Expert Spotlight

Matthew Echeverria

SHINING A LIGHT ON THE STUDENT IMPACTS OF THE U.S. SUPREME COURT DECISION TO END RACE-CONSCIOUS ADMISSIONS PRACTICES

“I feel deeply concerned and anxious that now private institutions in California, as well as colleges and universities across the country, may not recognize where I and so many students like me come from. I call upon college leaders, policymakers, and communities of color to take urgent action in order to continue to promote diversity, affirm equity, and ensure inclusion on their college campuses.”
As part of the Affirming Equity, Ensuring Inclusion, Empowering Action national initiative, the Campaign for College Opportunity has met with many students who have shared their stories on the impact of the recent Supreme Court decision prohibiting the use of race-conscious admission practices at colleges and universities. One of these students was Matthew Echeverria, who shared his reaction to the decision and what students, educators, and policy leaders can do to support students like him. Matthew is a first-generation and Latino high school senior attending school in Los Angeles, California.

The recent Supreme Court decision on race-conscious admissions has raised concerns about the future of diversity in higher education. Students like Matthew are worried about the implications of overturning affirmative action. As a product of a low-income neighborhood in downtown Los Angeles, Matthew believes that access to education is crucial for bridging the gap between opportunities and economic mobility for students from marginalized communities.

What the Supreme Court Decision Means for Students Like Matthew

“I was truly frustrated, disheartened, and concerned for the future of diversity at colleges and universities across the country,” expresses Matthew. As a high-achieving student, he worries that the decision could hinder recognition of the unique challenges faced by students of color who come from underprivileged backgrounds. Affirmative action provided an opportunity for students like Matthew to overcome historical disadvantages and gain access to higher education.
What Policymakers and Higher Education Leaders Can Do to Support Students

Matthew urges college leaders and policymakers to take action to support diversity and equity on college campuses. He believes that eliminating standardized testing, providing targeted recruitment strategies, and offering resources and scholarships for students of color are all essential steps to ensure inclusive access to higher education. Additionally, colleges should be vocal about their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and advocate for safeguarding access to students of color.

Student Call to Action

Matthew calls upon his fellow peers and students to actively engage in policy advocacy and participate in the political process. He encourages students to share their stories with admissions officers and school boards and emphasizes the importance of student leaders in ensuring effective representation and support for marginalized communities.

“To my fellow peers and students concerned about our future, we must take action by actively engaging in policy advocacy and participating in the political process.”
Additional Thoughts on Legacy Admissions and the SAT/ACT

Matthew points out that if race is to be removed as a factor in admissions, legacy influence should also be banned. Legacy admissions tend to favor white students who have historically benefited from such policies. He also urges institutions to consider eliminating the SAT/ACT, as it can be discriminatory and favor students with access to tutors and resources. You can read more about strategies to rethink the use of standardized testing and other practices that are highly inequitable in our briefs: Ensuring Fairness in College Admissions: Rethinking Recruitment, Demonstrated Interest Strategies, Early Decision, and Legacy Admissions, The Urgency of Fair and Equitable Holistic Review of College Applicants, and Advancing Equity by Rethinking the Use of Tests in College Admissions.

Conclusion

The recent Supreme Court decision on race-conscious admissions has left students of color like Matthew concerned about their future access to higher education. However, Matthew remains hopeful that college leaders, policymakers, and communities of color will take decisive action to promote diversity, affirm equity, and ensure inclusion in higher education. Through advocacy and engagement, students can play an active role in shaping policies that support a more equitable and diverse educational landscape.
About Matthew Echeverria

Matthew Echeverria is a high school senior at Orthopaedic Hospital Medical Magnet High School within the Los Angeles Unified School District. Matthew is a first-generation Latino student at a Title I funded high school in downtown Los Angeles, in an area predominantly made up of low-income Black and Latinx families. In high school, he has involved himself in student government, cross country, volleyball, and research and advocacy-related extracurriculars. Recently, he has become an alumnus of the Chicano Latino Youth Leadership Project and the Young Leaders Summit. Matthew aspires to attend a four-year university, major in political science/pre-law, and go to law school. He dreams of helping the undocumented community and becoming a lawyer specializing in immigration.

The Campaign for College Opportunity is a California non-profit bipartisan policy and research organization focused on a single mission: to ensure all Californians have an equal opportunity to attend and succeed in college in order to build a vibrant workforce, economy and democracy. In June 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court announced a decision to curtail the use of race in college and university admissions, a powerful tool that has been used to address the legacy of racial injustice and advance the inclusion and integration of Latinx, Black, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI), and American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) students. In response, the Campaign for College Opportunity has launched a national initiative, Affirming Equity, Ensuring Inclusion, Empowering Action, promoting evidence-based solutions through practice briefs and toolkits that advance more equitable strategies in college preparation, admission, affordability, and success to ensure those who have been historically excluded and underserved by our colleges and universities have a real opportunity to go to college and succeed.
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