

Adopted: June 9, 1998

ACADEMIC SENATE  
Of  
CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY  
San Luis Obispo, CA

AS-505-98/DTF  
RESOLUTION ON  
THE ACADEMIC VALUE OF DIVERSITY

- WHEREAS, Cal Poly has stated its commitment to diversity in the *University Strategic Plan* and in the *Commitment to Visionary Pragmatism*; and
- WHEREAS, The CSU's *Mission Statement* expresses the institution's commitment to "educational excellence for a diverse society"; and
- WHEREAS, The commitment to diversity is reflected in both the *Academic Senate CSU Report on the Meaning of the Baccalaureate Education in the CSU* and the *CSU Cornerstones Report*; and
- WHEREAS, The commitment to and the importance of diversity have been affirmed by the Association of American Universities, the American Council on Education, the American Association for Higher Education, the American Association of University Professors, the American Association of University Administrators, the Educational Testing Service, the Association of American Medical Colleges, The Association of American Law Schools, The American Society for Engineering Education, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, the College Board, and many others; therefore, be it
- RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate at Cal Poly accept and endorse the American Association of University Professors' *The Educational Value of Diversity*, the Association of American Universities' *On the Importance of Diversity in University Admissions*, and the American Council on Education's *On the Importance of Diversity in Higher Education*; and, be it further
- RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate recommend to its administration that they actively reaffirm the academic value of diversity among its faculty, staff, students, and within the curriculum; and, be it further
- RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate at Cal Poly in partnership with its administration devise plans and strategies to promulgate and implement the diversity and educational objectives outlined in the above three documents; and, be it further
- RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate at Cal Poly recommend to its administration that the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs provide an annual assessment of the previously mentioned partnership's diversity related activities to the Academic Senate.

Proposed by: The Diversity Task Force  
Date: April 21, 1998  
Revised: June 8, 1998

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR  
RESOLUTION ON  
THE ACADEMIC VALUE OF DIVERSITY

# American Association of University Professors

MUP Home Page ... Diversity & Affirmative Action in Higher Education

Academic article, January/February 1997

## The Educational Value of Diversity

By Jonathan R. Alger

Diversity is not a dirty word, but recent legal and political developments in the higher education context seem to suggest otherwise. In the 1978 *Bakke* decision, Justice Lewis Powell found the attainment of a diverse student body to be a constitutionally permissible goal for a university exercising its educational judgment, and he recognized race as one among a number of factors contributing to that diversity. In the 1996 *Hopwood* decision, a federal appellate court--with considerable judicial chutzpa--asserted that Justice Powell had been mistaken, and that diversity cannot serve as a "compelling interest" justifying race-based affirmative action programs in higher education. California, the nation's largest and most racially diverse state, has now banned the consideration of race in its higher education programs. Why has the affirmative consideration of race to achieve diversity in higher education fallen into legal and social disrepute?

One major reason is that diversity has become an end in itself, rather than a means to a greater educational end. In addition, the need for diversity has frequently been confused by its supporters and critics alike with the need to remedy discrimination. Although remedying discrimination has been recognized as a permissible basis for race-based affirmative action, it rests on different assumptions and relies on different evidence.

The opponents of race-based affirmative action have largely succeeded in convincing the courts and the public that the goal of racial diversity reflects and reinforces racial stereotypes, acts as a poor substitute for true intellectual diversity, and serves as a thinly disguised excuse for racial quotas. Too often these criticisms have been on target, in part because universities have failed to establish the fundamental link between diversity and their educational missions. If programs premised on the need for diversity are to survive in this legal and political climate, the educational value of these programs for all students must be fully and forcefully articulated.

The argument for the necessity of diversity is perhaps stronger in higher education than in any other context, but only if diversity is understood as a means to an end. The ultimate product of universities is education in the broadest sense. Including preparation for life in the working world. As part of this education, students learn from face-to-face interaction with faculty members and with one another both inside and outside the classroom. Racial diversity can enhance this interaction by broadening course offerings, texts, and classroom examples, as well as improving communications and understanding among individuals of different races. The impact of diversity is evidenced by the inclusion of multicultural perspectives in many disciplines--authors such as Toni Morrison have joined the accepted canon.

A common criticism of race-based diversity programs, reflected in the *Bakke* discussion of intellectual diversity arising from different perspectives and life experiences, is that race is used as a mere proxy for a particular perspective or point of view. According to this critique, a university seeking diversity assumes that individuals of particular races will bring with them certain perspectives due to their racial backgrounds. This assumption is patronizing and misguided, of course, because members of every racial group differ in their life experiences. Proponents of diversity have all too often permitted the debate to be centered on this argument and have faltered in the courts when trying to defend the use of race to achieve intellectual diversity. Given the strict scrutiny with which racial classifications are judged under American law, it is not surprising that courts have frowned upon this justification for race-based diversity programs.

In fact, the educational value of diversity can be defended largely on the basis of the exact opposite of this stereotypical assumption. The range of similarities and differences within and among racial groups is precisely what gives diversity in higher education its educational value. For example, by seeing firsthand that all black or Hispanic students do not act or think alike, white students can overcome learned prejudices that may have arisen in part from a lack of direct exposure to individuals of other races. One can imagine the impact on a white student from a homogenous white suburban background, whose views regarding blacks have been shaped primarily by television and movies, of a law school class featuring arguments from black students as diverse as Thurgood Marshall and Clarence Thomas. Likewise, the recently immigrated Asian American student in the same class, who assumes that most white Americans think alike, may be surprised by white students with opinions as diverse as Antonin Scalia and Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Similarly, prejudices can be overcome when students discover just how much they have in common with their peers from other races. Prejudice is learned behavior, and the prevalence of young offenders in racially motivated hate crimes demonstrates that it is learned at an early age. Due to local control of elementary and secondary education in this country, many students attend neighborhood schools that are segregated according to local demographics. Once in college together, however, students of different races may discover that their political beliefs or extracurricular interests provide as much or more common ground as does race. No textbook or computer can substitute for the direct personal interaction that leads to this type of self-discovery and growth.

This educational benefit is universal in that all students learn from it, not just minority students who might have received a "bump" in the admissions process. Indeed, majority students who have previously lacked significant direct exposure to minorities frequently have the most to gain from interaction with individuals of other races. The universality of this benefit distinguishes the diversity rationale from the rationale of remedying discrimination, under which minority students receive special consideration to make up for past injustices to their racial group.

### Diversity as Institutional Mission

The diversity rationale also differs from remedying discrimination in that it stems directly from, and reinforces, the educational mission of the university as defined by the institution itself. In *Bakke*, Justice Powell cited the university's academic freedom interest in setting the criteria for selection of its students to meet its educational goals. This relationship of diversity to academic freedom and to the university's educational mission implies that each institution is in the best position to determine its own diversity goals in light of its educational objectives. For example, some institutions have religious roots and desire a student body that keeps those ties alive. Historically black colleges were founded to educate black students shut out of other institutions and have a mission that includes continued support of underprivileged groups. Moreover, the mission of each institution is determined to some extent by its service area and applicant pool, which can change over time as changes occur in the institution's size, stature, or program offerings.

Each institution's interest in and need for racial diversity will vary based upon these factors. As Harvard President Neil Rudenstine recently described, all internationally recognized college or university that draws students from all over the country and the world--such as Harvard or Stanford--might have as part of its educational mission a commitment to expose its students to individuals from all races represented in the nation or even the world. A publicly funded landgrant college, however, might have a special legal obligation to serve the citizens of its state, and its interest in diversity would

reflect that mission and service area. A community college might be established to serve students in a distinct region or metropolitan area, whereas a tribally controlled college might have a statutorily authorized core mission of serving Native Americans of particular tribes.

In some of these cases, it may be that affirmative efforts are required to achieve the diversity needed to match the educational mission because institutional recruiting efforts are insufficient. For example, a predominantly white college in a rural location with little racial diversity may decide that its educational mission includes a need to broaden the horizons of its students by recruiting students of other races and from other places. Even if the college itself has no history of discrimination, it may need to make affirmative efforts to attract and retain such students, particularly until it develops a welcoming reputation for minority students.

Of course, this model of learning assumes that students will interact with peers of other races in a variety of settings once enrolled at a university. Clubs, cultural centers, or special events that celebrate the traditions and contributions of minority groups can be inclusive and send a welcoming signal to minority students. If minority students remain largely segregated in campus housing, dining halls, classes, and activities, however, much of the potential interactive educational value of diversity may be lost for all students. For this reason, university programs based on diversity should focus not merely on the initial admissions process, but also on retention and on involvement in the full range of fields of study and extracurricular activities.

Recent studies by Alexander Astin and others have shown that direct student experience with racial diversity corresponds to increased cultural awareness and commitment to promoting racial understanding. This exposure comes at a critical time in students' lives: the university in essence serves as a controlled microcosm previewing the larger society and working world into which the students will graduate. At that point, their employers will expect them to be able to work and interact with a wide variety of people in an increasingly global economy.

More research remains to be done, however, by colleges and universities seeking to define and develop their interest in diversity as related to their educational missions. In a recent survey of existing research on diversity, the Association of American Colleges and Universities reports that campus-based diversity initiatives have a positive impact on the education of all students--promoting increased tolerance and understanding of differences, greater commitment to social justice, and improved academic success and cognitive development. As the frontline educators who serve as students' teachers, mentors, role models, and friends, faculty members are uniquely positioned to observe and evaluate these educational benefits of diversity in a variety of campus contexts. For this reason, AAUP's Committee on Historically Black Institutions and the Status of Minorities in the Profession, along with other organizations in higher education, is seeking systematic faculty input to inform the debate over the nature and extent of these educational benefits.

### Merit and Other Considerations

If racial diversity in higher education is a compelling interest for which there is no adequate alternative, it must still be "narrowly tailored" to fit its goals in order to meet the legal standards for programs in which race is considered. May a university give special consideration to race in its admissions process to a greater extent than to other diversity factors such as geography or religion? Similarly, may special consideration be given to some minority groups and not others? The answers depend upon the extent to which race-neutral admissions procedures provide an adequate cross-section of students with regard to these other factors.

This principle applies to recruiting for all sorts of university needs and activities. In some years a university might need to make special efforts to obtain a top-caliber Quarterback for its football team or bassoon player for its orchestra, but not when it already has a wealth of applicants from which to choose who will play Quarterback or bassoon. Special consideration should be given to members of particular racial groups only to the extent necessary to achieve the diversity interest articulated by the institution at a given time. This need is subject to constant reassessment in light of changing demographics and other circumstances. The goals should never approach rigid quotas; flexible ranges are more legally sound and allow for the myriad of factors that must be considered in putting together a student body.

Critics of diversity argue that factors such as race should not be considered in admissions or financial aid because such decisions should be based solely on individual "merit." Traditionally, such critics have defined merit narrowly to reflect individuals' past academic achievement or potential as measured by grade point averages and standardized test scores, perhaps allowing for consideration of certain types of special skills or talents such as athletic or musical ability. All of these factors can of course contribute to the education of fellow students, but they are not the only factors that contribute to the breadth and quality of the learning environment on a college campus. Looking at an entering class as a whole, any of a number of factors that distinguish a particular applicant from large numbers of other individuals in the pool may also contribute to the overall learning environment. An applicant's "merit" therefore cannot be measured in the abstract without reference to other applicants: each individual's characteristics must be compared with the needs of the class as a whole. A star high school Quarterback may have "merit" based on his past athletic accomplishments, for example, but it may mean little at an institution at which fifteen other star Quarterbacks are also applying--or which has no football team at all.

Ironically other factors having little to do with a traditional definition of merit--such as relationships to wealthy alumni or high-level university administrators--have long been accepted as legitimate criteria in admissions and financial aid decisions. Consideration of these nonmeritocratic factors has never been thought of as "stigmatizing" for the students who benefited. The critics of racial diversity and defenders of traditional "merit" would be much more convincing if they attacked these forms of preference with equal vigor, because consideration of such factors has historically had a strong adverse impact on minority applicants.

These critics also claim that consideration of other race-neutral criteria such as socioeconomic status or geographic origin--i.e., criteria not subject to strict judicial scrutiny--could provide the same results as consideration of race. Studies of the impact of using such factors to seek racial diversity have not been encouraging, however. For example, estimates indicate that the cessation of race-based affirmative action in California will have an adverse impact on African American and Hispanic students, even if socioeconomic status is relied upon heavily in admissions decisions.

Far from reflecting a colorblind society, racial classifications receive the highest level of constitutional scrutiny precisely because race has been such a powerful and divisive force in American and world history. In the post-Cold War world, racial and ethnic tensions have emerged as the greatest single threat to societies all over the globe--ranging from the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia to South Africa, Rwanda, and even Canada. Face-to-face interaction in the higher education context can play a key role in developing genuine interracial understanding and tolerance (to overcome such tensions). Racial diversity within institutions is a compelling need, because painful historical experience has demonstrated that "separate but equal" educational systems are never equal and breed prejudice, misunderstanding, and resentment. If universities want to avoid a relapse into increased racial segregation in light of the pressures against affirmative action in today's political and legal climate, they must make the case for the need for racial diversity to further the core educational purposes for which they exist--and enlist the help of their faculty in identifying and articulating its educational benefits.

Jonathan R. Alger is AAUP associate counsel and staff liaison for Committee on Historically Black Institutions and the Status of Minorities in the Profession.

For further information contact the [Government Relations Office](#) of the  
American Association of University Professors

# On the Importance of Diversity in University Admissions

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On April 14, during its annual spring meeting in Washington, D.C., the Association of American Universities adopted a statement that expresses strong support for continued attention to diversity in university admissions.

The Association of American Universities consists of 62 leading North American research universities. These institutions are represented at the association's meetings by their president or chancellor.

The text of the statement that was adopted April 14 is reproduced below.

For some time, the consideration of ethnicity, race, and gender as factors in college and university admissions has been strenuously discussed both within and outside of the academy.

The public debate about the goal of diversity, as well as affirmative action; the 1995 decision of the Regents of the University of California to discontinue any special consideration of ethnicity, race, and gender as factors in admissions; the passage of Proposition 209 in California; and the *Hopwood* ruling of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals have all combined to create substantial uncertainty about the future representation of minority students within our student bodies. Special efforts to identify and enroll women--particularly but not only in fields such as mathematics, the physical sciences, and engineering--may also be affected.

As members of the Association of American Universities, we therefore want to express our strong conviction concerning the continuing need to take into account a wide range of considerations--including ethnicity, race, and gender--as we evaluate the students whom we select for admission.

We speak first and foremost as educators. We believe that our students benefit significantly from education that takes place within a diverse setting. In the course of their university education, our students encounter and learn from others who have backgrounds and characteristics very different from their own. As we seek to prepare students for life in the twenty-first century, the educational value of such encounters will become more important, not less, than in the past.

A very substantial portion of our curriculum is enhanced by the discourse made possible by the heterogeneous backgrounds of our students. Equally, a significant part of education in our institutions takes place outside the classroom, in extracurricular activities where students learn how to work together, as well as to compete: how to exercise leadership, as well as to build consensus. If our institutional capacity to bring together a genuinely diverse group of students is removed--or severely reduced--then the quality and texture of the education we provide will be significantly diminished.

For several decades--in many cases, far longer--our universities have assembled their student bodies to take into account many aspects of diversity. The most effective admissions processes have done this in a way that assesses students as individuals, while also taking into account their potential to contribute to the education of their fellow-students in a great variety of ways. We do not advocate admitting students who cannot meet the criteria for admission to our universities. We do not endorse quotas or "set-asides" in admissions. But we do insist that we must be able, as educators, to select those students--from among many qualified applicants--who will best enable our institutions to fulfill their broad educational purposes.

In this respect, we speak not only as educators, but also as concerned citizens. As presidents and chancellors of universities that have historically produced many of America's leaders in business, government, the professions, and the arts, we are conscious of our obligation to educate exceptional people who will serve all of the nation's different communities. The evaluation of an individual applicant to our universities cannot, therefore, be based on a narrow or mainly "statistical" definition of merit. The concept of merit must take fully into account not only academic grades and standardized test scores, but also the many unquantifiable human qualities and capacities of individuals, including their promise for continuing future development. It must include characteristics such as the potential for leadership--especially the requirements for leadership in a heterogeneous democratic society such as ours.

We therefore reaffirm our commitment to diversity as a value that is central to the very concept of education in our institutions. And we strongly reaffirm our support for the continuation of admissions policies, consistent with the broad principles of equal opportunity and equal protection, that take many factors and characteristics into account--including ethnicity, race, and gender--in the selection of those individuals who

will be students today, and leaders in the years to come.

### Association of American Universities member Institutions

Brandeis University	The Pennsylvania State University	University of Kansas
Brown University	Princeton University	University of Maryland, College Park
California Institute of Technology	Purdue University	University of Michigan
Carnegie Mellon University	Rice University	University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
Case Western Reserve University	Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey	University of Missouri, Columbia
The Catholic University of America	Stanford University	University of Nebraska, Lincoln
Clark University	Syracuse University	University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Columbia University	Tulane University	University of Oregon
Cornell University	University of Arizona	University of Pennsylvania
Duke University	University at Buffalo-State University of New York	University of Pittsburgh
Emory University	University of California, Berkeley	University of Rochester
Harvard University	University of California, Davis	University of Southern California
Indiana University	University of California, Irvine	University of Texas, Austin
Iowa State University	University of California, Los Angeles	University of Toronto
The Johns Hopkins University	University of California, San Diego	University of Virginia
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	University of California, Santa Barbara	University of Washington
McGill University	University of Chicago	The University of Wisconsin, Madison
Michigan State University	University of Colorado, Boulder	Vanderbilt University
New York University	University of Florida	Washington University in St. Louis
Northwestern University	University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	Yale University
The Ohio State University	University of Iowa	

THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES  
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## On the Importance of Diversity in Higher Education

America's colleges and universities differ in many ways. Some are public, others are independent; some are large urban universities, some are two-year community colleges, others small rural campuses. Some offer graduate and professional programs, others focus primarily on undergraduate education. Each of our more than 3,000 colleges and universities has its own specific and distinct mission. This collective diversity among institutions is one of the great strengths of America's higher education system, and has helped make it the best in the world. Preserving that diversity is essential if we hope to serve the needs of our democratic society.

Similarly, many colleges and universities share a common belief, born of experience, that diversity in their student bodies, faculties, and staff is important for them to fulfill their primary mission: providing a quality education. The public is entitled to know why these institutions believe so strongly that racial and ethnic diversity should be one factor among the many considered in admissions and hiring. The reasons include:

- **Diversity enriches the educational experience.**  
We learn from those whose experiences, beliefs, and perspectives are different from our own, and these lessons can be taught best in a richly diverse intellectual and social environment.
- **It promotes personal growth--and a healthy society.**  
Diversity challenges stereotyped preconceptions; it encourages critical thinking, and it helps students learn to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds.
- **It strengthens communities and the workplace.**  
Education within a diverse setting prepares students to become good citizens in an increasingly complex, pluralistic society; it fosters mutual respect and teamwork; and it helps build communities whose members are judged by the quality of their character and their collaboration.
- **It enhances America's economic competitiveness.**  
Sustaining the nation's prosperity in the 21st century will require us to maximize the talents and abilities of all our citizens, in work settings that bring together individuals with diverse backgrounds and cultures.

American colleges and universities traditionally have enjoyed significant latitude in defining their missions. Americans have understood that there is no single model of a good college, and that no formulaic standard can predict with certainty the lifetime contribution of a teacher or a student. Yet, the freedom to determine who shall teach and be taught has been restricted in a number of places, and come under attack in others. As a result, some schools have experienced precipitous declines in the enrollment of African-American and Hispanic students, reversing decades of progress in the effort to assure that all groups in American society have an equal opportunity for access to higher education.

Achieving diversity on college campuses does not require quotas. Nor does diversity require admission of unqualified applicants. However, the diversity we seek, and the future of the nation, require that colleges and universities continue to be able to reach out and make a conscious effort to create healthy and diverse learning environments appropriate for their missions. The success of higher education, and the strength of our democracy depend on it.

### Endorsements

AACSB . The International Association for Management [ , ] .  
ACT (formerly American College Testing)  
American Association for Higher Education  
American Association of Colleges For Teacher Education  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing



American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
 American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers  
 American Association of Community Colleges  
 American Association of Dental Schools  
 American Association of State Colleges and Universities  
 American Association of University Administrators  
 American Association of University Professors  
 American College Personnel Association  
 American Council on Education  
 American Indian Higher Education Consortium  
 American Medical Student Association  
 American Society for Engineering Education  
 APPA: The Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers  
 Association of Academic Health Centers  
 Association of American Colleges and Universities  
 Association of American Law Schools  
 Association of American Medical Colleges  
 Association of American Universities  
 Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities  
 Association of College Unions International  
 Association of Community College Trustees  
 Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges  
 Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities  
 Coalition of Higher Education Assistance Organizations  
 Coker College, Hartsville, South Carolina  
 College and University Personnel Association  
 Commission on Independent Colleges & Universities  
 Consortium on Financing Higher Education  
 Council for Advancement and Support of Education  
 Council of Graduate Schools  
 Council of Independent Colleges  
 Educational Testing Service  
 Golden Key National Honor Society  
 Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities  
 LaN School Admission Counsel  
 Lutheran Educational Conference of North America  
 NAFSA- Association of International Educators  
 National Association for College Admission Counseling  
 National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education  
 National Association of College and University Business Officers  
 National Association of Graduate and Professional Students  
 National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities  
 National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges  
 National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators  
 National Association of Student Personnel Administrators  
 National Collegiate Athletic Association  
 National Council of Educational Opportunity Associations  
 NAWA: Advancing Women in Higher Education  
 New England Board of Higher Education  
 The College Board  
 The College Fund/UNCF  
 The Education Trust  
 University Continuing Education Association

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American Council on Education  
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Last modified March 17, 1998  
 Send comments and suggestions to [web@ace.ncho.edu](mailto:web@ace.ncho.edu)

File  
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State of California  
**Memorandum**

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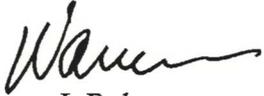
**Academic Senate**

**CAL POLY**

SAN LUIS OBISPO  
CA 93407

To: Myron Hood  
Chair, Academic Senate

Date: September 18, 1998

From:   
Warren J. Baker  
President

Copies: Paul J. Zingg  
Harvey Greenwald  
Linda Dalton

Subject: AS-505-98/DTF, Resolution on the Academic Value of Diversity  
AS-506-98/DTF, Resolution on *The Cal Poly Statement on Diversity*

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I am pleased to accept Resolutions AS-505-98/DTF and AS-506-98/DTF.

The Academic Senate is to be applauded for its clear affirmation of the educational values of diversity and its recognition that diversity strengthens our community and prepares our students more fully for effective citizenry, responsible careers and engaged lives.

Both resolutions underscore the University's values that are imbedded in our Mission Statement and Strategic Plan. The voice of the Senate in these matters will strengthen the University's ability to continue its efforts to foster greater diversity among our students, faculty and staff. Clearly aligning Cal Poly with the important statements on diversity that the nation's principal educational associations have made signals our commitment and resolve.

I look forward to working with the Senate and our entire University community in achieving the promise within these resolutions.