



Association of Biomolecular Resource Facilities

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ABRF Statement on Supreme Court Decision on Race in College Admissions

August 2023 (Lexington, KY) - On June 29, 2023, the Supreme Court struck down affirmative action programs, effectively ending the consideration of race in college admissions. **ABRF** (the Association of Biomolecular Resource Facilities) disagrees with the Supreme Court's decision not only because of its impact on black, brown, and indigenous students who seek opportunities at elite universities, but also because of the ripple effect this decision will have in the way diversity, equity and accessibility are understood in a country that still grapples with a history and a present challenge of racial injustice.

Affirmative Action policies relied on forty years of legal precedent and played a crucial role in promoting equity on campuses as well as in society. Originally, affirmative action policies were not about the practice of using race as a factor in college admissions but designed to enforce federal policies that prevented workplaces from violating civil right laws. The phrase "affirmative action" traces back to the Civil Right Acts of 1961 and 1964, which aimed to end discrimination. Both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson signed executive orders stating that any company receiving federal funds must take "affirmative action" to ensure equal opportunity.

Fifty years later, the Supreme Court's decision deems it unnecessary and unconstitutional to take "affirmative action" in college admissions to guarantee equal opportunity for all. However, the broader impact is already resonating within and outside universities. The Supreme Court's decision may seem aimed only at admissions policies, but colleges that receive federal funds for scholarships and recruitment are already preparing to comply. Inside Higher Ed reports, "The rulings have already begun to affect areas of higher education beyond admissions policies. On June 29, the same day the decisions came down, Missouri attorney general Andrew Bailey ordered all higher education institutions in the state to end all financial aid or scholarship programs that take race into account, with which the University of Missouri system promptly complied."

In addition, health care organizations, such as The American Medical Association (AMA), the Department of Health and Human Services, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), the American College of Physicians (ACP) and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), among others, have issued statements about the importance of a diverse professional workforce to combat health disparities. The court's decision will have a detrimental impact on patient care by decreasing the number of black, Latinx, and indigenous health care practitioners.

Moreover, according to the Chronicle of Higher Education, 22 states have introduced 40 bills designed to “prohibit colleges from having diversity, equity, and inclusion offices or staff; ban mandatory diversity training; prohibit institutions from using diversity statements in hiring and promotion, or prohibit colleges from using race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in admissions or employment.” The Supreme Court’s decision on affirmative action has the potential to open the door to other forms of discriminatory laws by setting a precedent for future legal challenges.

As an organization committed to advancing education and scientific excellence within a collaborative and inclusive community, ABRF reaffirms its commitment to building equitable access by committing to diversity, and by partnering with organizations to promote projects that will have a measurable impact on increasing historically excluded populations’ presence in shared resource facilities. For example, ABRF is working with community colleges and the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) funded National Biotechnology Education Center (InnovATEBIO) through an NSF consortium that will promote bioanalytical technical education to prepare community college students to work in core facilities.

ABRF is excited about this partnership since community colleges are more accessible to all student populations due to their practical admissions requirements, their low cost, the variety of programs offered and their flexible scheduling. ABRF envisions that such partnerships between universities, research institutions and community colleges will increase accessibility for historically excluded students to pursue a career in biomolecular science. By committing to initiatives that open spaces for black, Latinx and indigenous students, ABRF hopes to continue Presidents Kennedy and Johnson’s 1961 vision where attaining equal opportunity took strategic and deliberate affirmative action. ABRF is not moving backwards.

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Sources

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