

UNIVERSITY DENIES ACCUSATIONS OF SHOWING RACIAL BIAS IN ADMISSIONS: WE DO IT TO DIVERSIFY OUR STUDENT POPULATION, IT CLAIMS.



A much awaited and contentious case is scheduled to go before the court this session that will decide whether a student's race was a factor and what role could it play, in public colleges and universities in Oklahoma. The Center for Equal Opportunity released a report on Monday alleging that the University of Oklahoma, in its admission decisions to its undergraduate, law and medical school programs showed partiality and inclination towards African-American and American-Indian students. The Center for Equal Opportunity says that even though African-American and American-Indian students received lower average test scores than white students, they were given preference over the white students. The case gains more importance as Oklahoma voters are readying to take up State Question 759 that would prohibit existing policies that ask state agencies to present affirmative action plans. The question would modify the Oklahoma Constitution to outlaw preferential treatment tied to race or gender in public hiring, education or contracts and resolve whether race could and if it could, to what extent, play a role in the enrollment process at publicly funded colleges and universities. The suit has been instigated by Andrea Noel Fisher, a white Texas woman, who alleges that she was refused admission into the University of Texas because of her skin color. She alleges that the University guarantees admission to students among the top ten percent, but did not find her 3.59 GPA adequate enough for admission. Linda Chavez, Center for Equal Opportunity's founder and chairman said, "It should not matter to a university whether an applicant has a particular skin color or what country his or her ancestors came from. In an increasingly multiracial and multiethnic society, the use of racial preferences is unacceptable." The study's President Roger Clegg, says that their analyzed data leaves no doubt that the University was prejudiced in its admission decisions and said that the findings were, "disappointing but not surprising." The university, however, refuted the report's allegations and said that it does not use race as a criterion to decide who gets admission and who does not. Moreover, the university had of late adopted a "holistic" admission policy that permitted the university to take in students who are typically not accepted elsewhere. The "holistic" approach meant that apart from GPA, the university would also take into contemplation other aspects like writing ability, personal history, volunteerism and "personal challenges." The new admission method also looks into an applicant's work ethic and academic potential, along with high school grades and scores on college entrance exams. The university also alleged that the study was not representative as the Center for Equal Opportunity did not seek contribution from the university when researching and writing its report. University spokeswoman Catherine Bishop said that perhaps if the University had been given an opportunity to tell its side of the story, many misconceptions could have been cleared. Civil rights groups are vehemently opposed to the ballot question and accuse politicians of creating and manufacturing a crisis where none exists. They say that their diversity is what makes them strong as a state. "They've done this all so that during this election cycle they have the opportunity to go to the voters and deploy cleverly crafted political messages that they believe are advantageous to them at the ballot box." Oklahoma State University spokesman Gary Shutt said that since their admission policies are based to diversify its student body and there is no color or race prejudice, the court decision will not impact them.

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