

## CERPP Statement on the U.S. Supreme Court’s Decision to Hear the Harvard and UNC Admission Cases

Harvard and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill have presented compelling cases in federal court proceedings, where they prevailed, for the lawful use of race-aware admission policies to diversify their student bodies. However, with the Supreme Court now taking the case, over forty years of legal precedent affirming the compelling nature of higher education’s educational diversity interests is at stake.

Colleges and universities are and should be quite worried about the Supreme Court’s action, as should leaders in business and industry, the military, and educational institutions and organizations, among others. Specifically for colleges and universities, the ability of institutions to consider all the information available about an applicant as part of an individualized holistic review process is in jeopardy.

At its core, the consideration of an applicant’s race in context is central to the advancement of equity interests as well as enhancing the quality of the education provided.<sup>1</sup> Such processes, when appropriately designed and implemented, do not categorically or mechanically favor any individual student based on their race or ethnicity, contrary to conventional public perception. In reality—and as demonstrated in the Harvard and UNC litigation—the consideration of race involves a review of an applicant’s background, qualities and interests in an integrated fashion, with awareness of that applicant’s personal and educational context.

Also contrary to public perception, colleges and universities do not rely on isolated test scores and grades as determinants of merit. That judgment of institutional readiness is much more complicated—with an evaluation of individual candidates as well as a determination about how best to assemble a student body of diverse cultures, perspectives, and backgrounds to enhance the learning experience for *every* student on campus.

Although there are reasons to hope that the Court will fulfill its responsibility and apply governing precedent with fidelity, if the Court renders an adverse decision, colleges **will not** and **should not** change their equity and diversity commitments—even if such a decision could make attainment of those goals more difficult. Reasoned and informed public engagement and amicus briefs that are empirically grounded are now critical. Longstanding legal precedent must be preserved as a foundation for success in the continuing advancement of college and university missions for the betterment of their students and all of society.

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<sup>1</sup> Abundant and long-standing research—reviewed and affirmed by federal courts for decades—establishes the educational benefits associated with student diversity, including improved teaching and learning; better workforce preparation for students; and enhanced civic values engagement.