

## **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AT THREE UNIVERSITIES**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This paper analyzes Fall 2003 admissions data for University of Virginia undergraduates, North Carolina State undergraduates, and William and Mary Law School. Odds ratios indicate that black applicants receive very strong preference over equally qualified white applicants at UVA and W&M Law (and over equally qualified Hispanics and Asians), and moderate preference at NCS. At NCS and W&M Law, white students are preferred over equally-qualified Asian students. At UVA and NCS, Hispanic students are also preferred over white students, but the degree of preference is much less than for black students. The results for UVA do not appear consistent with their stated admission policies, which “seek the ablest and most promising students,” and “expand[ed] opportunities for ... minority students.”

## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AT THREE UNIVERSITIES

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### Background

The National Association of Scholars (NAS) has initiated a national study of admissions policies and practices in the light of the Supreme Court's *Grutter* and *Gratz* decisions for the University of Michigan. This report presents a preliminary analysis and discussion of admissions data from three universities: University of Virginia, North Carolina State, and William and Mary Law School. The data for UVA and NCS represent undergraduate admissions only.

In response to a FOIA request made by Carey Stronach, Professor of Physics at Virginia State University and President of the Virginia Association of Scholars (VAS), we received applicant data for UVA and W&M Law. To this we have added undergraduate applicant data received by NAS from North Carolina State. The data presented here is for the classes entering in Fall of 2003; as such, it most likely represents policies in place before the *Grutter* and *Gratz* decisions of June 2003, although as far as we can determine none of these three universities modified their basic admission procedures following those decisions.

This report is a mainly an analysis of admissions data with only a modest attempt to relate the data to specific admissions policies. The most specific information about admissions policies was received from the University of Virginia, which will be discussed below.

### Admissions Data

The results in this section are based on approximately 14,600 undergraduate applicants to UVA, 12,800 undergraduate applicants to NCS, and 4,000 applicants to W&M Law School. The admission criteria analyzed includes grade point averages (gpa), SAT and LSAT scores, race/ethnicity, and residence. The SAT is the combined verbal plus quantitative scores; gpa is high school for UVA and NCS and college for W&M Law.

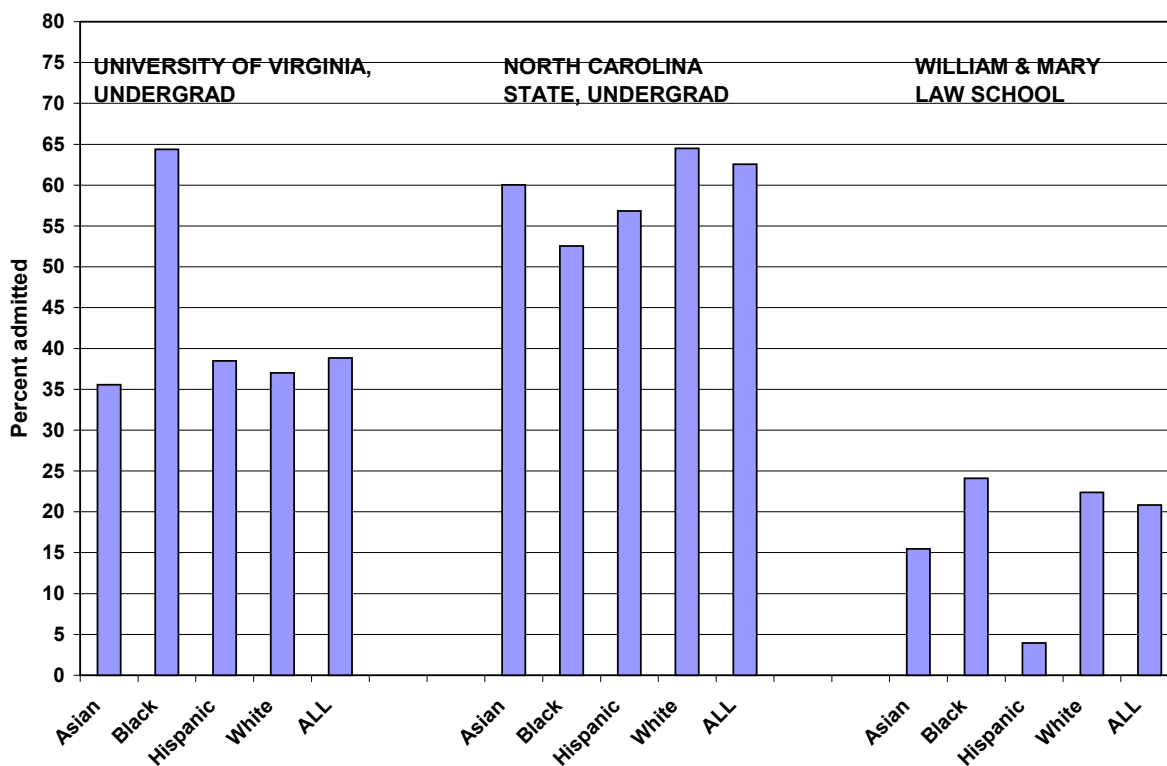
Chart 1 shows the percentage of applicants who were admitted broken down by race/ethnicity without regard to any other characteristic. At UVA, nearly 65% of all black applicants were admitted in the Fall of 2003 compared to 36 to 38% of all other groups.<sup>1</sup> Overall, only 39% of all applicants were admitted. Of those with race coded, blacks represent about 12% of admissions, Asians 12%, Hispanics 4%, and whites 72%.

NCS is considerably less selective than UVA, with an overall admission rate of 62%. In addition, the chance of admissions do not differ as much by race as at UVA, and in fact both white and Asian students have a higher likelihood of admission (65% and 60%, respectively) than black and Hispanic students (57% and 53%). Of those admitted, the racial breakdown is 11% black, 5% Asian, 2% Hispanic, and 82% white.

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<sup>1</sup> Chart 1 omits approximately 1000 UVA applicants for whom race was unknown, 700 coded alien, and 36 Native Americans. The admission rate was 37% for unknown, 53% for alien, and 27% for Native American.

1. ADMISSION RATES BY RACE, FALL 2003



Not surprisingly, William & Mary Law School is the most selective of the three, admitting just 21% of all applicants. Black applicants have the highest chance of admission at 24% compared to 22% for whites and 15% for Asians. Interestingly, the only large difference is for Hispanics, of whom only 4% are admitted. The racial breakdown of those admitted the racial breakdown is 8% black, 9% Asian, 1% Hispanic, and 82% white.

Chart 2 shows the likelihood of being admitted to UVA or NCS for black and white applicants according to their SAT scores. The largest differences in the likelihood of admission at UVA occur for the SAT ranges 950 to 1350, where more than 70% of black students are admitted compared to only about 25% of white students. About half of all white applicants score in this range, compared to more than three-fourths of black applicants. The median SAT score for all UVA admissions is 1350, while the average for admitted black students is 1026.

For NCS, there are fairly large differences in the probability of admission for blacks and whites in SAT score range 850 to 1050, but only about one-sixth of white applicants score in this range. For higher SAT score ranges, black applicants have an advantage over white applicants of only about 10%. The average SAT score for all NCS admissions is about 1200; the average for admitted black students is 909.

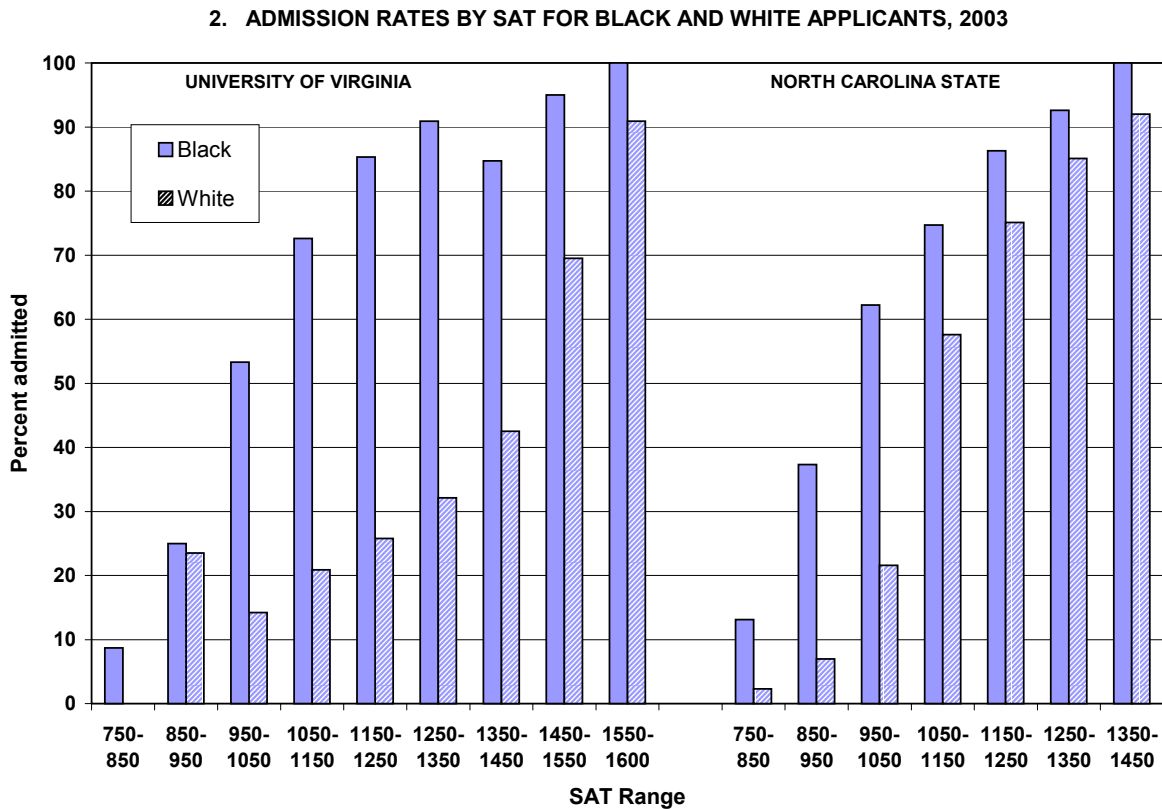
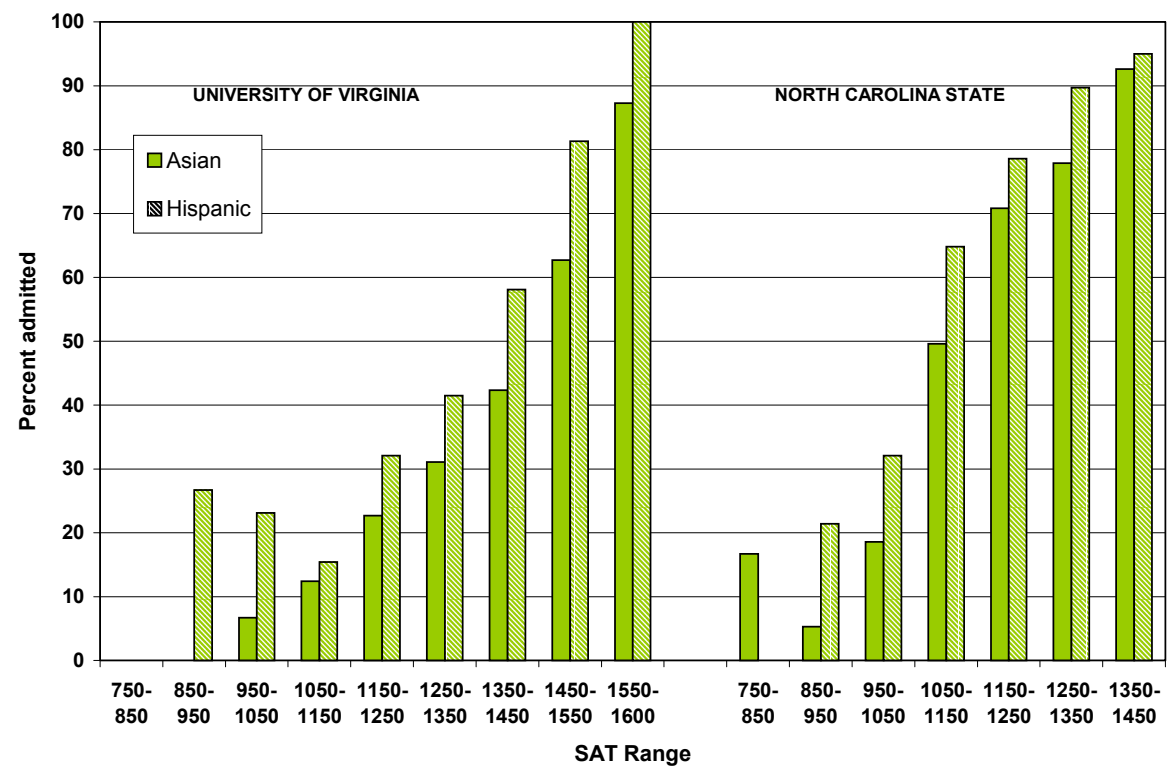


Chart 3 shows the relation between SAT scores and admission rates for Hispanics and Asians. For both schools, the patterns are more similar to the white student rates shown in Chart 2. The probability of admission for Asian students is almost identical to white rates for each SAT category, while the probabilities are somewhat higher for Hispanic students. But the differences are on the order of 10% in each category rather than the 50% advantage shown for black students at UVA.

Chart 4 shows the relation between admission and LSAT scores at W&M Law school. Black students have a substantial advantage over all other groups in the LSAT score range 153 to 162, which encompasses nearly half of all white applicants. Black applicants in this range have better than a 50% chance of admission compared to less than 10% for white students. The average LSAT score for W&M admissions is 165; the average for black admissions is 156.

### 3. ADMISSION RATES BY SAT FOR ASIAN AND HISPANIC APPLICANTS, 2003



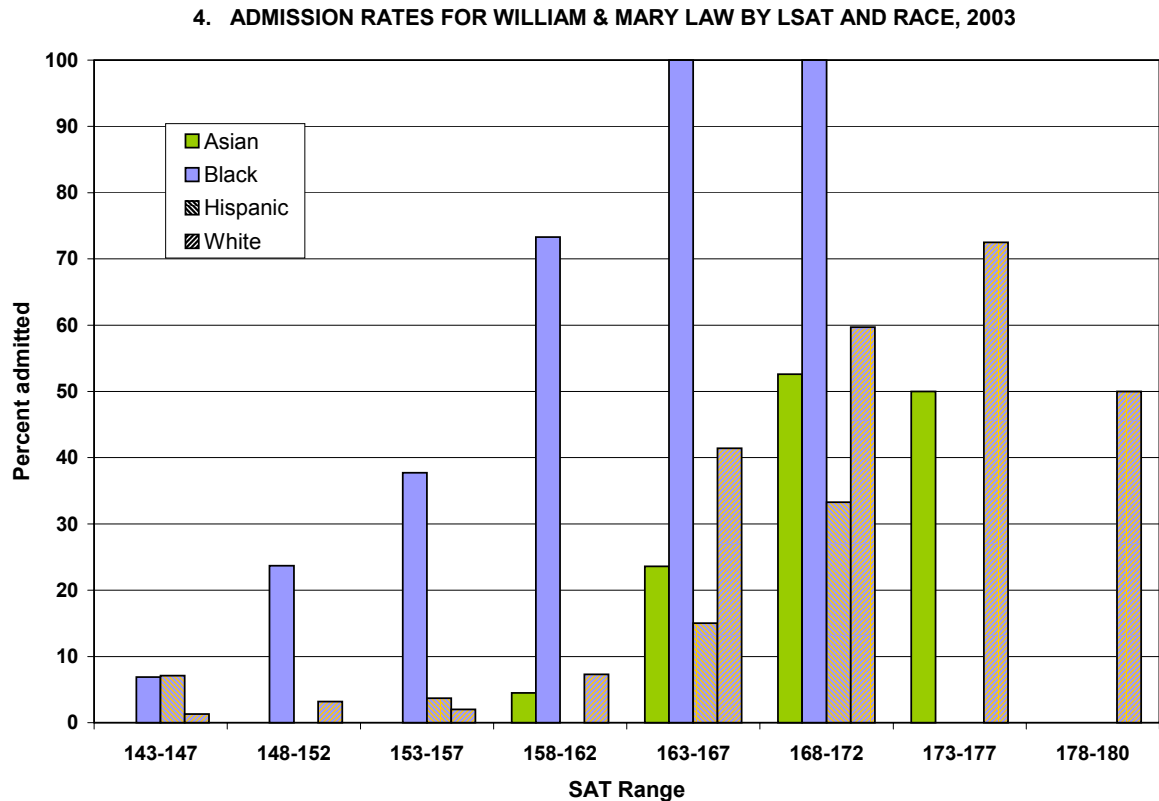


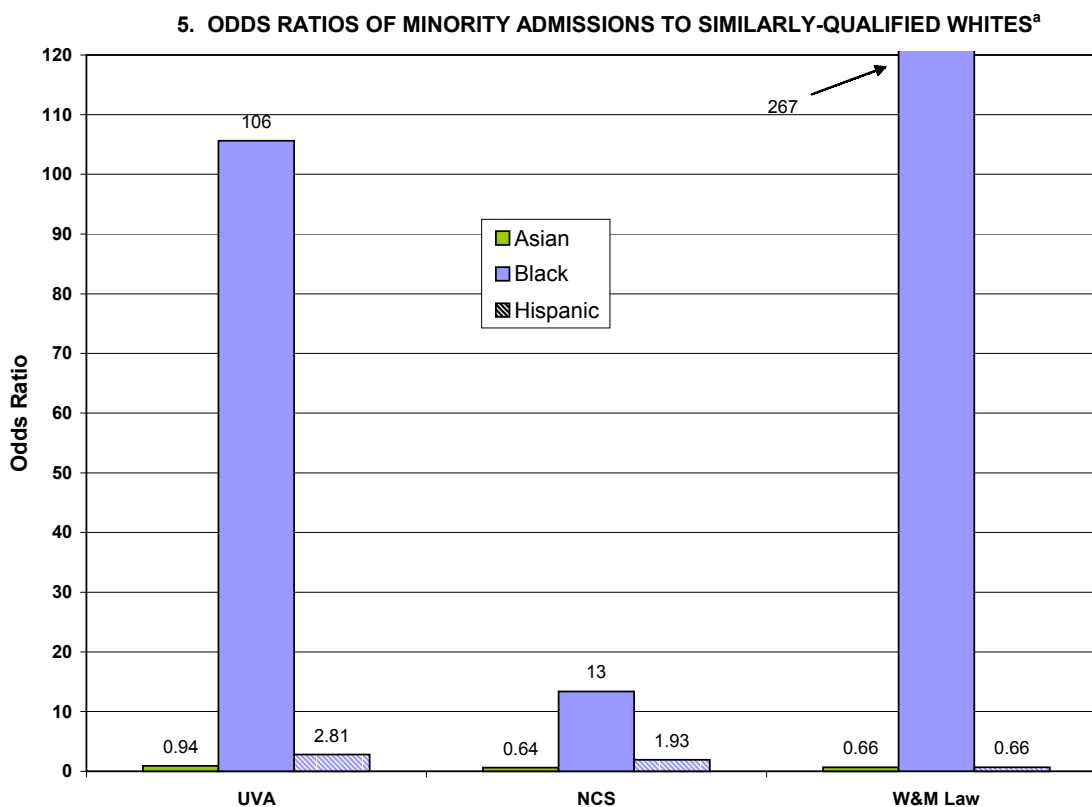
Chart 5 shows the odds ratios for admission of minority applicants as compared to white applicants with similar academic and residential qualifications. The odds ratios are derived from a logistic regression analysis which controls for SAT/LSAT scores, gpa, and, for UVA and NCS, residence. As such, the odds ratios compare the odds of admission among equally-qualified applicants.<sup>2</sup>

The odds ratio for blacks compared to whites at NCS is 13 to 1, but at UVA it is 106 to 1 and at William & Mary 267 to 1. In other words, at UVA the odds of a black student being admitted is more than 100 times the odds of admission of a white student with the same qualifications. The odds of admitting a black applicant at William & Mary is more than 250 times the odds of admitting an equally-qualified white applicant.

The odds ratios for Asians at all three schools are less than one, meaning that Asians are less likely to be admitted than equally-qualified whites (the odds ratio for Asians at UVA is not statistically significant). The odds ratios for Hispanics are 2.8 and 1.9 at UVA and NCS, respectively, but less than one at W&M. This means that Hispanics are somewhat more likely

<sup>2</sup> For example, if the odds of a white applicant being admitted with a certain SAT score, gpa, etc. is 1 to 9 (1 out of 10 admitted), and the odds of a black applicant with the same qualifications being admitted is 9 to 1, (9 out of 10 admitted). then the odds ratio would be 9/1 divided by 1/9, or 81 to 1. For UVA, high school gpa decile was also included in the regression.

than whites to be admitted at UVA and NCS but less likely than whites to be admitted at W&M Law (but this is not statistically significant).



For the layman, the odds ratios shown in Figure 5 are sometimes hard to understand. Another way to assess racial preferences is to show actual admission rates within among categories of equally-qualified groups of applicants. Table 1 illustrates this for UVA black and white residents grouped according to gpa's and SAT scores. Because black SAT scores are lower than white scores, the table shows categories that are below the SAT average of 1350.

For black residents with high school grade point averages from 3.3 to 3.7 and SAT scores from 1051 to 1150, nearly all (86%) were admitted, while only 8% of white students with the same academic qualifications were admitted. This corresponds to an odds ratio of about 70 to 1 (the ratio of 86 to 14 and 8 to 92). In the next-higher category of grades and SAT scores (3.8-4.2 and 1151-1200), 51% of whites were admitted as compared to 100% of blacks. Clearly, among equally qualified black and white applicants in 2003, UVA gave very strong preference to blacks. In fact, the more academically qualified white applicants in this second grouping are less likely to be admitted than the black applicants in the less qualified group.

Table 1 UVA ADMISSION RATES FOR EQUALLY-QUALIFIED APPLICANTS WITH BELOW AVERAGE SAT SCORES, FALL 2003

Percentage admitted (all applicants are residents):

High School GPA	SAT Scores	
	1051-1150	1151-1200
<u>Black Applicants</u>		
3.3-3.7	86%	86%
3.8-4.2	94%	100%
<u>White Applicants</u>		
3.3-3.7	8%	13%
3.8-4.2	37%	51%

## Discussion

At this writing, only the University of Virginia has sent us fairly detailed information about how race and other factors are evaluated in the admissions process (see Appendix for attached letter). The letter from the Office of University Relations states that applicants are evaluated “individually” and “holistically” for academic potential and contribution to diversity, and that race/ethnicity is only one of many factors evaluated. One of the goals approved by their Board of Visitors is “to seek the ablest and most promising students,” and another goal is “to expand educational opportunities for persons with special challenges such as minority status...”

These statements of policy do not appear consistent with the UVA admissions data which shows very strong preference given to black applicants when compared to whites with the same academic qualifications. Indeed, perhaps the most important finding is that white applicants with higher grades and test scores are less likely to be admitted than blacks with significantly lower academic credentials. Moreover, the racial preference for blacks is also seen in the much lower rate of admission for Hispanics with SAT scores in the average and below average ranges.

Although we lack detailed information about how race is evaluated for William and Mary Law School, the odds ratios indicate that even stronger preference is given to blacks than equally-qualified whites at that school, and greater preference for whites than equally-qualified Hispanics (but this latter ratio is not statistically significant). While the odds ratios indicate that North Carolina State also shows racial preference for blacks vs. whites, the degree of preference is much less than at the other two schools.



**APPENDIX**

May 24, 2004

Carey E. Stronach, acting president  
 Virginia Association of Scholars  
 2241 Buckner St.  
 Petersburg, VA 23805-2207

Dear Mr. Stronach:

This will respond to your request pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act for "[a]ny statements or discussions of university policies, practices, or procedures, formal or informal, relating to the use of racial and ethnic considerations in admissions or to eligibility for any undergraduate, graduate, or professional school program, activity, or benefit." You ask for such statements or discussions relating to a number of subcategories of information.

Most discussions about which you inquire would have occurred in closed session at Board meetings, and no minutes or other record of them would exist. In the broader context of statements of University policy concerning the areas of your concern, the following excerpts from the University Undergraduate Record, under the Statement of Purpose and Goals as approved by the Board of Visitors, are pertinent:

- To offer instruction of the highest quality to undergraduates from all walks of life;
- To seek the ablest and most promising students, within the Commonwealth and without;
- To strive for diversity in the student body and in the faculty and to promote international exchange of scholars and students;
- To expand educational opportunities for persons with special challenges such as minority status, physical disability, ethnic heritage, or insufficient financial resources.

The University does not focus on membership in a particular group when making admission decisions, but rather seeks to shape a class consisting of interesting people who on an individual basis bring talent and diversity to the class. The best way of responding to your questions about group membership is to offer a few comments on how we carry out the evaluation and selection process.

In the evaluation process each application is read by at least two deans and/or readers to assure thoroughness in judging each person's credentials. The first evaluation may be done by a reader, admission officer or dean. The second readers will always be the dean or an associate dean.

Early Decision evaluations are, in almost all cases, limited to two readings. Regular Decision evaluations are done in two phases. In Phase I all of the applications are read in the normal two-reader process and one of the following decisions results: deny, offer admission, or defer decision pending further review. Phase II is the process in which the deferred applications, those that have resulted in neither an offer of admission nor a rejection, are evaluated again. During Phase II, the staff is organized into teams of deans and readers to re-evaluate the applications and make final recommendations. All of the folders are then presented to the dean or associate dean for final approval.

Factors holistically evaluated with respect to each application include: curriculum, grades and rank in class or GPA, standardized test scores, a demonstrated love of learning, academic improvement, academic industry, rigor of program, recommendations, extra-curriculars, honors and awards, leadership ability, writing ability, and any other information appearing in the application which would contribute to the diversity of the class such as, without limitation, race/ethnicity, economic hardship, accomplishments in the school or community, aspirations, interests and experiences.

Each application is individually read and holistically evaluated. This allows us to make a fair judgment about each individual considering both academic potential and the contribution the student could make to the diversity of the class. The individualized and holistic approach is used throughout the entire process and for all applications.

The data you requested on our most recent first-year class is attached in this e-mail.

I apologize for the delay in responding to your request and appreciate your understanding regarding finals and graduation commitments. I hope the information furnished answers your questions.

Sincerely,

Carolyn S. Wood  
assistant vice president  
for University Relations

cc: John A. Blackburn, Richard C. Kast