



Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education

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Statement on the U.S. Supreme Court's Decision on Affirmative Action

The Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education joins with many others across the nation to condemn the recent decision of the Supreme Court. The judgment of the conservatives further erodes a major legal mechanism available to address systemic discrimination and disadvantage. In a 6 to 3 vote, conservative justices concluded that race-conscious admissions are unconstitutional. Ignoring the history of racial and economic disadvantage and exclusion, the court denied the legacy of privilege imbedded in institutions that continues to mold advantage and disadvantage in contemporary US society. With an already damaged reputation and shredded credibility, the Supreme Court demonstrated its lack of commitment to extend democratic rights and create a more just and equitable society.

The battle against affirmative action is a decades long campaign supported by wealthy sectors and reactionary actors that are themselves evidence of the power of economic interests and their ability to buy influence and shape public policy. Their purpose is to limit opportunity and straitjacket change. Despite claims of fairness, it is the maintenance of hierarchy and privilege that these forces wish to maintain.

It is necessary to move beyond our frustration and anger. As the ACLU states:

“The Court's ruling does not prohibit universities from considering an applicant's discussion of how race affected their life, be it through discrimination, inspiration, or otherwise. Colleges can still consider race as long as they do so in this manner.”

Our institutions of higher education now must double down to ensure every student gets a fair shot moving forward. Universities must recommit to expanding opportunity by:

- Eliminating use of standardized test scores in admissions
- Increasing guaranteed financial support
- Broadening recruitment efforts to underserved communities
- Developing robust middle and high school pipelines

Many of us have spent years seeking to extend access and opportunity to those who are educationally and economically marginalized. Our concern is that some Illinois higher education intuitions will utilize this recent decision to minimize their efforts or collapse initiatives while pointing to the courts as the culprits and advance backburner agendas that will negatively impact our students and communities. This is not a time to retreat but a time to unify, sidestep obstacles thrown in our path, develop new strategies, and continue to work with allies to aggressively achieve our goals and build a more inclusive society.