Winners and losers: changes in Texas university admissions post-Hopwood

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This paper evaluates changes in the racial and ethnic composition of admissions at seven Texas universities following the judicial ban on affirmative action imposed by the 1996 Hopwood decision. We estimate the extent to which these universities practiced affirmative action before the judicial ban and evaluate how admission officers at these universities changed the relative weights accorded to various applicant characteristics after 1996. After assessing whether changes in the relative weights favored minority applicants, we simulate the degree to which these new policies succeeded in maintaining minority admission rates at their pre-Hopwood levels. We find that most of the universities complied with the Hopwood ruling such that direct advantages given to black and Hispanic applicants disappeared (and, in some cases, became disadvantages). While we find some evidence that universities changed the weights they placed on applicant characteristics aside from race and ethnicity in ways that aided black and Hispanic applicants, these changes in the admissions process were unable to maintain black and Hispanic applicants’ share of admitted students. Thus, these alternative admissions systems have not served as a sufficient proxy for race and ethnicity.