DOCUMENT 1 - What are legacy admissions — and do colleges need them?
CNN, by Ramishah Maruf, September 25, 2023

Legacy college admission is an advantage given at birth, in which the children of a school's alumni receive special consideration in the college admissions rat race. But after the US Supreme Court overturned race-based admissions over the summer, attention toward this already criticized practice intensified.

While many students from minority or low-income backgrounds are likely the first in their families to attend college, legacy students are mostly White, according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

Since the Supreme Court's decision on race-based admissions, Wesleyan University and the University of Minnesota dropped legacy admissions. Other schools, such as Johns Hopkins University and Pomona College, made the decision even earlier.

"It was clear we should get rid of it," Wesleyan President Michael Roth said on "CNN This Morning" in July. "The Supreme Court's decision saying we shouldn't consider the groups with which students are identified — racial groups — made it even more clear to me that it was indefensible to give preference to the children of alumni."

How widespread are legacy admissions?

A 2022 report from nonprofit think tank Education Reform Now found that colleges were turning away from legacy admissions. Eighty-nine percent of college admissions directors did not support the use of legacy admits, and three-quarters of public colleges and universities didn't even provide a legacy preference.

The American public also isn't in favor of the practice. The Pew Research Center found 75% of respondents to a 2022 poll did not support legacy admissions, even before the Supreme Court's affirmative action decision.

But children of alumni maintained a significant advantage at the schools that upheld the practice — those happen to be America's most elite colleges, the very group of schools that were targeted in the Supreme Court case overturning affirmative action.

And though they only represent a sliver of college graduates, the alumni of elite schools go on to hold some of the most influential positions in society.

Look at Harvard University. Let's say there are two students with the highest academic qualifications. One student is the child of an alumnus, while the other comes from a household that makes below $60,000. The legacy applicant is twice as likely to be admitted into the university, EFN found.

Harvard did not respond to a request for comment from CNN.

Joan Casey, president of Massachusetts-based college admissions consulting firm Educational Advocates, said many Harvard legacies have hired the firm's service and tend to fare better than other applicants.

“Sometimes we’ve seen students get in that are good students, but they perhaps are not as strong as some of our other applicants who don’t have that legacy connection,” Casey said. “In that admission process, that legacy extra boost really can make a difference.”

Donations, donations, donations

Some colleges say that legacy admissions play a financial role in keeping donors engaged. That money is then passed down to students as financial aid.

“That financial support is essential to Harvard’s position as a leading institution of higher learning; indeed, it helps make the financial aid policies possible that help the diversity and excellence of the College’s student body,” a 2018 report of Harvard’s committee to study race-neutral alternatives said, going on to say removing any consideration of legacy “would diminish this vital sense of engagement and support.”

There are mainly three places where colleges receive their money, Pomona College President Gabrielle Starr told CNN: Tuition, philanthropy and state funding for public colleges.

Pomona College, a private liberal arts college in California, does not factor in legacy or donor status into its admissions decisions.

“Our endowment contributes over 50% of what it costs to educate a single student in a year,” Starr said. “And that all has come from philanthropy and the vast majority of it from alumni.”

Pomona eliminated legacy admission consideration before Starr’s tenure.

“It was part of an overall effort to ‘walk the walk’ on equal opportunity for students from whatever their backgrounds were,” Starr said.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology also suggested it had no issues with fundraising from alumni despite not engaging in legacy admissions.

“And I can tell you, from having sat on countless committees, that we simply don’t care if your parents (or aunt, or grandfather, or third cousin) went to MIT,” Chris Peterson, an MIT admissions officer, wrote in 2012.

Pomona also hasn’t noticed a change in donations since removing legacy preferences, Starr said.

“For every person who may be disappointed that legacy status isn’t considered there are other people who are really proud that we don’t consider legacies,” Starr said.

Culture

Colleges say that outside of the financial benefit of legacy admissions, the practice builds traditions and camaraderie.

“Dartmouth has a remarkable alumni body, in terms of who its alumni are, what they do and their indelible connection to this campus,” Dartmouth’s dean of admissions and financial aid, Lee Coffin, said to the school’s alumni magazine in 2017. “So legacy candidates are an

important constituency in each applicant pool and in the way we think about the class we are shaping."

The dean added that children of alumni made up about 12% to 13% of each entering class.

"A legacy connection will continue to be one factor among dozens that Dartmouth considers when evaluating applicants," Dartmouth said in a statement. "Dartmouth is grateful to have an increasingly diverse alumni body that makes for an increasingly diverse group of legacy applicants."

Elite schools don't just view themselves as admitting bright students — they are admitting future leaders.

Casey said that the attitude that legacy candidates fit in with the school's culture better "perpetuates admitting these people you feel comfortable with from generations and generations of families that are affluent."

What's next for legacy admissions?

Since colleges receive tax benefits and donations are tax exempt, some advocates argue that colleges need to act in the public interest or risk losing those benefits.

"I don't know if there will come a time where (colleges could) feel their tax exempt status could be threatened because people feel like they need their practices need to be more equitable," Casey said.

In July, the US Department of Education began a civil rights investigation into whether Harvard University discriminates in its admissions process by giving preferential treatment to children of wealthy donors and alumni.

And even if legacy admissions were eliminated, many of those same students already come from a privileged background. "Whether they go to Harvard or not, they're already on a trajectory to be successful because of personal wealth and other factors," Casey said.

Casey added that getting rid of legacy admissions won't change the compositions of the nation's most elite colleges overnight.

Starr said there are still multiple barriers to higher education for students from underprivileged backgrounds.

"We made a lot of made a lot of decisions collectively to try and promote equal access. And so this was one among others," Starr said.

DOCUMENT 2 - Wealth looms big as ever in post-scandal college admissions
AP News, by Collin Binkley, January 15, 2023

Celebrities wept in court. Coaches lost their jobs. Elite universities saw their reputations stained. And nearly four years later, the mastermind of the Varsity Blues scheme was sentenced this month to more than three years in prison.

But there's little belief the college bribery scandal has stirred significant change in the admissions landscape. Some schools tweaked rules to prevent the most flagrant types of misconduct, but the outsize roles of wealth, class and race — which were thrust into public view in shocking plainness — loom as large as ever.

College admissions leaders say the case is an anomaly. Corrupt athletics officials abused holes in the system, they argue, but no college admissions officers were accused. Still, critics say the case revealed deeper, more troubling imbalances.

"Privilege is just really baked into the system in many ways," said Julie Park, who studies college admissions and racial equity at the University of Maryland. "At the end of the day, there's disproportionate representation of the 1% at any private college."

The scheme itself was brazen, with rich parents paying to get their children accepted to selective universities as fake athletes. It drew attention to the advantages those families already had, including tutors and private consultants. It also highlighted other ways money can sway admission decisions, with edges given to the relatives of donors and alumni.

In court, some of the accused parents argued their alleged bribes were no different from donations colleges routinely accept from relatives of prospective students. Records revealed from the University of Southern California showed lists detailing scores of "VIP" applicants, with notes such as "potential donor" or "1 mil pledge."

Among the parents sent to prison for participating in the scheme were "Full House" actor Lori Loughlin, her fashion designer husband Mossimo Giannulli, and "Desperate Housewives" star Felicity Huffman.

When authorities announced the first charges in 2019, it left colleges across the U.S. scrambling to review their own admissions systems, especially where there was overlap with athletics programs. Schools added layers of scrutiny around recruiting, with a sharp eye on lower-profile sports targeted in the scheme, such as water polo and rowing.

Asked what has changed since then, the universities at the center of the scheme point to a flurry of policies that were adopted within a few months of the arrests.

An internal review at USC found an average of 12 students a year had been recruited for sports they didn't end up playing. Some, but not all, were tied to the bribery scheme. The university blamed it on "one or a small number" of sports officials who violated school policy and hid it from the admissions office.

Officials at USC said they started reviewing athletic recruits at multiple levels of administration, including by an office of athletics compliance, which also started verifying that recruits actually end up competing.

Yale University made similar changes after a women's soccer coach accepted $860,000 in bribes to get students admitted as part of the scheme. Yale's athletic director started reviewing all proposed recruits, the school announced in 2019, and recruits that don't end up on teams now face "close scrutiny."

But in the big picture of Yale's admissions, "very little has changed," said Logan Roberts, a senior at the Ivy League school who came from a low-income family in upstate New York. The school denounced the scandal, he said, but ignored deeper problems that give wealthy students advantages in admissions.

On campus, he said, students from modest means are still far outnumbered by those who went to private schools with access to expensive tutors. Roberts and others have pressed the university to abandon policies that favor wealth, including preferences for the children of alumni, but so far Yale has resisted change.

"When money and morality clash, money generally tends to win," said Roberts, 22.

Angel Pérez was the head of admissions at Trinity College in Connecticut when the scandal broke. His school wasn't implicated, but within minutes, his phone was buzzing with texts from colleagues. Could it happen here, they wondered? Trinity reviewed its policies and concluded they were sound.

Ultimately, it did little to change the industry, said Pérez, who now leads NACAC, a national association of college admissions officials.

"The majority of institutions found that they had a really good process and that there wasn't unethical behavior taking place," he said. "This was a case of some bad actors who were framing themselves as college counselors."

Still, he said, the bribery case — along with the country's racial reckoning and separate legal battles over affirmative action — stirred debate about the fairness of legacy preferences and entrance exams.

"I think it just woke up the American public," he said.

After the Jan. 4 sentencing of scheme mastermind Rick Singer, authorities said their work led to reform. The FBI said colleges reached out asking how they could catch wrongdoing.

Massachusetts U.S. Attorney Rachael Rollins said it revealed a "separate college admissions process for the rich, powerful and entitled," but she also said it led to "meaningful changes." She suggested it may have contributed to more colleges making the SAT and ACT optional, a trend that started before the case but gained steam during the pandemic.

Others, however, argue that the scheme was only a symptom of a disease.

America's obsession with elite schools, combined with opaque admissions systems, has led to desperation among families seeking the best for their children, said Mark Sklarow, CEO of the Independent Educational Consultants Association, a nonprofit that represents private counselors who help in the admissions process.

Colleges help fuel the frenzy, he said, by boasting about their ever-narrowing acceptance rates, all while giving advantages to the well-connected.

“Colleges created a system that was designed to reject more and more kids,” he said. “It became less and less clear who got in and who got rejected, and I think that led this generation of parents to say, ‘I’ll do whatever it takes to get my kid in.’”

Closing bribery loopholes, he added, does little to make admissions more fair.

Ultimately, wealth and privilege play the same role in admissions that they did before the case, said Park, of the University of Maryland. So far she sees little real change, she said, with only a small number of schools agreeing to drop legacy preferences, for example.

“Things have the potential to change,” she said. “But is it just going to be shifting chairs around on the Titanic? I don’t know.”

DOCUMENT 3 - The SATs are: a) dying; b) already dead; c) alive and well; d) here forever
Vox, by Kevin Carey, May 2, 2023

The confusing future of standardized testing, explained.

On March 1, Columbia became the first Ivy League university to permanently suspend its longstanding requirement that applicants submit their scores on the SAT. It was the latest in a series of setbacks for the college testing industry.

Between 2000 and 2018, some 200 colleges and universities adopted similar policies. It was hardly a groundswell — there are about 2,300 public and private four-year colleges and universities in the US — but it cracked the door to a different future for standardized testing.

Covid-19 pushed that door wide open. The pandemic scrambled the logistics of test administration and caused most colleges to go "test-optional." Covid had the same effect on mandatory admissions testing that it had on the practice of requiring white-collar workers to go to the office five days a week: It transformed a growing but not-yet-mainstream trend into a sudden sea change.

The number of test-takers plummeted during the pandemic and has only partially rebounded. Moreover, a sizable number of those who do take the exams aren't submitting their scores, as policies like Columbia's become the norm.

Meanwhile, an expected Supreme Court decision outlawing affirmative action admissions policies may give top colleges another reason to pull back from tests that have long played a key role in defining American meritocracy. Going test-optional or test-blind — that is, not even submitting test scores as an option — could be seen by colleges and universities as a way to continue their commitment to diversifying their student bodies in a post-affirmative action world.

Despite these developments, it's too early to declare the death of college testing. Even as the SAT and its chief rival, the ACT, have become less important in admissions, they are becoming more universal for a different purpose: as a measure of high school achievement. More and more high schools have turned to the SATs and ACTs as their standard assessment tool for their students' progress, entirely separate from the college admissions process.

The result is a standardized testing landscape that has been shaken up, and whose future looks murky, at best.

The different uses of standardized tests for America's colleges, explained

While news outlets trumpeted that Columbia had "dropped," "dumped," or "ditched" the SAT, those depictions elided a more nuanced truth: Test-optional, Columbia's policy, does not mean no tests at all.

Indeed, it's likely that many Columbia applicants will continue to voluntarily submit scores. The only major institutions to go "test-blind" — meaning they refuse to consider tests in any way — are California's public universities, which opted to do so in 2021 and 2022.

Given their sheer size — California State universities enroll nearly 500,000 students, along with another 280,000 in the University of California system — such a move by itself is a significant blow to admissions testing. But other public systems haven't followed suit. Students took around 3 million SAT and ACT tests last year, up from 2.8 million in 2021, but down from 4 million in 2019.

The key question is whether test-optional is the new normal or a transition state to test-blind. According to a database maintained by FairTest, an anti-testing organization, fewer than 10 of the colleges that stopped requiring tests in the 2000s went fully test-blind.

According to the College Board, which administers the SAT, the first results of mass test optionality were roughly: 20 percent of students skipped the test, 30 percent took the test but didn't submit their scores, and 50 percent took the test and submitted their scores. That means that the raw-number drop in the number of tests taken understates the true decline of testing, because it includes a lot of scores that weren't submitted.

But it's hard to predict what will happen next, because different colleges use admissions tests in very different ways.

Their stated reasons are often similar — they say they want to make sure students are prepared to succeed in college. While research shows that college success can be mostly predicted by high school grade point averages — unsurprisingly, doing well in school is a good indicator that you're going to do well in school — grade point averages and tests together are more predictive of college success than GPAs alone. The difference isn't huge, but it's real.

But at super-elite institutions, there are probably 10 or 20 students in the applicant pool smart enough to succeed for every one who is admitted. Predicting success is not the issue. The Harvards and Princetons use the SAT more like an IQ test — they want an exam that reliably distinguishes the 99th percentile of smart from the 95th. That's why the SAT deliberately includes questions that almost everyone gets wrong — and why high SAT scores are still the most widely accepted currency of undergraduate prestige.

For large, mid-tier public universities like the University of Tennessee and the University of Central Florida, standardized test scores serve a different purpose. They remain very useful as a first-order sorting mechanism for qualified applicants. These schools process tens of thousands of applications and typically don't have the financial resources necessary to give each one a thorough "holistic" review. SAT and ACT scores come in handy in that context.

Then there are the hundreds of less selective public and private colleges — typically institutions facing a sharp, looming demographic decline in the number of new college students. They come closest to using admissions tests for the official purpose of predicting success, because it costs them money when students drop out.

SATs are also an element in the black-box "enrollment management" algorithms that most private colleges, and increasingly many public ones, use to maximize how much tuition students pay. The first wave of test optionality was exclusively a private school phenomenon because it was all about marketing and recruitment, giving students with low scores and generous bank accounts another reason to apply.

Any prediction of where things will go after the mass move to test optionality has to take these complex motivations into account.

What standardized testing is increasingly being used for

Ever since the federal No Child Left Behind Act was enacted in 2002, public schools have been required to administer standardized tests to high school students.

At first, every state developed its own academic standards and tests, but that was pretty quickly revealed to be a bad idea — geometry is geometry, no matter where you live. So states began adopting common standards and exams, an idea that was integrated into an updated law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), in 2015.

The College Board and ACT are technically nonprofits. But they make millions of dollars selling tests and saw the new law as a business opportunity. They had already divided up the testing market along regional lines (93 percent of Wisconsin high schoolers take the ACT, for example, compared to 4 percent in California). In the case of ESSA, they had actually lobbied for a provision that allows states to use the SAT or ACT as their required high school test.

Then they lobbied states to adopt their tests, with significant success. There are currently 14 states where more than 90 percent of high schoolers take the ACT, and 10 more that administer the SAT to comply with ESSA, according to the College Board.

And how that test is administered is starting to look different. David Coleman, CEO of the College Board, says the SAT is rapidly changing from a paper-based exam that college-bound students elect to take in high school gyms on weekends to a shorter digital assessment that's given to everyone as a part of regular schooling. While only 36 percent of SATs were administered during the regular school day in 2018, he says, it will be 68 percent this year.

In other words, the College Board and ACT spent the years prior to a pandemic disruption no one could have foreseen insulating themselves against just such an eventuality, by taking the demand for their tests out of the hands of individual students and colleges and embedding it into public policy. Test-optional may be gaining ground in the college admissions process — but standardized testing is firmly established in American high schools anyway.

Who the SATs help and hurt

As long as states continue administering the SAT and ACT as a matter of course, the tests aren't going away. And as long as colleges find them useful, they will continue to play a significant role in admissions.

That said, their importance still seems on a downward trajectory.

For testing critics, this is all good. Akil Bello, senior director of advocacy at FairTest, believes that the rise of test optionality shows the exams were never as important as they seemed.

"There isn't a high school transcript-optional movement," he observes. "The SAT clearly advantages certain groups of students," referring to studies that consistently find lower scores for Black and Hispanic students.

But others aren't so sure that getting rid of the SATs would actually do much — and might even be harmful. Jay Caspian Kang, a New Yorker writer, has argued that eliminating tests is mostly an empty gesture compared to reforms that would actually move the needle on improving equity for underprivileged students.

Meanwhile, Harvard economist Susan Dynarski has written persuasively about the benefits of universal test administration, arguing it can help surface high-performing students. Michigan began giving the ACT to all high school juniors in 2007. "The results were surprising," she writes. "For every 1,000 low-income students who had taken the test before 2007 and scored well, another 480 college-ready, low-income students were uncovered by the universal test."

Test supporters also say that eliminating the exams will put too much pressure on the other major determinant of admission: high school transcripts. ACT CEO Janet Godwin cites ACT research that high school grade inflation is a sizable and growing problem.

In 2016, 42 percent of ACT test takers had an "A" average. By 2021, the ranks of A students had grown to 55 percent. If the range of high school grades continues to collapse, they will be less useful for distinguishing students from one another. Essays and teacher recommendations are also subject to pressure from parents determined to help their children, particularly if those factors fill the gap that test optionality creates.

There are two small but significant "divergent" groups for whom test optionality might make a marked difference: students with high GPAs and low test scores, and students with low GPAs and high test scores. We'll call them "High Grade" and "High Test," respectively.

High Test students are much more likely to be white, male, and suburban, with parents who are wealthy and college-educated. High Grade students are more likely to be female and Black or Hispanic, from rural areas and households with more poverty and less education. In a 2016 ACT study of divergent students, High Test students were more than twice as likely as High Grade students to come from families earning more than $100,000 per year. High Grade ACT students were three times more likely than High Test students to come from a high-poverty school.

High Grade students are most likely to benefit from test optionality. They'll be able to put their best feet forward without being penalized for low scores. And according to the findings from a 2021 paper by Yale economist Zachary Bleemer, not only is that good for High Grade students — for whom admission to elite universities is more consequential than it would be for High Test students — but it's also good for society, because the High Test students displaced aren't hurt as much as High Grade students are helped.

Where standardized testing goes from here

The diminishment of admissions testing is happening just as the school privatization movement is flourishing in a number of conservative states.

Schools don't control SAT and ACT scores. They do control grades, to the point that college admissions officers already routinely adjust raw high school grade point averages up and down to make them more comparable among high schools with different academic standards. The more public schools are subject to market pressures, the more they will contort themselves to deliver the grades that families demand.

Coleman points to a College Board research finding that high school grade inflation has grown the most in private schools, with no corresponding increase in SAT scores. “We have to be thoughtful as a society about checks and balances,” he says. “What does it mean to rely on grades when there is no other widely available source of academic information?”

At the same time, selective colleges may have another reason to move away from testing: the imminent destruction of affirmative action.

If the Supreme Court’s conservative majority makes race-based admissions preferences illegal later this year, some colleges will use other means to maintain the desired racial composition of their freshman classes — which could expose them to legal scrutiny. When the Trump administration sued Yale over affirmative action in 2020, it included a table showing the combined test scores and grades for major racial/ethnic groups in the admitted class as evidence that Black and Hispanic students were less qualified.

But under a test-optional regime, such analyses will be less accurate, which would make it hard to point to test scores in a legal challenge against a university’s diversification efforts.

With everything in sudden flux, it can be hard to arrive at a clean takeaway on the messy state of standardized testing. But, complicated though it may be, there’s a case to be made that this new normal strikes a good, if uneasy, balance.

The rise of universal high school testing means that, per Dynarski’s point, more students whose talents were obscured by nonconformity or class bias or something else will have a chance to shine.

The rise of test optionality means that more students with years of solid academic success won’t be hamstrung by a small, standardized snapshot of their whole self.

Neither development will fundamentally change the complex calculi that determine college admissions. But more young people will have the chance to present the best of who they really are.

DOCUMENT 4 - American universities are pursuing fairness the wrong way
The Economist, March 9, 2023

Drop legacy admissions—not standardised exams

The best American universities wish to be ruthlessly discriminating on academic merit—and beacons for diversity on everything else. Trying to accomplish both at once can prompt mistakes. Lately Columbia University, an Ivy League member in New York, has been making a lot of them. Last year it admitted to submitting incorrect data to a college-rankings outfit in a bid to seem more exclusive than it really is. And on March 1st, in a bid to seem more inclusive than it is, Columbia said it would drop the requirement for applicants to submit standardised exam scores.

Campaigners claim that exams favour the privileged. Evidence for this is thin. Maths problems involve neutral things like numbers and algebra; reading-comprehension tests are rarely about silverware or yachting. The bias, however, is said to be latent. Because scores are correlated with race and parental income, the exams must therefore be contaminated with racism and classism.

This confuses disparity with discrimination. Tests correctly measure educational inequality, which begins before kindergarten and grows as a result of bad policy. Just as smashing thermometers does not prevent climate change, so abandoning the measurement of educational inequality will not magic it away.

In fact, for meritocrats to abandon exams is self-defeating. Scores may be correlated with privilege, but they are probably the hardest part of an admissions application to warp with money. Children of the rich can get ample help in completing their coursework (which may receive inflated grades), hire professional writers to “edit” their essays and even spend lavishly on consultants who will help craft a delectable smorgasbord of extra-curricular activities. Yet research shows that intensive tutoring has a marginal effect on test scores. That is why, in the Varsity Blues scandal of 2019, very rich parents paid to have others sit their children’s exams.

Worse, supposedly progressive universities like Columbia operate affirmative-action schemes for deep-pocketed dullards in the form of “legacy” admissions that shower advantages on the relatives of alumni. One study found that undergraduates at Columbia are more than 100 times more likely to belong to the top 0.1% of families by income than to the poorest 20%. The best way to promote fairness would be to eliminate such a regressive pathway to admission.

In the 1920s Harvard moved to a “holistic” admissions system because its president thought it had too many Jewish students (who excelled on the standardised exam adopted in 1905). A century later, Harvard is being sued over a holistic admissions system that limits the number of Asian-American students, who also do well on tests. Based on that case, the Supreme Court is expected to rule that race-based affirmative action is unconstitutional. A cynical observer might conclude that universities are jettisoning quantitative measures, the lawsuit’s key evidence, to make discrimination harder to detect.

Fixing educational inequality requires more data, not less. Susan Dynarski, an economist at Harvard, makes the case that free, universal testing helps unearth promising young talent from rough backgrounds. Timely reminders about financial aid also help. For decades, elite universities have sought skin-deep diversity to paper over abysmal socioeconomic diversity, a

failing that is exacerbated by legacy admissions. If the Supreme Court rules that stratagem out, universities should not devote their energies to maintaining an undesirable status quo, but to crafting something better: a true meritocracy shorn of an unjustifiable, hereditary mediocracy.

DOCUMENT 5 - Affirmative action: US Supreme Court overturns race-based college admissions

BBC, by Bernd Debusmann Jr, June 29, 2023

The US Supreme Court has ruled that race can no longer be considered as a factor in university admissions.

The landmark ruling upends decades-old US policies on so-called affirmative action, also known as positive discrimination.

It is one of the most contentious issues in US education.

Affirmative action first made its way into policy in the 1960s, and has been defended as a measure to increase diversity.

US President Joe Biden said he "strongly" disagreed with Thursday's much-anticipated decision.

"We cannot let this decision be the last word," he said. "Discrimination still exists in America."

"This is not a normal court," he added of the nine justices, who are ideologically split between six conservatives and three liberals.

Education Secretary Miguel Cardona told BBC News that the court "took away a very important tool that university leaders used to ensure diversity on campus".

"However what it didn't take away is the intent to ensure that our colleges are made up of beautifully diverse students, much like our country is," he continued, adding that the White House will issue guidance to universities with instruction on how to legally maintain diversity.

The ruling covered two cases involving admissions at Harvard and the University of North Carolina (UNC). The court ruled 6-3 against UNC and 6-2 against Harvard.

The justices sided with an organisation called Students for Fair Admissions, founded by legal activist Edward Blum.

The group argued before the court last October that Harvard's race-conscious admissions policy violated Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which bars discrimination based on race, colour or national origin.

Chief Justice John Roberts wrote: "Many universities have for too long wrongly concluded that the touchstone of an individual's identity is not challenges bested, skills built, or lessons learned, but the color of their skin."

His majority opinion said UNC and Harvard's policies were "well intentioned".

And the decision noted that universities should not be prohibited from considering an applicant's "discussion of how race affects his or her life".

But Justice Roberts wrote: "Harvard's admissions process rests on the pernicious stereotype that 'a black student can usually bring something that a white person cannot offer.'"

Justice Clarence Thomas, the nation's second black justice and a conservative who has long called for an end to affirmative action, agreed.

He wrote that such programmes were "patently unconstitutional".

"Universities' self-proclaimed righteousness does not afford them license to discriminate on the basis of race," he said.

Among the liberal justices who dissented was Ketanji Brown Jackson, the first black woman appointed to the court. She said the decision was "truly a tragedy for us all".

"With let-them-eat-cake obliviousness, today, the majority pulls the ripcord and announces 'colorblindness for all' by legal fiat," she wrote.

Another dissenting liberal justice, Sonia Sotomayor, said the ruling "cements a superficial rule of colorblindness as a constitutional principle in an endemically segregated society".

But Justice Roberts argued that the dissenting justices had ignored parts of the law that they did not like.

"Most troubling of all is what the dissent must make these omissions to defend: a judiciary that picks winners and losers based on the color of their skin," he wrote.
Mr Blum, the founder of Students for Fair Admission, celebrated his group's success in the blockbuster ruling.
He called it "the beginning of the restoration of the colorblind legal covenant that binds together our multi-racial, multi-ethnic nation".
"These discriminatory admission practices undermined the integrity of our country's civil rights laws," he said.
Yukong Zhao, president of the Asian American Coalition for Education, told the BBC he welcomed the ruling.
His group argued that affirmative action had negatively affected Asian American students' odds of enrolment at elite schools.
"This decision will preserve meritocracy, which is the bedrock of the American dream.," Mr Zhao said outside the court.
Others criticised the ruling.
Angie Gabeau, the president of the Harvard Black Students Association, told the BBC she was "very discouraged" by the decision.
Ms Gabeau, who is 21 and entering her final year at Harvard, says she believes her race "100% played a factor in my application", including through an application essay.
She worries that "students that are affected by their race in this country will now feel obligated to trauma-dump in their applications to show how race is affecting their lives".
In a statement, Harvard president Lawrence Bacow said that while the Ivy League college "will certainly comply with the court's decision", it would continue to incorporate "people of many backgrounds, perspectives, and lived experiences".
UNC Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz said that while it is not the outcome that the university "hoped for", it will review the decision and "take any necessary steps to comply with the law".
Former US President Donald Trump, the current Republican frontrunner for next year's election, hailed the decision as a "great day".
Americans with "extraordinary ability and everything else necessary for success" are "finally being rewarded", he said on social media.
The Supreme Court has twice backed affirmative action programmes at US universities, most recently in 2016.
Nine US states already have bans on race-based college admissions in place: Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Oklahoma, New Hampshire, Michigan, Nebraska and Washington.
In California, voters rejected a 2020 ballot measure to bring back affirmative action, 24 years after it was banned.
The conservative-dominated Supreme Court enraged many US liberals last year when it voted to overturn Roe v Wade, a 1973 ruling that granted women abortion rights.
Several more recent rulings, however, have been cheered by the political left, including one on Native American child welfare and three others on election laws in Alabama, Louisiana and North Carolina.

DOCUMENT 6 - Bias against Chinese, Asians in US college admissions unfair and untenable
Global Times, by Wen Sheng, July 2, 2023

The US Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling on Thursday in banning discrimination by race in college admissions at Harvard University and the University of North Carolina. The high-stakes legal ruling, which directly impacts the future of employment, incomes and socioeconomic status of the nation's young people, was welcomed by many as a measure to bolster racial equality, which is the bedrock of social norms in many countries.

But the ruling has drawn fierce criticism from US President Joe Biden. In a statement, Biden assailed the court decision, saying that he continued to believe in the need for "diversity" in American colleges, with his undertone reading that black and Hispanic students deserve "special favorable treatment" to be enrolled in the country's elite institutions of higher learning.

Introduced in the 1960s, the so-called "affirmative action" policies were designed to boost the number of black and Hispanic students on American college campuses to increase racial and ethnic diversity in the domain of higher education. But in practice, in the past decade, many students of Asian origin have been put at a severe disadvantage, despite their consistent high performance on globally standardized metrics like exam scores, grades and coursework.

These affirmative action programs are designed to help black and Hispanic students gain easier access to higher education, but the policies are biased against Asian students, particularly those of Chinese origin.

Therefore, a largely anonymous group of Asian diaspora who highly value children's education, acting as part of Students for Fair Admissions in the US, brought the complaint to the high court. The group has a membership of about 20,000 students and parents, who claim the affirmative action has actually encouraged and aggravated racial discrimination, according to media reports.

The US Supreme Court ruled that Harvard and the University of North Carolina's race-conscious admissions policy is "unconstitutional," noting university programs "must comply with strict scrutiny, may never use race as a stereotype or negative," which must come to an end. From now on, all American universities will be required to abide by this new ruling, and should no longer consider an applicant's race as a factor during the admissions process.

It is not difficult to assume the affirmative action policies are socially contentious and divisive, often leading to racial and ethnic disputes and confrontation. Many in the US render the policy as unhealthy and harmful. However, Biden was scathing, saying it came from "not a normal court" - a well-worn accusation from the executive branch against the court.

The truth behind Biden's disapproval is that he, facing the 2024 presidential reelection, aspires to curry favor with a big proportion of American constituency, the rapidly growing African and Latino American voters. Therefore it is all politics.

The anti-Asian bias in higher education is an open secret at many elite "Ivory Tower" institutions in the US. Not long ago, a report by Harvard's own researchers concluded that being Asian Americans were disadvantage in the US college admissions process. So it is high

time to frankly and honestly discuss the pervasive anti-Asian prejudice in American higher education, as people's future careers and earnings are at stake.

And, the dispute on college admissions fully illustrates the troubled race relations in the US, this time placing the interests of the whites and Asians against the blacks and Latinos. Their dueling is drawing attention to the systemic problem of an increasingly polarized society.

In China, a student's score from the annual college entrance examinations is the only universal metric to determine whether a student can go to the best universities regardless of the student's family background. Many other countries have also observed the same set of principle in college admissions.

But, some in the US claim that reducing college admissions to a simple score of SAT or other tests overlooks the nuances and complexities of how race and inequality intersect in the US. They are stubbornly beholden to affirmative action and race-conscious college admissions, which they believe are necessary in addressing a history of racism and inequality.

A large majority of Asian Americans say that when prestigious colleges consider race and ethnicity in admissions decisions, it negatively affects fairness and student quality in enrollment. Amid the pandemic and the rising US-China tensions in recent years, Asians, especially Chinese, have been facing escalating anti-Asian racism in the US.

Increasingly, many students are forced to hide their Asian identity in the US college admissions. For an instance, a popular test-prep guide published by the Princeton Review, advises students of Asian descent to "conceal their racial identity," according to media reports. And, some consultants advocate the students to shift away from "classically Asian activities" like playing chess or learning the piano or other instruments in order to improve their chance of getting into elite universities.

Isn't it ridiculous and absurd that students of Asian origin are being prompted to appear "less Asian" or "less Chinese" on their college applications, along with the perception that Asian students must meet a higher bar than other racial groups in order to get into the same universities?

Following the latest supreme court ruling, a number of US media pundits predicted that American college admissions could become even more "subjective" and "opaque", as institutions would place less emphasis on test scores, and more emphasis on personal qualities, the application essay and the recommendations, the opposite of what many opponents of affirmative action had hoped for. In that case, the stereotypes placed on Asians will persist, and the bias and discrimination against them will only be amplified, ruining their hopes or dreams of achieving upward social mobility in the US.