

Study: 10 percent law isn't doing enough for diversity

Sharon Jayson, AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

460 words

24 October 2003

[Austin American-Statesman](#)

B7

English

Copyright (c) 2003 Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company. All rights reserved.

Texas' top 10 percent law hasn't done enough to improve college access for minorities, according to a study released Thursday by **Princeton University** researchers. The findings, released in California at a higher education conference, are based on surveys of Texas high school students conducted during spring 2002.

The report suggests that minority students have less college aspirations than non-minority students and that college costs play a major role in preventing high-achieving low-income students from going to college.

Those findings reinforce long-term efforts by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to increase college participation, Commissioner Don Brown said.

"The conclusion that we have gaps to close is right on the mark," he said. "We've already concluded that years ago."

The state agency has launched an effort to bring another 300,000 students, above the 200,000 already forecast for a college education, into higher education by 2015.

"My view is that the 10 percent policy was aimed at keeping the door open at our most competitive undergraduate institutions, but it was not aimed at accomplishing all of the other results that we need to accomplish to close the gaps by ethnic group, by income and by region," Brown said.

The law guarantees automatic admission to the state's public colleges and universities for high school graduates in the top 10 percent of their classes.

It was enacted to increase campus diversity after a 1996 court ruling, called Hopwood, dismantled affirmative action in Texas college admissions.

There is debate now on whether the law is needed after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling reinstated consideration of race as an admissions factor.

State Sen. Jeff Wentworth, R-San Antonio, has said he plans to introduce a repeal bill during a spring special session.

The report suggests differences based on race, ethnicity and class rank, including that more top 10 percent students applied to college compared with the overall senior population.

The report also found that students who knew about the law were 5 1/2 times more likely to enroll at a four-year institution.

This fall, about 70 percent of the freshman class at the University of Texas and just over half the class at Texas A&M University were admitted automatically.

Marta Tienda, a Princeton sociologist who was one of the three researchers, said the study's findings suggest that change, rather than repeal, is in order.

"It may be prudent to remove the provision allowing students to select their institution by choice and allow the UT and A&M systems to determine where students are placed," she said in a statement.