

**Barnard College Student Government Association
Columbia College Student Council
Engineering Student Council
General Studies Student Council**

Resolution on Affirmative Action

DRAFT; FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

WHEREAS Columbia University currently has a policy of using Affirmative Action¹ in admissions decisions, which contributes to the diversity of our campus; and

WHEREAS all undergraduate students benefit from the diversity created by this policy, in that students learn to work with and appreciate their peers of different backgrounds, and in that students from traditionally disadvantaged groups are afforded opportunities in line with their abilities rather than historical prejudice; and

WHEREAS the legal framework for Affirmative Action outlined in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* is currently under threat, with the case *Gratz v. Bollinger et.al.*² presently being argued before the Supreme Court of the United States of America. This case, if the appellants prevail, could overturn decades of Affirmative Action policy in American higher education, with uncertain but troubling implications for both public and private institutions.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the councils urge their respective admissions offices to maintain their policies of Affirmative Action with respect to admissions decisions, in order to promote the growth of diversity among the student bodies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the councils' delegates to the Ivy Council be urged to support the Affirmative Action resolution being presented before that body.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that it is the sense of the councils that the US Supreme Court, in its deliberations in the *Gratz* case, ought to maintain the principles upheld in *Bakke* and recognize the continuing value of diversity and Affirmative Action in American higher education.

¹ For the purposes of this resolution, we define Affirmative Action to be the policy of consciously seeking to admit students of traditionally disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, including but not limited to *blah blah blah*. [This statement is tentative pending consultation with the offices of Admissions and of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, but see the University's non-discrimination policy, attached as an appendix.] We note the interpretation of the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education:

Affirmative Action does not mean entitlements to proportional representation. It means actions to eliminate discrimination: creation of more adequate pools of talent, active searches for talent wherever it exists, revision of policies and practices that permitted or abetted discrimination, development of expectations for a staff whose composition does not reflect the impacts of discrimination, provision of judicial processes to hear complaints, and the making of decisions without improper regard to sex, race, or other origin.

² As the councils represent the undergraduate student body, we are primarily concerned with the *Gratz* case, which deals with undergraduate admissions. The *Grutter* case, which deals with law school admissions, raises some similar issues, but is not the topic of this resolution.

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Resolution on Affirmative Action: Optional Rider on Legacy Admissions

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[It appears that the councils have differing views on the role of legacy in the admissions process and its relation to Affirmative Action. Therefore, we present this as an additional section that the individual councils may or may not choose to pass, while maintaining the hope that all four councils will pass our main resolution.]

WHEREAS, while considering the role of Affirmative Action in the admissions process, the councils are concerned with the role of legacy³ admissions; and,

WHEREAS, while Affirmative Action is designed to reduce the impact of historical prejudices, legacy admissions serve to increase that impact, granting preference to students based on their lineage rather than their ability, and especially to those who are already advantaged in their secondary schooling and in the admissions process.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the councils urge their respective admissions offices to study the effect of legacy on the admissions process, with an eye towards ending its consideration as a factor in admissions decisions.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the admissions offices be pressured to release information about their policies with respect to legacy, and to make available statistics showing the differences in qualifications, admission rates, and matriculation rates between legacy and non-legacy students.

³ Legacy is the granting of special consideration in the admissions process to those who are children or siblings of Columbia alumni. Obviously, no one would suggest that all such applicants be denied admission; we seek simply to remove their special consideration.

APPENDIX: Columbia University Admissions Statement of Non-Discrimination

Columbia University admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the University. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, religion, marital status, citizenship, or Vietnam era or disabled veteran status in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other University-administered programs.