

# Sociology professor finds 10 percent plan flawed

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The Texas '10 percent plan' for college admissions, heralded as a race-neutral alternative to affirmative action, does not succeed in boosting minority enrollment at the state's two flagship universities, according to a study conducted by University professor of sociology Marta Tienda.

President Bush has asserted that the Texas system is better than ones that use racial preferences. Before the Supreme Court now is a landmark case on affirmative action. Three white applicants who were denied admission to the University of Michigan have claimed that the university's policy violates the equal protection guarantees of the Constitution.

President Tilghman said Princeton may join a brief supporting Michigan's side in the case.

The Texas admission plan, passed by the state legislature and signed into law by then-governor Bush in 1998, automatically admits Texas students who graduate in the top ten percent of their high school classes to any public four-year university in the state.

However, the numbers of Hispanic and black students at Texas A&M and the University of Texas at Austin have not become representative of the state, Tienda said.

"Without very aggressive outreach programs to [high schools] that have high levels of economic disadvantage, there would be no gains," she added.

After a Texas court ruling in 1996 banned racial preferences in admissions, the percentages of black and Hispanic students fell at these two schools. At Texas A&M, the percentage of black students fell from 3.7 to 2.4 percent, while the percentage of Hispanic students fell from 12.6 to 9.2 percent, according to the study.

Since the 10-percent plan began, the number of minority students enrolled has not matched the growth of college-age minorities in the state, Tienda said. She added that Texas would soon have a nonwhite majority.

Tienda said that whereas the 10-percent plan may admit more minority students, it does little to increase minority enrollment unless the schools make significant outreach efforts. "Many of these kids are first generation college-goers," she said.

Furthermore, the program does little to increase minority enrollment because the students in the top 10 percent of their classes at under-performing high schools were being admitted before the program, the study said.

A program of '10-percent plus,' adding recruitment and increased financial aid to the admissions system, is necessary to bring about gains in minority enrollment, Tienda said.

University Communications Director Lauren Robinson-Brown '85 said that while the publication of Tienda's study supports the University's position, the study was conducted independently of the current debate on affirmative action.

President Tilghman said that x-percent plans "fundamentally require segregation" to promote diversity, which she called "terrible public policy."

Instead, Tilghman said the University would seek to support the use of racial preferences, along with many other criteria, in the admission process.