

## Schools share diversity efforts

Race-based policies aren't the only way, universities say

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**CLEMSON, S.C.** -- As the courts restrict or invalidate programs designed to recruit minorities, colleges have developed new strategies to foster diversity without using race as an admissions standard.

During a conference here on black student achievement, admissions officials of three schools whose affirmative action programs have been struck down maintained that their new policies were working:

- After the University of Texas lost a 1996 case over raced-based admissions, state legislators and Gov. George W. Bush enacted a law guaranteeing slots in any state university to students in the top 10 percent of Texas high schools. The law is designed to provide college access for students from predominantly black and Hispanic schools, who might not otherwise qualify.

Critics have charged the policy could admit unprepared students from poor high schools. But Bruce Walker, University of Texas admissions director, said students admitted under the top 10 program are outperforming some other students with higher test scores.

- Since losing a 2000 case involving the use of race in selecting students, the University of Georgia has worked to attract more students from high schools traditionally underrepresented at UGA, said Admissions Director Nancy McDuff. While black enrollment in 2001 fell below 5 percent, black enrollment in the incoming freshman class this year was slightly up from recent years, she said.

- After a 1998 court ruling banning the use of race in admissions, the University of Washington created a minority "student ambassadors" program, said Admissions Director Tim Washburn. The students are paid to help recruit minority students at high schools across the state. Some administrators have criticized these alternatives to affirmative action as ineffective or even counterproductive.

Last week, a study by Princeton University sociologist Marta Tienda found that the probability of acceptance for black and Hispanic applicants had fallen at UT and Texas A&M since the top 10 percent policy was enacted. At the same time, the probability of acceptance for whites increased at both schools.

"If we want to diversify our institutions of higher education," Tienda said last week, "it is necessary to take race into account."

Ted Spencer, the University of Michigan's undergraduate admissions director, opposes top 10 percent policies, he said, because they do not consider individual abilities and varying educational programs at different high schools.

"I don't buy it," said Spencer. "It sounds like a quota system to me."

Spencer defended his university's program, which is under attack in the courts for using race in admissions decisions. "Our goal is to bring students to our campus who will succeed," Spencer said. "We use race as a matter of consideration. It is not the only admissions factor, and we do not try to meet a quota."

The Supreme Court this year will consider whether some white Michigan applicants were rejected unconstitutionally because of their race. The case is being widely watched, and could produce the court's most far-reaching decision on affirmative action in decades. The Bush administration has joined the case, opposing the university's policy.

Arthur Coleman, assistant secretary in the U.S. Education Department under President Clinton, told the conference that colleges can defend race-based admissions on the basis of "academic freedom that's been bestowed upon you by the federal courts and Supreme Court for decades."

The Michigan case is not about using affirmative action to remedy historical wrongs, said Coleman, now a Washington lawyer. "As a legal matter, we are talking about pursuing the educational interests and the mission of the University of Michigan."