many selective colleges experience related to recruiting qualified students from diverse backgrounds to apply.[2]

3. Adoption of Alternative Admissions Models

We also examined the anticipated impacts of a nationwide ban on race-conscious admissions by assuming that selective colleges adopted class-based proxies for race at two different levels.

First, we assumed that only 60 percent of selective colleges currently consider race in admissions, and that only these colleges would replace race-conscious admissions practices with class-conscious alternatives. This assumption is based on survey findings regarding the share of selective institutions that consider race in admissions.[3] It also reflects the fact that students in the HSLS:09 data set applied to selective colleges at a time when nine states had bans on the use of race in admissions at public institutions.[4] Ten public institutions operate in those states and are considered selective colleges. Of the remaining 183 selective colleges, we randomly selected 68 institutions to not consider applicants' race/ethnicity in the admissions process, and to therefore not use class-conscious alternatives in the event that race-conscious admissions practices are banned.[5] When modeling enrollments at the public institutions in states with bans on race-conscious admissions, we filled the slots based on the observed enrollment behavior of applicants. When modeling enrollments at the other 68 institutions, we factored only the academic merit index into the admissions process.[6]

Second, we examined the anticipated enrollment composition at selective colleges if all institutions changed their admissions practices in response to a nationwide ban on race-conscious admissions. These results illustrate how much additional racial/ethnic and class diversity could be achieved if all selective colleges followed the same approach to account for class background when admitting students. However, because a nationwide ban on race-conscious admissions practices is not likely to change the practices at institutions that do not currently consider an applicant's race/ethnicity, universal adoption is unlikely. We therefore believe that the partial adoption assumption represents the more realistic changes to enrollment that would transpire following a nationwide ban on race-conscious admissions practices.

2. Mabel et al., "Can Standardizing Applicant High School and Neighborhood Information Help to Diversify Selective Colleges?," 2022.

3. Espinosa et al., *Race, Class, and College Access*, 2015.

4. Those states are Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, and Washington.

5. In fall 2020, the 193 selective colleges collectively enrolled 287,981 first-time, degree-seeking students from the 2019–20 high school class. Of those students, 46,622 attended one of the 10 public institutions in states that banned race-conscious admissions practices, and 62,369 attended one of the 68 institutions randomly selected to not consider race by choice in their admissions processes.

6. We do not observe the admissions criteria used by each institution in the HSLS:09 data, and thus, many of the colleges randomly chosen to not consider race/ethnicity likely do consider those factors in practice. We used the pure academic merit model (Model 3) instead of the observed enrollment behavior at these institutions for this reason.

4. Pre-simulation Analyses

Prior to simulating the enrollment changes at selective colleges, we conducted three analyses using the HSLS:09 data that contribute to the six admissions models we examined. In our first analysis, we constructed a composite index of academic merit for each student, given that all six models consider applicants' academic qualifications in one way or another.

We constructed this index to emulate the academic information that selective colleges typically receive from applicants in the new era of test-optional admissions. The index consists of 11 equally weighted measures of academic performance:[7]

- weighted cumulative high school grade point average;
- unweighted high school grade point average (GPA) in 11th grade;
- total number of Advanced Placement (AP) exams taken;
- number of STEM AP exams taken;[8]
- proportion of all AP exams taken receiving a score of 3, 4, and 5 (three items);
- proportion of STEM AP exams taken receiving a score of 3, 4, and 5 (three items); and
- college entrance exam score (combined math and verbal SAT score or concorded ACT composite score).

The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed dramatic changes in test-taking and test-sending behavior among college-intending students. Most four-year colleges no longer require applicants to submit college entrance exam scores,[9] and recent evidence shows that only about half of applicants to selective colleges are doing so.[10] Not surprisingly, high-scoring students are much more likely than low-scoring students to disclose their scores to colleges today.[11] To model this behavior when constructing the academic merit index, we randomly selected applicants for which to include entrance exam scores and those for which to exclude scores in accordance with their likelihood of score disclosure. The academic merit index has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.852, which indicates that it exhibits a strong degree of internal consistency. Moreover, among applicants randomly chosen for score exclusion, the correlation between the index that excludes their score and one that includes their score is 0.996. In other words, whether or not an applicant chooses to submit their test scores has little bearing in most cases on the inference institutions can draw about that applicant's academic qualification for admission.

After constructing the academic merit index, we predicted the index value for each student using student-level and school-level characteristics that are associated with educational privilege or disadvantage. Specifically, for this analysis we regressed the academic merit index on the following set of predictors:

7. Prior to constructing the index, we used multivariate imputation by chained equations to impute ten possible values for all missing measures of academic performance. We then assigned the average value across the ten imputations to individuals with missing data.

8. STEM AP subjects in the HSLS:09 data set include Mathematics and Computer Science, Calculus AB, Calculus BC, Computer Science, Statistics, Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, Physics B, Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism, and Physics C: Mechanics.

9. Bauer-Wolf, "Over 1,700 Colleges Won't Require SAT, ACT for Fall 2023, Up from Same Point Last Year," 2022.

10. College Board Research, *New Evidence on Recent Changes in College Applications, Admissions, and Enrollments*, 2022.

11. College Board Research, *New Evidence on Recent Changes in College Applications, Admissions, and Enrollments*, 2022.

- household size;
- high school type (regular or charter, magnet, or vocational/technical/alternative school);
- high school level of control (public, Catholic, or other private school);
- high school locale (census division by level of urbanicity);
- quintile of free-or-reduced-price lunch rate at high school attended;
- indicator of whether student temporarily withdrew from high school;
- indicator of whether student earned a GED instead of a high school diploma;
- indicator of whether student was an academic concentrator in high school;
- indicator of whether student was an occupational/vocational concentrator in high school;
- indicator of whether student held a paid job during high school;
- indicator of whether student worked with a private college counselor; and
- share of peers planning to attend a four-year college.

To account for SES in the admissions process, we also included the quintile of the composite socioeconomic status measure in the regression specification. To account for race/ethnicity in the admissions process, we specified a second model that additionally included a set of race-by-gender indicator variables.[12] We estimated the regressions on both the applicant sample and the high school graduation sample to account for the fact that the coefficient values may change across samples.

We used the regression estimates to calculate academic merit index residual values for each student in the data. These values represent the difference between a student's actual academic merit index value and their predicted academic merit index value based on the predictors in the regression specification. Students with residual values greater than zero have a higher-than-expected level of academic merit according to their observable level of educational privilege or disadvantage, including their family socioeconomic status and their race/ethnicity as applicable to the simulation. Likewise, students with residual values less than zero have a lower-than-expected level of academic merit. We ranked students by these residual values (from most positive to most negative) instead of by the actual academic merit index in the simulations that factor class and/or race into the criteria for admission.

In the third pre-simulation analysis, we estimated which high school graduates in the HSLS:09 data set graduated in the top 10 percent of their high school class. To do this, we first constructed a high school class rank for all high school graduates in the HSLS:09 data set by comparing each student's weighted cumulative high school GPA to the distribution of high school GPAs within their school.[13,14] We then used the class ranks to identify students who graduated in the top 10 percent of their class and would automatically qualify for admission to a selective college in the simulations that implement a nationwide top 10 percent admission policy.

12. In the regression specification that excludes race from the admissions criteria, the race-by-gender indicator variables are replaced by an indicator variable for being male.

13. Deriving the within-school GPA distribution relies on weighting each student in the data according to their within-school sampling weight. That weight is not reported in the HSLS:09 data set, so we estimated it using both the final student sampling weight and the school sampling weight, which are reported. Specifically, the overall student sampling probability is approximated by the product of the school sampling probability and the student sampling probability within the school. Thus, the within-school student sampling weight is approximated by the overall student sampling weight divided by the school sampling weight.

14. The number of sampled students per school in the HSLS:09 study ranges from 1 to 42, with a mean of 23. In cases where too few students were sampled to distinguish the top decile from other deciles of the GPA distribution, we randomly assigned students to one of the deciles into which they potentially fell.

5. Simulation Approach

For each of the six alternative admissions models, we simulated the impact on the race-and class-based composition of first-time, degree-seeking students attending selective colleges using a four-step process.

In step one, we rank-ordered students in the relevant sample according to the criteria for admission associated with each model. Table A3 lists the criteria factored into each model in order of the priority we assigned each criterion in the sorting process.

Table A3. Admission criteria considered in each model and priority assigned to each criterion when rank-ordering students for admission to selective colleges

Model	Admission Criteria
Model 1	• Academic merit index residual from regression that includes SES and race/ethnicity
Model 2	• High school class rank (top 10 percent of high school class), then • Academic merit index residual from regression that includes SES and race/ethnicity
Model 3	• Academic merit index
Model 4	• Academic merit index residual from regression that includes SES but excludes race/ethnicity
Model 5	• High school class rank (top 10 percent of high school class), then • Academic merit index
Model 6	• High school class rank (top 10 percent of high school class), then • Academic merit index residual from regression that includes SES but excludes race/ethnicity

In step two, we admitted 433,759 students to the set of selective colleges. This number is equivalent to 50 percent more students than selective colleges actually enrolled in fall 2020. We exceeded the enrollment capacity of selective colleges in the simulated admission process to account for the fact that only two-thirds of applicants who are admitted to a selective college actually attend one.[15] In practice, selective colleges admit more students than they can enroll, knowing that their yield rate will be less than one. We incorporated this nuance into the simulation models.

In step three, we randomly assigned a subset of the admitted pool of students to attend one of the selective colleges. Among admitted students, the likelihood of attendance differs by race/ethnicity and SES. We therefore used race- and SES-specific yield rates estimated from the HSLS:09 data set to determine the subset of admitted students accepting an offer to attend a selective college.[16] Table A4 reports the estimated yield rates by race/ethnicity and tercile of the composite SES index distribution. We then filled the available enrollment slots at selective colleges from the sample of matriculating students until we reached the capacity constraint of 287,981 enrolled students (this equals the number of first-time, degree-seeking students who attended selective institutions in fall 2020 and graduated high school in the 2019–20 school year).

Lastly, in step four, we calculated the proportional change in enrollment shares between the status quo and the alternative admission criteria for each racial/ethnic group in the HSLS:09 sample. We carried these proportional changes over to the existing enrollment shares by race/ethnicity in fall 2020 to simulate the expected changes that would result today under each alternative admissions policy.[17]

Table A4. Estimated attendance rates at selective colleges among admitted students, by race/ethnicity and SES tercile

A. Race/Ethnicity	Attendance Rate
White	65.5%
Asian/Asian American	81.7%
Hispanic/Latino	66.9%
Black/African American	51.1%
Other Race	64.4%
B. SES Tercile	**Attendance Rate**
Bottom Tercile (Low-SES)	67.8%
Middle Tercile (Middle-SES)	60.7%
Top Tercile (Top-SES)	67.8%

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.

Note: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 and sample attrition in follow-up survey rounds. Selective colleges are those categorized as "Most Competitive" or "Highly Competitive" in the 2014 NCES–Barron's college admissions competitiveness selectivity rankings. Students who identified as American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, or Two or More Races are grouped together into an "Other Race" category due to sample size limitations. Likewise, SES terciles are used in place of quintiles when estimating yield rates to reduce measurement error due to small samples.

15. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.

16. For example, we assigned all admitted students a random number between 0 and 1. Because 65.5 percent of white applicants admitted to a selective college actually enroll, we assigned white admits with a random number less than 0.655 to accept an offer to attend a selective college, and we assigned white admits with a random number greater than or equal to 0.655 to decline the offer.

17. Unlike the race-based composition of students attending selective colleges, the class-based composition of enrolled students is not reported in IPEDS. We were therefore unable to adjust the results by socioeconomic status in the HSLS:09 data set to account for changes to the class composition at selective colleges over time. The reported results by SES quintile thus reflect the actual or simulated class-based composition of recent high school graduates who first attended selective colleges in fall 2013.

Appendix B. Additional Tables

Table B1. Race-by-socioeconomic status (SES) distribution in the high school class and among selective colleg

	(1)
	High School Class
AI/AN/NH/PI	
Low SES	*
High SES	0.4%
Asian/Asian American	
Low SES	2.2%
High SES	3.8%
Black/African American	
Low SES	8.8%
High SES	4.4%
Hispanic/Latino	
Low SES	17.4%
High SES	6.3%
White	
Low SES	20.5%
High SES	31.8%
Two or More Races	
Low SES	2.0%
High SES	2.1%
Total	100%

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (H

Note: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 and sample attrition in follow-up suppressed in accordance with NCES data security rules to protect data confidentiality. We use the median of the continuous SES distribution to distinguish between low

ge enrollees

(2)	(3)
Selective College Enrollees	Representation Ratio
*	*
0.3%	0.82
4.1%	1.85
12.9%	3.40
2.6%	0.29
3.3%	0.75
7.4%	0.42
6.7%	1.07
7.3%	0.36
49.8%	1.56
1.0%	0.49
4.7%	2.28
100%	

HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022. Numbers may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

p survey rounds. AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; NH = Native Hawaiian; and PI = Pacific Islander. Results for low-SES AI/AN/NH/PI students are -SES and high-SES students.

Table B2. SES quintile of high school class, selective college applicants, and selective college enrollees, by ra

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6
	High School Class				Select	
SES Quintile	White	Asian/ Asian American	Black/ African American	Hispanic/ Latino	White	Asi Asian A
Bottom	8.6%	12.9%	23.1%	39.1%	3.8%	9.3
Second	15.7%	10.4%	29.1%	22.6%	5.9%	5.6
Third	21.7%	18.7%	19.7%	16.4%	11.0%	15.
Fourth	24.9%	22.1%	17.5%	13.0%	19.9%	19.
Top	29.1%	35.8%	10.7%	8.9%	59.4%	49.
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	10

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (H

Notes: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 and sample attrition in follow-u

ce/ethnicity

(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
ive College Applicants			Selective College Enrollees			
an/ merican	Black/ African American	Hispanic/ Latino	White	Asian/ Asian American	Black/ African American	Hispanic/ Latino
3%	12.7%	29.8%	2.6%	9.2%	7.2%	34.9%
6%	36.0%	14.5%	4.2%	4.5%	21.4%	14.5%
8%	15.1%	12.4%	9.5%	14.1%	19.1%	3.9%
4%	15.1%	19.3%	17.1%	15.5%	11.4%	19.8%
9%	21.1%	23.9%	66.7%	56.7%	40.8%	26.8%
0%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.
up survey rounds. Numbers may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Table B3. Enrollment shares by race/ethnicity and SES quintile at selective colleges if all institutions considered academic merit, SES, and race (Model 1) in admissions decisions

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Race/Ethnicity	High School Class	Existing	Applicant Pool... Based on Expected Applicant Behavior	Applicant Pool... Expanded to Entire High School Graduating Class
A. *Overrepresented at Selective Colleges*				
White	52.3%	57.1%	52.9%	48.9%
Asian/Asian American	6.0%	17.0%	12.9%	12.4%
Two or More Races	4.1%	5.7%	7.3%	8.4%
B. *Underrepresented at Selective Colleges*				
Hispanic/Latino	23.7%	14.1%	16.9%	19.3%
Black/African American	13.2%	5.9%	9.6%	10.5%
AI/AN/NH/PI	0.9%	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
SES Quintile				
Bottom Quintile	17.2%	8.2%	14.1%	15.5%
Second Quintile	19.2%	6.6%	10.4%	13.9%
Third Quintile	20.3%	9.8%	11.0%	13.7%
Fourth Quintile	21.2%	17.3%	21.0%	22.4%
Top Quintile	22.1%	58.1%	43.5%	34.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Median SAT Score	900	1240	1190	1160
Median High School GPA (weighted, 0-5 scale)	2.90	4.03	3.87	3.81

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS) October Education Supplement, 2020; US Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2021; and US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09) restricted use data, 2022.

Notes: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the Current Population Survey (CPS) October 2020 Education Supplement and HSLS:09, and for sample attrition in HSLS:09 follow-up survey rounds. Existing enrollment shares by race/ethnicity are based on fall 2020 enrollment counts reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Existing enrollment shares by SES quintile are based on the SES composition of enrolled students in the HSLS:09 sample. AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; NH = Native Hawaiian; and PI = Pacific Islander. Merit is defined as a combination of high school GPA, college entrance exam scores, and AP exam participation and performance. Results assume universal adoption of the alternative admission model. Numbers may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Table B4. Enrollment shares by race/ethnicity and SES quintile at selective colleges if all institutions considered high school class rank, SES, and race (Model 2) in admissions decisions

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Race/Ethnicity	High School Class	Existing	Applicant Pool... Based on Expected Applicant Behavior	Applicant Pool... Expanded to Entire High School Graduating Class
A. *Overrepresented at Selective Colleges*				
White	52.3%	57.1%	51.6%	55.0%
Asian/Asian American	6.0%	17.0%	15.3%	15.6%
Two or More Races	4.1%	5.7%	7.4%	7.0%
B. *Underrepresented at Selective Colleges*				
Hispanic/Latino	23.7%	14.1%	16.3%	14.3%
Black/African American	13.2%	5.9%	9.1%	7.8%
AI/AN/NH/PI	0.9%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
SES Quintile				
Bottom Quintile	17.2%	8.2%	13.0%	10.9%
Second Quintile	19.2%	6.6%	8.5%	11.0%
Third Quintile	20.3%	9.8%	11.3%	12.4%
Fourth Quintile	21.2%	17.3%	21.9%	23.8%
Top Quintile	22.1%	58.1%	45.3%	41.8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Median SAT Score	900	1240	1200	1170
Median High School GPA (weighted, 0-5 scale)	2.90	4.03	3.93	3.99

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS) October Education Supplement, 2020; US Department of Education Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2021; and US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.

Notes: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the Current Population Survey (CPS) October 2020 Education Supplement and HSLS:09, and for sample attrition in HSLS:09 follow-up survey rounds. Existing enrollment shares by race/ethnicity are based on fall 2020 enrollment counts reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Existing enrollment shares by SES quintile are based on the SES composition of enrolled students in the HSLS:09 sample. AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; NH = Native Hawaiian; and PI = Pacific Islander. High school class rank is considered by offering admission to all applicants in the top 10 percent of their high school class. The sample in column (3) is restricted to selective college applicants and adjusted to account for the expected change in composition after the introduction of a nationwide top 10 percent admissions policy. Results assume universal adoption of the alternative admissions policies. Numbers may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Table B5. Enrollment shares by race/ethnicity and SES quintile at selective colleges if institutions considered academic merit only (Model 3) in admissions decisions

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Race/Ethnicity	High School Class	Existing	Partial Adoption after Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions / Applicant Pool Based on Expected Applicant Behavior	Universal Adoption of Alternative Admissions Policies after Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions — Applicant Pool... Based on Expected Applicant Behavior	Universal Adoption of Alternative Admissions Policies after Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions — Applicant Pool... Expanded to Entire High School Graduating Class
A. *Overrepresented at Selective Colleges*					
White	52.3%	57.1%	58.1%	58.4%	52.6%
Asian/Asian American	6.0%	17.0%	16.3%	18.9%	17.7%
Two or More Races	4.1%	5.7%	5.1%	5.2%	6.7%
B. *Underrepresented at Selective Colleges*					
Hispanic/Latino	23.7%	14.1%	14.9%	13.0%	16.8%
Black/African American	13.2%	5.9%	5.6%	4.4%	5.8%
AI/AN/NH/PI	0.9%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
SES Quintile					
Bottom Quintile	17.2%	8.2%	10.4%	8.2%	10.4%
Second Quintile	19.2%	6.6%	7.4%	7.3%	9.3%
Third Quintile	20.3%	9.8%	9.0%	9.1%	10.5%
Fourth Quintile	21.2%	17.3%	19.9%	20.6%	24.2%
Top Quintile	22.1%	58.1%	53.3%	54.8%	45.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Median SAT Score	900	1240	1220	1230	1170
Median High School GPA (weighted, 0-5 scale)	2.90	4.03	3.94	3.98	3.87

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS) October Education Supplement, 2020; US Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2021; and US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.

Notes: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the Current Population Survey (CPS) October 2020 Education Supplement and HSLS:09, and for sample attrition in HSLS:09 follow-up survey rounds. Existing enrollment shares by race/ethnicity are based on fall 2020 enrollment counts reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Existing enrollment shares by SES quintile are based on the SES composition of enrolled students in the HSLS:09 sample. AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; NH = Native Hawaiian; and PI = Pacific Islander. The sample in columns (3) and (4) is adjusted to account for the expected change in composition after the repeal of race-based affirmative action. The sample in column (5) includes all high school graduates. In column (3), 60 percent of institutions are assumed to adopt alternative admissions policies in response to a nationwide ban, reflecting the fact that some institutions operate in states that already impose a ban on race-conscious admissions and others currently choose not to consider race in admissions. In columns (4) and (5), all institutions are assumed to adopt alternative admissions policies in response to a nationwide ban. Merit is defined as a combination of high school GPA, college entrance exam scores, and AP exam participation and performance. Numbers may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Table B6. Enrollment shares by race/ethnicity and SES quintile at selective colleges if institutions considered academic merit and SES (Model 4) in admissions decisions

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Race/Ethnicity	High School Class	Existing	Partial Adoption after Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions / Applicant Pool Based on Expected Applicant Behavior	Universal Adoption of Alternative Admissions Policies after Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions — Applicant Pool... Based on Expected Applicant Behavior	Universal Adoption of Alternative Admissions Policies after Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions — Applicant Pool... Expanded to Entire High School Graduating Class
A. *Overrepresented at Selective Colleges*					
White	52.3%	57.1%	56.6%	55.1%	51.9%
Asian/Asian American	6.0%	17.0%	16.6%	16.7%	15.5%
Two or More Races	4.1%	5.7%	5.6%	5.5%	7.0%
B. *Underrepresented at Selective Colleges*					
Hispanic/Latino	23.7%	14.1%	14.6%	15.3%	18.5%
Black/African American	13.2%	5.9%	6.3%	7.1%	6.6%
AI/AN/NH/PI	0.9%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
SES Quintile					
Bottom Quintile	17.2%	8.2%	10.0%	13.1%	16.8%
Second Quintile	19.2%	6.6%	8.3%	10.6%	13.9%
Third Quintile	20.3%	9.8%	10.0%	11.1%	13.0%
Fourth Quintile	21.2%	17.3%	20.1%	20.9%	22.4%
Top Quintile	22.1%	58.1%	51.6%	44.2%	34.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Median SAT Score	900	1240	1210	1200	1160
Median High School GPA (weighted, 0-5 scale)	2.90	4.03	3.92	3.88	3.80

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS) October Education Supplement, 2020; US Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2021; and US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.

Notes: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the Current Population Survey (CPS) October 2020 Education Supplement and HSLS:09, and for sample attrition in HSLS:09 follow-up survey rounds. Existing enrollment shares by race/ethnicity are based on fall 2020 enrollment counts reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Existing enrollment shares by SES quintile are based on the SES composition of enrolled students in the HSLS:09 sample. AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; NH = Native Hawaiian; and PI = Pacific Islander. The sample in columns (3) and (4) is adjusted to account for the expected change in composition after the repeal of race-based affirmative action. The sample in column (5) includes all high school graduates. In column (3), 60 percent of institutions are assumed to adopt alternative admissions policies in response to a nationwide ban, reflecting the fact that some institutions operate in states that already impose a ban on race-conscious admissions and others currently choose not to consider race in admissions. In columns (4) and (5), all institutions are assumed to adopt alternative admissions policies in response to a nationwide ban. Merit is defined as a combination of high school GPA, college entrance exam scores, and AP exam participation and performance. Numbers may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Table B7. Enrollment shares by race/ethnicity and SES quintile at selective colleges if institutions considered high school class rank (Model 5) in admissions decisions

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Race/Ethnicity	High School Class	Existing	Partial Adoption after Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions / Applicant Pool Based on Expected Applicant Behavior	Universal Adoption of Alternative Admissions Policies after Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions — Applicant Pool... Based on Expected Applicant Behavior	Universal Adoption of Alternative Admissions Policies after Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions — Applicant Pool... Expanded to Entire High School Graduating Class
A. *Overrepresented at Selective Colleges*					
White	52.3%	57.1%	56.4%	54.9%	54.5%
Asian/Asian American	6.0%	17.0%	16.7%	18.5%	16.4%
Two or More Races	4.1%	5.7%	6.6%	6.2%	6.9%
B. *Underrepresented at Selective Colleges*					
Hispanic/Latino	23.7%	14.1%	14.3%	15.1%	14.0%
Black/African American	13.2%	5.9%	5.9%	5.0%	7.7%
AI/AN/NH/PI	0.9%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
SES Quintile					
Bottom Quintile	17.2%	8.2%	9.2%	10.4%	10.8%
Second Quintile	19.2%	6.6%	8.1%	7.4%	10.9%
Third Quintile	20.3%	9.8%	10.1%	9.0%	11.8%
Fourth Quintile	21.2%	17.3%	20.8%	20.7%	24.0%
Top Quintile	22.1%	58.1%	51.8%	52.5%	42.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Median SAT Score	900	1240	1210	1220	1180
Median High School GPA (weighted, 0-5 scale)	2.90	4.03	3.93	4.01	3.99

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS) October Education Supplement, 2020; US Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2021; and US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.

Notes: All results are generated using survey weights that account for the sampling design of the Current Population Survey (CPS) October 2020 Education Supplement and HSLS:09, and for sample attrition in HSLS:09 follow-up survey rounds. Existing enrollment shares by race/ethnicity are based on fall 2020 enrollment counts reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Existing enrollment shares by SES quintile are based on the SES composition of enrolled students in the HSLS:09 sample. AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; NH = Native Hawaiian; and PI = Pacific Islander. High school class rank is considered by offering admission to all applicants in the top 10 percent of their high school class. The sample in columns (3) and (4) is adjusted to account for the expected change in composition after the introduction of a nationwide top 10 percent admissions policy and the repeal of race-based affirmative action. The sample in column (5) includes all high school graduates. In column (3), 60 percent of institutions are assumed to adopt alternative admissions policies in response to a nationwide ban, reflecting the fact that some institutions operate in states that already impose a ban on race-conscious admissions and others currently choose not to consider race in admissions. In columns (4) and (5), all institutions are assumed to adopt alternative admissions policies in response to a nationwide ban. Numbers may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Table B8. Enrollment shares by race/ethnicity and SES quintile at selective colleges if institutions considered high school class rank and SES (Model 6) in admissions decisions

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Race/Ethnicity	High School Class	Existing	Partial Adoption after Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions / Applicant Pool Based on Expected Applicant Behavior	Universal Adoption of Alternative Admissions Policies after Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions — Applicant Pool... Based on Expected Applicant Behavior	Universal Adoption of Alternative Admissions Policies after Nationwide Ban on Race-Conscious Admissions — Applicant Pool... Expanded to Entire High School Graduating Class
A. *Overrepresented at Selective Colleges*					
White	52.3%	57.1%	55.2%	53.4%	54.9%
Asian/Asian American	6.0%	17.0%	16.7%	17.5%	15.9%
Two or More Races	4.1%	5.7%	6.6%	6.4%	6.9%
B. *Underrepresented at Selective Colleges*					
Hispanic/Latino	23.7%	14.1%	15.1%	16.3%	14.1%
Black/African American	13.2%	5.9%	6.2%	6.1%	7.8%
AI/AN/NH/PI	0.9%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
SES Quintile					
Bottom Quintile	17.2%	8.2%	10.5%	12.3%	11.0%
Second Quintile	19.2%	6.6%	8.7%	9.3%	11.1%
Third Quintile	20.3%	9.8%	10.5%	10.5%	12.3%
Fourth Quintile	21.2%	17.3%	20.7%	21.7%	24.0%
Top Quintile	22.1%	58.1%	49.5%	46.1%	41.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Median SAT Score	900	1240	1200	1200	1180
Median High School GPA (weighted, 0-5 scale)	2.90	4.03	3.92	3.94	3.99

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey October (CPS) October Education Supplement, 2020; US Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2021; and US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), restricted use data, 2022.

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Race-Conscious Affirmative Action: What's Next can be accessed online at cew.georgetown.edu/diversity-without-race.

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