Equity and Access in a Post-Affirmative Action Environment

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Presentation Overview

What next?
- Moving forward in the current social/political environment
- Talking about race and diversity

Talking about race & diversity
- Highlight disparities
- Explain root causes and perpetuating factors
- Link people’s ideals with the need for diversity

Moving Forward
- Identify all affected arenas
- Going beyond numerical diversity
- Considering race-neutral alternatives
- Setting short, medium and long term goals.
Alignment

► Values
► Goals
► Institutions
► Practice
► Communication
  ▪ Story
What next?

►► Michigan on the front lines

►► Need to move fast to preclude the devastating consequences of similar initiatives in California, Washington and Florida

- Following the passage 209 in California, African Americans at UCLA and Berkeley Law programs plummeted 80%. Latinos dropped by 50% at Berkeley, and 25% at UCLA.

- UCLA saw the lowest levels of incoming African American freshman since 1973

Need to Understand the Social/Political Climate

Key Question: Given public\(^1\) and organizational support of Affirmative Action, how do we explain the results of the election?

Critical to move quickly to understand as next states have already been identified for colorblind initiatives.

To better understand need to collaborate with universities/organizations/stakeholders to assess what we know, what we don’t, and concrete next steps.
What next?

►► Affirmative action is complex; how it is framed impacts support

- Affirmative action has gained support over past 10 years. In 1995, 58% supported it. In 2003 63% did.

- However, 42% felt it was unfair, and when the words preferential treatment were used, 72% felt we should not “make every effort to improve the position of blacks”

Defining Race

► At the core, affirmative action is not being contested, how we conceptualize race is.

► Race-based interventions are seen as unfair because race is though of as phenotype alone

► Race + framework: Race is a web, or matrix of several factors of dis advantage culminating, and feeding off each other creating a vicious cycle of cumulative causation.
Defining Race

► Class thought to be a good proxy
  ▪ Correlation between race and class
  ▪ Less controversial

► Meaning of class is complex; class is multidimensional
  ▪ Difficult to define yet must be understood to be utilized most effectively
  ▪ For example, if class is used via income or socioeconomic status limited—would ignores cumulative benefits of wealth (SAT scores)

► The polarity is false. A class analysis cannot do the work of a race alone. Need to understand relationship between race and class to understand either.
“We hear it said nowadays that there is no “race Problem” but only a “class problem.” The Negro sharecropper is alleged to be destitute not because of his color—but because of his class position—and it is pointed out that there are white people who are equally poor. From a practical angle there is a point in this reasoning. But from a theoretical angle it contains escapism in new form...And it tends to conceal the whole system of special deprivations visited upon the Negro only because he is not white.”

Talking About Race
Need and Hesitancy to Talk about Race

► Now more than ever there is a critical need to talk about race & diversity

► Yet there is a hesitancy to discuss race and disparities
  - Fear of stigmatizing groups and creating self-fulfilling prophecy
  - Concern about reinforcing negative stereotypes
  - Avoidance of eliciting frames that create resistance to social-justice policy and encourage inter-group conflict
  - Ignores similar stresses of whites
Why We Need to Talk about Race

Consequences of not talking about race

- To not talk about race is to talk about race
- Masks racial disparities
- Reinforces perceptions of equality
- Decreases support for equitable interventions
- Creates a social and political climate where diversity is not understood or valued
- Diverts policies to focus on other proxies such as class
- Ignores symptoms that arrangements are functioning poorly for all- **linked fate**
How to talk about race?: Disparities

- Talk about race by talking about race: inoculate
- What is impact and meaning of group based durable cumulative disparities?
Model for Disparate Outcomes

Historically

- Biased Structures
- Disparate Outcomes

Today

- De Jure Neutral Structures
- Disparate Outcomes

What is occurring here to replicate the outcomes today?

Biology

- Individuals/Culture
  - Endo/exo
- Structures/Opportunity
Talking about Race (cont.)

- Need to discuss relationship between dominant social discourses, American ideals, and current arrangements
  - Unbalanced playing field negates legitimacy of dominant American ideals (individualism, meritocracy)
  - In order to have a legitimate democratic state, diversity must be at the center.
  - Diversity in education is necessary to achieve this
Talking about Race in a Post-Proposal 2 Environment

- Proposition 2 changed the social and political climate dramatically
- Conversations about race and diversity must be honed to ensure messages are effective. Part of larger story.
- This is the first step in proactively achieving and maintaining diversity in our public institutions
Understanding Disparities
Causes and Perpetuation of Disparities

► Historical factors. Discrimination through:
  - Slavery
  - Jim Crow
  - de jure segregation
  - Redlining
  - The New Deal

► Present day factors. Disparities in:
  - Public education
  - Housing
  - Healthcare
  - Wealth disparities
  - Crime & criminal justice
Attribution of disparities

- Dominant public paradigms explaining disparities “bad apples”
  - Defective culture
  - Individual faults
  - Personal Racism

- Overlooks policies and arrangements “diseased tree”
  - Structures
  - Institutions
  - Cumulative causation

- This lens illustrates the web of structures as they cumulatively support or depress opportunity
Illustration of Cumulative Causation

► The present paradigm of “bad apples” leads many to believe that higher education is equally accessible to all.

► However, a multitude of external factors determine who makes it to the doors of a university, including:
  - Availability and quality of healthcare throughout childhood, extending back to prenatal care
  - Access to preschool
  - Neighborhood effects: lead, asthma, high-stress environments
  - Family environment
  - Neighborhood resources: libraries, community centers
  - Nutrition
  - Resources available to the public school
  - School’s concentration of high-poverty students

► These combined institutions create a web of oppression that are more than the sum of the individual parts.
At the core of these issues is housing

Housing is **Critical** in Determining Access to Opportunity

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**Link Between Housing and Education**

- Fiscal Policies
  - Health
  - Employment
  - Education
  - Transportation
  - Childcare
  - Effective Participation
  - Housing

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21
SR and Opportunities

- Analysis is not communication
- We are uncomfortable with SR
- We like Opportunity Communities
- They are the obverse of each other
The Web of Opportunity

Opportunities in our society are geographically distributed and often clustered throughout metropolitan areas

- This creates “winner” and “loser” communities or “high” and “low” opportunity communities

Your location within this “web of opportunity” plays a decisive role in your life potential and outcomes

- Where you live determines where you go to school
- Where you go to school determines your GPA
- This determines your acceptance into higher education
Connection Between Housing and Schools

Low Opportunity

High Opportunity
Racialization of Poverty

- The concentration into low-opportunity neighborhoods is experienced disproportionately by African Americans.

- This can be seen in school segregation rates as the racial makeup of neighborhoods determines the racial composition of schools.

- School segregation has been steadily increasing in the '90s²
  - Half of all African American students attend a central city district.
  - Only 1 in 6 white students does.

The Link between Racial & Economic Segregation

- Strong correlation: nearly all schools with a majority of students of color are high poverty.
- The average White student attends a school with student poverty ranging from 23-30%.
- For the average African American student, school poverty ranges from 61-78%.
- The level of concentrated poverty is correlated with the quality of the school.
But isn’t it getting better?

► Many feel that this racialization of concentrated poverty has improved in recent years.

► In 1960, African-American families in poverty were 3.8 times more likely to be concentrated in high-poverty neighborhoods than poor whites.

► In 2000, they were 7.3 times more likely.

Fact Sheet from the Opportunity Agenda, Housing Neighborhoods and Opportunity.  
http://www.opportunityagenda.org/site/c.mwL5KkN0LvH/b.1433711/k.B7BA/Housing_Fact_Sheet.htm
Effect of Disparities

- Existing disparities illustrate a number of effects that run counter to American ideals:
  - REPRESENTATION: Public institutions do not reflect their constituents
  - EQUALITY: A race-based social hierarchy predominates
  - NON-DISCRIMINATION: Unresolved tensions between public ideal (colorblindness) and reality (disparities)
  - CITIZENSHIP: Membership in society conferred unequally
  - OPPORTUNITY: Dominant ideologies in America such as open opportunity and individualism are hollow
  - FREEDOM: People in poverty cannot fully exercise their freedoms
    Amartya Sen, Development as Freedom (1999)
  - DEMOCRACY: Cumulatively these represent an ILLEGITIMATE DEMOCRACY

These contradiction must be communicated to the public
Moving Forward
Eradication of Affirmative Action

Prior to Proposal 2, affirmative action was the primary vehicle which did the work of:

- Addressing racial disparities
- Interrupting the cycle of poverty
- Leveling the playing field made unequal from historical injustices and present-day structural impediments
- Ensuring national security
- Providing a diverse AND culturally competent workforce
- Creating more democratic institutions
- Working towards a legitimate democracy
Moving Forward in the Social/Political Environment

► Although not ideal social/political climate, this is a unique opportunity for higher education

► Colleges and universities have been defending diversity for decades, but not enough has been done for race or socioeconomic bases

► The passage of Proposal 2 presents an opportunity to shift from a reactive to a proactive agenda

► Need short, medium and long term strategies
Short, Medium & Long Term Strategies

► Short Term
  - Act quickly to develop policies that ensure a racially diverse campus.
  - Continue building public support for diversity
  - Meet & collaborate with universities/states/stakeholders

► Medium & Long Term
  - Develop ongoing research and data collection plans to ensure the full effect of Proposal 2 is understood
  - Consider ways to broaden and challenge the meaning of merit
  - Revisit the university’s vision and mission, and ensure policies and practices are in alignment
  - Bakke and societal discrimination/racial justice
Moving Forward in a Post-Affirmative Action Environment

There are four primary areas of focus to mitigate and redirect the impact of Proposal 2:

- Outreach
- Recruitment
- Admissions
- Retention
- Alignment
Outreach

► The qualifications of who makes it to the door of the university depend largely on structural factors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Healthcare</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Environmental justice</td>
</tr>
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</table>

► To ensure a highly qualified, diverse applicant pool, higher must increase outreach efforts to high-poverty schools and communities:

- Creating or expanding mentoring/tutoring support and summer programs
- Providing support to and partnering with community organizations
- Advocating for education reform and working to build a more equitable P-12 system
Recruitment

- In Washington State after Initiative 200, the percentage of African Americans at the school decreased as a result in application rates.

- Schools must be aware of and prepare for being perceived as an unwelcoming, exclusive environment.

- Recruiters must be trained to hear students’ concerns and address them in ways that emphasizes the institution’s commitment to diversity.

- Extensive outreach efforts and revised admissions policies could also mitigate this chilling effect.
Admissions

► Higher education currently in the firm grasp of meritocracy, relying on indicators such as GPA and SAT to quantify individual ability AND predict potential.

► This is predominantly accepted as being:
  - Objective
  - Valid
  - Legitimate
  - Natural
Racialization of Standardized Measurements

- This is problematic because these measurements are racialized
  - GPA depends on school (5.0 classes predominantly in middle-class, white schools)
  - SAT results racially disparate; stronger predictor of family income
  - Standardized measurements impacted by stereotype threat (Steele)

- There is also a hidden assumption that these measurements are aligned with a schools’ greater goals and objectives
Aligning Missions and Admissions

► Instead schools should start with their goal and work backwards to achieve them.

► What constitutes a good student?
  ▪ Grades?
  ▪ Career success?
  ▪ Degree to which their career is financially or emotionally rewarding?
  ▪ Whether they give back to their alma mater and/or the greater community?

► If merit is based on what we value, what does the way we measure merit say about our values?
  ▪ Do we value standardized test performance, or democracy?
  ▪ Which is given more weight in admissions? Curriculum?
  ▪ Is individual success more important than group? Can both be achieved?
Moving Beyond Individualistic Merit

► The way merit is currently used is individualistic

► Problematic because cumulative disadvantage based upon group identity- race

► Limitations of individualistic merit:

  ▪ Reinforces myth of the ‘American dream’- work hard, achieve success. Stigmatizes those who don’t make it
  
  ▪ Marginalized groups do not benefit from a few members given preference- need intervention that lifts up group collectively

  ► e.g. those more likely to give back (thus lifting up the entire community) are Black and Latino beneficiaries of affirmative action
Democratic Merit

► Admissions practices must confer rewards to those who will create a more just, more democratic society

Democratic merit is multi-dimensional. It includes

1. Aligning practices with the meaning of democracy (doing democracy) and
2. Creating democratic citizens (being part of democracy)
Aligning Missions and Admissions

- The matter of who should get into any institution cannot be separated from the question of what that institution hopes to accomplish.
- If diversity and citizenship is a goal, consider alternatives to achieve:
  - Democratic/citizenship merit
    - Indiana 21st Century Scholars
  - Reward those who will give back to the community
  - Geographic merit - Clark University
Aligning Missions and Admissions

Alternative admissions policies (cont.)

- Texas 10%/California 4% plans
- Special consideration for 1st generation college students
- Create seamless connection to community colleges - California’s 4-12% plan
- Move beyond measurements that are limited to one type of intelligence (analytical), create space to recognize multiple intelligences
- Conduct research to better understand SAT scores - at what threshold are they accurate predictors of success?
- Provisions in admissions for students from high poverty schools
- Identify ‘strivers’ - consider test scores in comparison to peers at the same or similar schools
- Develop more holistic metric: e.g. family net worth, school poverty, neighborhood poverty, single parent household, etc.
Aligning Missions and Admissions

- Caution must be taken with admissions policies because many are thought to do the work of race, but fall short.

- Class—when using class as a proxy the numbers of students of color drops.

  - Explanations:
    - low-income threshold set too high
    - Previous beneficiaries of affirmative action may not have been low income.
    - Poverty is experienced differently depending on race: low-income white students significantly outperform Black and Latino/a students.
    - Household income may not be the best measure of economic disadvantage.
    - Already reduced applicant pool.
Aligning Missions and Admissions

Class fails to account for the cumulative effect of factors that act as gatekeepers for people of color:

- Segregated in high-poverty, low performing schools
- Higher drop/push out rates
- Less willing to going into debt with school loans
- Inadequate/little assistance in application process
- Racialized admissions policies
Retention

► The work of creating a diverse institution does not stop with the demographic makeup of the student body

► Diversity is a transformative goal, not solely a numerical one.

► Harnessing the genuine benefits of diversity within and across an institution is a challenge.
  - Teachers, administrators and staff must share the goal and be culturally competent
  - Teachers must have the skills and knowledge to create a safe, supportive, and inclusive space.
Summary
Summary

While conditions are less than ideal, the university has a unique opportunity to move forward in groundbreaking ways and to set the agenda for other universities and colleges to redefine merit, and achieve transformative diversity and create a more legitimate, democratic arrangement.
Next Steps

► **Cooperation**: By reaching out and soliciting input from students, faculty, administrators, public education and the community, The University of Michigan is continuing to keep the public in public education.

► **Collaboration**: Dialogues, coalitions and best practice sharing with other higher education institutions are key.

► **Preparation**: Convene a national meeting with universities, organizations and stakeholders to set research agenda and determine next steps.
Next Steps

► This is a unique opportunity to take what has happened and utilize it to set a new, proactive, democratic agenda for higher education

► This is broad discussion is more challenging, but more fruitful

► Need to continue diligent work on short and medium term goals, while keeping long term goals in sight

► Collect data/evaluate/tell stories
Linked Fates…

Transformative Change

► Our fates are linked, yet our fates have been socially constructed as disconnected (especially through the categories of class, race, gender, etc.)

- We need socially constructed “bridges” to transform our society
- Conceive of an individual as connected to—instead of isolated from—“thy neighbor”
- Be advocates for transformative change

► Transformative: An intervention that works to permanently transform structural arrangements which produce inequity and disparity
Questions or Comments?
For More Information Visit Us On-Line:

www.KirwanInstitute.org

African American  
Latino  
Asian  
Native American
## Alternative Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROACH</th>
<th>PUBLIC APPROVAL</th>
<th>RACIAL/ETHNIC DIVERSITY</th>
<th>SES DIVERSITY</th>
<th>COLLEGE PERFORMANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Grades, test scores, teacher recommendations and demonstrated leadership</strong></td>
<td>Widespread support</td>
<td>Reduces # of qualified African Americans and Hispanics</td>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>4% increase in graduation rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lottery with minimal academic qualifications</strong></td>
<td>Approx 83% disagree</td>
<td>No effect</td>
<td>Substantial increase</td>
<td>Reduced graduation rates, lower standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class rank</strong></td>
<td>Majority of the public supports</td>
<td>Slightly smaller pool, little change</td>
<td>Substantial Increase</td>
<td>May be under-prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class rank w/ minimum academic qualifications</strong></td>
<td>Support increases over class rank alone</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
<td>4% increase in graduation rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academically qualified, low-SES students</strong></td>
<td>Supported: 63% say low-income should be admitted over comparable high-income peer</td>
<td>Share in the pool compared to enrollment indicates possible decrease</td>
<td>Greatest increase. &gt;10% increase</td>
<td>4% increase in graduation rate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Alternative Admissions Policies


Merit


Benefits of Diversity


Talking About Race


