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Admissions

## UT-Austin re-enacts affirmative action to boost diversity

*Minority enrollment declined after program's end; administrators say the 10 percent rule isn't enough.*

By [Tristan Vawters](#)  
 The Shorthorn Staff

Menial gains in increasing minority students at state flagship schools has caused the Top 10 Percent Law to accompany the re-emergence of race as one of the factors for admission.

Starting in the fall, UT-Austin will re-enact affirmative action in its admissions process to bring in more minority freshmen despite the state's current Top Ten Percent Law, which promotes diversity on college campuses by admitting high school seniors statewide from rural to suburban to inner-city areas who ranked in the top 10 percent of their class.

Don Hale, UT-Austin vice president of public affairs, said the university wants to be more diverse.

"The 10 percent law is not enough to increase minority enrollment," he said. "We're committed to diversity."

According to a Diversity in Higher Education report, minority enrollment at UT-Austin decreased from 38 percent in fall 1996 to 32 percent in fall 1997 after the state's affirmative action program ended. Even with the implementation of the Top 10 Percent Law, the increase in minority enrollment between 1998 and 2004 has been relatively small.

The only ethnic groups that didn't see a drop in enrollment after the end of affirmative action were Asian and white students. After 1998, enrollment of all groups steadily decreased, along with the total incoming class at UT-Austin.

Music business junior Jason Hamilton, who ranked in the top 10 percent of his senior class at Kimball High School, a predominately black school in Dallas, said many black students attend black colleges because of the familiar environment.

"If you go to a black high school, you probably went to a black middle and elementary school, so you get used to it," he said. "Historically, black colleges are usually less expensive, with some exceptions."

Hamilton said he decided to attend UTA instead of UT-Austin to be closer to home.



"I chose to go to a predominately white school to get a different experience," he said. "Plus, this school is close to home, so I can travel to see my mother."

Pamela Haws, assistant vice president and director of institutional research and planning, said UTA has always had a diverse enrollment compared to other schools.

"I'm not sure the 10 percent rule was even aimed at a campus like ours," she said. "We're in the Metroplex, so we serve the population of the area, but I don't think we seen an increase in minority students since the law has been in place."

The Supreme Court ruled in favor of affirmative action in June 2003 in university admissions, making it clear that diversity is a compelling interest and that race can be used in the admissions process in Texas' higher education. The ruling overturned the 1996 Hopwood v. Texas ruling, which stated that consideration of race in admissions was a violation of the Constitution's equal-protection guarantee.

Even though the 10 percent plan has only recaptured the minority students that were lost after the deletion of affirmative action, David Montejano, former UT-Austin associate professor of history and sociology, said the law appears to have broadened the high school "sending or feeding pattern" to UT-Austin.

"The real winners of the Top 10 Percent plan are the inner-city minority high schools and the rural white high schools," Dr. Montejano stated in a 2001 document entitled "Access to The University of Texas at Austin and the 10 Percent Plan: A Three-Year Assessment."

The number of high schools represented at UT-Austin has increased by nearly 200 high schools, from 616 in 1996 to 815 in 2004, according to the university's admissions office.

"The 10 Percent law has helped ensure that the diversity of the state is reflected at UT-Austin," Montejano said.



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