

More aid for non-minorities

By Charisse Dengler

As the result of two 2003 Supreme Court cases, schools nationwide are now making minority scholarships and other programs available to everyone. While the cases, which involved the University of Michigan, did not outlaw race specific programs, they did leave the law in an ambiguous state, causing officials to rethink many of their policies.

In *Grutter v. Bollinger*, the court ruled that the school's consideration of race in admission to its law school was acceptable. Still, in *Gratz v. Bollinger*, the court ruled that the use of race in undergraduate admissions was unfair.

The court stated that each student must be evaluated on an individual basis, and factors such as family and economic background must be considered. In other words, diversity is about more than just race.

In response to the court's ruling, more colleges are considering income and social class when it comes to admission and scholarships. For example, some schools have even begun asking students who else in their family has gone to college.

Even though the court's decision did not mention financial aid, it is no secret that scholarships are directly linked to school admissions. Because of this, many school officials worry that the banning of race-specific scholarships is not far behind.

Colleges that have opened up their race-exclusive scholarships to all students include Williams College, Indiana University, St. Louis University, and Carnegie Mellon University. Students who can plan to benefit from such policy changes include white students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds or specializing in unusual fields of study.

"Our concern is that the law be followed and that nobody be denied participation in a program on account of skin color or what country their ancestors came from," said Roger Clegg, President and General Counsel of the Center for Equal Opportunity, in a New York Times interview.

"We're not looking at achieving a particular racial outcome," he said. "And it's unfortunate that some organizations seem to view the success or failure of the program based simply on what percentage of students of this color or that color can participate."

Currently, the United States Department of Education is heeding the complaints of conservative organizations and looking into programs that use race as an admission requirement.

Last year, the Department of Education forced Washington University in St. Louis to change the requirements for an undergraduate scholarship that had only been available to minorities. A year after the revisions, 12 of the 42 recipients are white.

Also, Washington University's African-American scholarships have been argued to violate the idea of individual consideration by offering full tuition and a \$2,500 allowance to 10 African-American freshmen every year.



In July of 2005, the United States Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division informed officials at Southern Illinois University that it would be investigating various programs, including the Illinois Consortium for Educational Opportunity, the Illinois Minority Graduate Incentive Program, Diversifying Higher Education faculty in Illinois, the Proactive Recruitment of Multicultural Professionals for Tomorrow Fellowship, the Graduate Dean's Fellowship, the Chancellor's Fellowship program, the McNair Scholars program, and the Bridge to the Doctorate.

In November, the Department of Justice reported that SIU was participating in employment discrimination by only allowing women and minorities to apply for certain programs and positions, and in February, SIU entered into a consent decree with the Department of Justice.

The decree prohibits assigning paid fellowship positions on the basis of race, national origin, or sex. In addition, SIU is required to report on its fellowship activities every six months for the next two years.

Also, in January, the State University of New York made \$6.8 million available to white students. The money, which is awarded through two scholarship programs, had previously only been available to minorities.

Some schools say they are changing their scholarship program requirements not because of pressure from the government but simply because they want more academically advanced students applying, regardless of ethnicity.

Indiana University is one example of such a school, having recently changed one of its scholarship programs, the Minority Achievers Program, to the Hudson and Holland Scholars Program. A program that awards scholarship money to 150 freshmen each year, the Hudson and Holland Scholars Program will still primarily concern itself with minorities; but now any student may apply.

On other campuses, the push for equality is coming from the students. Utah State University's College Republicans, in an effort to protest discrimination, offered a \$100 "diversity" scholarship during the school's Diversity Week. The scholarship was open to everyone except white Americans.

The organization believes that scholarships should be open to students of all races and should be awarded based on academic qualifications, and its members are urging USU to take a stand against discrimination. In order to apply for the scholarship, students were required to write a 50-word answer to the question, Does reverse discrimination exist in America and in what form?

"We aren't campaigning for all-white scholarships. Race should just not be a factor in the equation to receive financial benefits. We do not see minorities as having a disadvantage because of their race," said Spencer Taylor, president of the College Republicans, in an interview with the Utah Statesman Online.

Some officials and minority students worry that opening up scholarships and programs to all students will deplete the funds and make it harder for minority students to get financial aid.

As a solution, some schools are asking their states for more money to add to the scholarships. These schools feel that this would allow them to offer more scholarships and, they hope, prevent any possible negative effects on minority students.