# Racial and Ethnic Preferences in Undergraduate Admissions to the University of Maryland, College Park

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Center for Equal Opportunity



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#### **Executive Summary**

Statistical analyses of Fall 2021 applicants to the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) found that race was a "plus" factor in the school's admissions policy.

Test Scores and Grades.

- The college admitted out-of-state African Americans with lower test scores and grades compared to in-state Asian Americans and whites.
- The college also favored out-of-state Hispanics over in-state Asian American and whites.
- Finally, the college admitted out-of-state whites over in-state Asian Americans.

#### Rejected Applicants.

- UMCP rejected 35 African Americans, 69 Hispanics, 422 Asian Americans, and 529 whites.
- Most rejectees were not from Maryland, but 17 African Americans, 15 Hispanics, 126 Asian Americans, and 183 whites were.

#### Odds Ratios.

- Being African American or Hispanic was a "plus" factor in admissions.
- Relative to the odds of admissions for whites, and controlling for test scores, grades, residency, and gender, an African American was almost three times as likely to be admitted over a white applicant (2.82 to 1).
- The odds ratio of Hispanic over white applicants was 1.62 to 1.
- Being Asian American, controlling for test scores, grades, residency, and gender, was not a plus factor. The Asian American over white odds ratio was 0.72 to 1.
- The odds ratio of admissions favored whites over Asian Americans. The odds ratio of white over Asian American applicants was 1.39 to 1, the mathematical inverse of 0.72 to 1.

Race Compared to Other Demographic Variables.

- The other demographic variables were given some weight in admissions, but not as much as race.
- UMCP slightly favored women over men. Odds ratio of women over men was a small 1.15 to 1.
- Out-of-state applicants were also favored. The out-of-state over in-state odds ratios was 1.39 to 1.
- Finally, UMCP gave very small preference to non-legacies over legacy applicants (1.08 to 1).



Probability of Admissions by Race and Residency, with SATs and GPAs Equal to Those of African American Admittees at the 50<sup>th</sup> Percentile

\*Calculations also assumed applicant was a male and non-legacy.

<u>Probability of Admissions</u>. For an applicant with the credentials of the African American admittee at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile, being African American was given more weight than residency.

- Among in-state applicants, African American residents were more likely to be admitted compared to Hispanic, Asian American, and white Maryland residents.
- Among non-residents, African American applicants were also more likely to be admitted compared to Hispanic, Asian American, and white applicants.
- Race and ethnicity were larger factors than residency. Out-of-state African American and Hispanic applicants were more likely to be admitted compared to in-state Asian and white applicants.

<u>Graduation Rates</u>. The six-year graduation rates show that African Americans and Hispanics graduated at lower rates compared to whites and Asian Americans.

• 83% of African Americans and 85% of Hispanics graduated in six years, compared to 92% of Asian Americans and 90% of whites.

## Acknowledgments

I want to thank Linda Chavez and the staff at the Center for Equal Opportunity for giving me the chance to work on this report on racial and ethnic preferences in 2021 undergraduate admissions to the University of Maryland, College Park.

#### Introduction

Until June 29, 2023, "diversity" was the only compelling reason that allowed an educational institution to use race as a factor in college and university admissions. An institution could not use a quota nor could it use race to compensate for past societal injustices. Race could only be used as a "plus" factor to achieve a diverse student body, but only when other mechanisms had been tried and not achieved a "critical mass."<sup>1</sup>

The diversity rationale was soundly rejected by a six-justice majority. In a path-breaking decision,<sup>2</sup> the U.S. Supreme Court ended racial preference in all college and university admission programs. The admissions programs at Harvard and the University of North Carolina were declared unconstitutional.

The decision reversed past decisions upheld over the years by narrow Supreme Court majorities (that included Republican-appointed justices). It ended the ability of colleges and universities — public and private — to do what most colleges and universities said they still need to do: consider race as one of many factors in deciding which of the qualified applicants is to be admitted.

Chief Justice John Roberts, a longtime critic of affirmative action programs, wrote the decision for the court majority, saying that the nation's colleges and universities must use colorblind criteria in admissions.

"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. This Nation's constitutional history does not tolerate that choice."

Chief Justice Roberts pointed to the court's 2003 decision that reaffirmed the constitutionality of affirmative action programs and noted that Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, in her majority opinion, suggested that there would have to be an end at some future point. "That time has now come," Roberts said.

<sup>1</sup> For a summary on preferences, see pp. 15-30 in Richard H. Sander and Stuart Taylor, Jr. Mismatch: How affirmative action hurts students it's intended to help and why universities won't admit it. The book summarizes data on how preferences in admissions ends up hurting underrepresented minority students the most.

<sup>2</sup> Students for Fair Admissions Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College. "Opinion of the Court," No. 20-119 and 21-707.



Justice Clarence Thomas issued a lengthy concurring opinion, stating, that the decision "sees the universities' admissions policies for what they are: rudderless, race-based preferences. ... Those policies fly in the face of our colorblind Constitution." He further declared,

"While I am painfully aware of the social and economic ravages which have befallen my race and all who suffer discrimination, I hold our enduring hope that this country will live up to its principles that ... all men are created equal, are equal citizens, and must be treated equally before the law."

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This CEO report is a study of Fall 2021 undergraduate admissions to the University of Maryland at College Park (UMCP). The UMCP admissions decisions were made before the Supreme Court ended racial preferences. The report analyzes undergraduate applicant data provided by the university in terms of preferences given to certain applicants.

The question the study seeks to answer is this: What role did race play in UMCP admissions? Did the college favor African American applicants and by how much compared to other groups? Did the college also favor Hispanics?

#### **Applicants, Admittees, and Matriculants, 2021**

Like other CEO studies, this report focuses on four applicant groups: African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and whites. It excludes international applicants, American Indians, Native Alaskans, Native Hawaiians and other Polynesians, multi-racial applicants, and "unknowns."<sup>3</sup>

## Admissions Rates, University of Maryland College Park (UMCP)

#### Admissions Rates



Figure 1. Admissions Rate by Race and Ethnicity

Figure 1 displays the admissions rate for each racial/ethnic group. Asian Americans had the highest rate (47%), followed by whites (44%) and Hispanics (36%). All three were higher than the admissions rate for African Americans (27%).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> UMCP provided the dataset in response to CEO's Freedom of Information Request. CEO received data on 149,173 applicants for the Fall 2021 term. 119 were American Indian, 23,104 were Asian American, 17,364 were African American, 13,211 were Hispanic, 10,761 were international applicants, 75 were Native Hawaiian, 6,594 were of two or more ethnicities, 6,253 were unknown, and 71,692 were white. Analysis for this report was limited to Asian American, African American, Hispanic, and white applicants to make the findings comparable to past reports and because other group members would be easier to identify when further divided into resident-non-resident and admit-reject subgroups.



Because UMCP is a state university, we further divided applicants by both residency and race/ethnicity (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Admissions Rate by Residency and Race/Ethnicity

Among in-state residents, the admissions rate for Asian Americans was ten points or more compared to other groups. 53% of in-state Asian Americans were admitted, as were 43% of in-state whites, 37% of in-state Hispanics, and 30% of in-state African Americans.

For non-residents, whites were admitted at the highest rate (45%), followed closely by Asian Americans (43%). 35% of Hispanic non-residents were admitted (ten points lower than the rate for non-resident whites), as were 22% of non-resident African Americans (the lowest admissions rate of all groups).

#### Yield

Figure 3. Yield by Race and Ethnicity



As shown in Figure 3, the percentage of admittees who decided to matriculate at UMCP was well under fifty percent. Most admittees went elsewhere. 28% of African Americans chose to attend UMCP, as did 27% of Hispanics, 31% of Asian Americans, and 21% of whites.

These decisions resulted in an entering class where whites made up the largest racial/ethnic group (see Figure 4), but no group made up the majority of matriculants.





Whites made up 47% of the 2021 entering class. 22% were Asian American, 10% were African American, and 8% were Hispanic.

#### **Differences in Academic Test Scores and Grades Among 2021** Admittees

#### SATs of Admittees by Race/Ethnicity

The figure below shows the admittees' range of SAT scores (verbal plus math) by racial/ethnic group. The scores are displayed at the 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, and 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles.



Figure 5. SAT Percentiles of Admittees by Race and Ethnicity

In general, Asian American SAT scores were the highest among the four groups, while African American admittees' were the lowest.

At the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile, Asian American admittees had a score of 1430 meaning that 75 percent of all Asian Americans admitted to UMCP had SAT scores that were higher. The Asian American median (scores at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile) was 1500—half the Asian Americans scored higher than a 1500, half scored lower. At the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, Asian American admittees had a combined score of 1540.

White admittees' scores were lower at the same percentiles compared to Asian Americans. At the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile, white sores were a 1340. They were a 1410 at the median and a 1480 at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.

Hispanic scores were lower than those of the other two groups. The Hispanic score at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile was a 1370—130 points lower than the Asian American median and 40 points lower



than the white median. The Hispanic median (1370) was also lower than the Asian American and white scores at the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile (1430 and 1410, respectively).

African American scores were the lowest of the four groups. The African American median was 1340—30 points lower than the Hispanic median (1370) but 160 points lower than the Asian American median (1500) and 70 points lower than the median for white admittees (1410).

#### ACTs of Admittees by Race/Ethnicity

The figure below shows the admittees' range of ACT scores by race and ethnicity. The scores are displayed at the 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, and 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles.



Figure 6. ACT Percentiles of Admittees by Race and Ethnicity

Similar to the distribution of SAT scores, Asian American ACT scores were generally higher than those of the other groups. The Asian American ACT at the median (34) was the same as the white ACT score at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile (34) and higher than the scores of African Americans (30) and Hispanics (32) at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile. This means that half of all Asian American admittees scored higher on the ACT than did three out of four whites, and more than three out of four Hispanics and African Americans.

The median score for white admittees was a 32—the same as the Hispanic median. White scores at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile (34) were higher by one point compared to Hispanic scores at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile (33) and two points higher than African American scores (32) at the same percentile.

White scores at the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile (31) were higher than Hispanic scores (30) and African American scores (26) at the same percentile.

## High School GPAs of Admittees by Race/Ethnicity



Figure 7. High School GPAs of Admittees by Race and Ethnicity

Almost all GPAs for admittees were close to or above a 4.0, and the range of scores overlap considerably. The African American median GPA was a 4.2—less than three-tenths of a point lower than the Asian American median (4.5), two-tenths of points lower than the white median (4.4), and one-tenth of a point lower than the Hispanic median (4.3).

The African American score at the  $75^{\text{th}}$  percentile (4.5) was the same as the Hispanic score at that percentile. It was also two-tenths of a point lower than the Asian American score (4.7) and one-tenth of a point lower than white scores at the  $75^{\text{th}}$  (4.6)

## Academic Qualifications, In-State and Out-of-State Admittees

#### In-State versus Out-of-State SATs

Racial and ethnic differences in test scores and grades also depended to some extent on whether applicants were in-state or out-of-state applicants. The figures in this section further break down test scores and grades by state residency.





The distribution of racial and ethnic group scores also differed when comparing in-state and outof-state admittees within each group.

The median in-state score for African Americans was a 1330, which was forty points lower than the median for out-of-state African Americans (1370). The African American in-state score at the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile was a 1195, compared to 1245 for out-of-state African Americans. Scores at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile were 1425 for in-state African Americans, compared to 1460 for those from out of state—a 35-point gap.

UMCP also gives greater preference to race over residency. The college admitted out-of-state African Americans with lower scores compared to in-state whites and Asian Americans. The median for non-resident African Americans (1370) was lower than in-state median scores for whites (1420) and Asian Americans (1490).

For Hispanics, the median in-state score was a 1340, which was forty-five points lower than the median for out-of-state Hispanics (1385). The Hispanic median in-state score was also lower than the median for in-state Asian Americans (1490) and in-state whites (1420).

Maryland also admitted out-of-state Hispanics with lower median SAT scores (1385) than instate Asian Americans (1490) and whites (1420).

In-State versus Out-of-State ACTs



Figure 9. ACT Scores of Admittees by Residency and Race

ACT scores also show race playing a bigger role than residency. Based on ACT scores, out-ofstate African Americans and Hispanics were admitted over in-state Asian Americans and whites.

Out-of-state African American admittees at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile had an ACT score of 30—significantly lower than the median ACT scores of in-state Asian American admittees (34) and in-state white admittees (33).

For out-of-state Hispanic admittees, the median ACT score (32) was also lower than the median ACT scores of in-state Asian American admittees (34) and in-state white admittees (33).

#### In-State versus Out-of-State High School GPAs



Figure 10. High School GPAs of Admittees by Residency and Race

High school GPAs show non-Maryland admittees with lower average grades compared to Maryland admittees. For every group, non-resident GPAs were lower than those from Maryland.

The median GPA for in-state African American admittees was a 4.3, slightly higher than the median GPA for non-resident African American admittees (4.2). The median in-state Hispanic score (4.4) was, in turn, higher than the median for out-of-state Hispanics (4.3). The in-state Asian American median was 4.6, compared to a median of 4.4 for non-resident Asian Americans. Finally, the median for in-state whites was 4.6, compared to a median of 4.3 for non-resident whites.

## **Rejectees with Higher Test Scores and Grades**

Table 1 below presents the number of Maryland and non-Maryland applicants who were rejected despite having SAT scores and grades higher than the medians of African Americans admitted by UMCP.

|            | In-State | Out-of-State | Total |
|------------|----------|--------------|-------|
| African Am | 17       | 18           | 35    |
| Hispanic   | 15       | 54           | 69    |
| Asian Am   | 126      | 296          | 422   |
| White      | 183      | 346          | 529   |
| Total      | 341      | 714          | 1055  |

 Table 1. Rejectees with Scores and Grades Better than the Median Scores and Grades of African

 American Admittees

Most such rejectees were not from Maryland, but 341 rejectees were Maryland residents. This group included 17 African Americans, 15 Hispanics, 126 Asian Americans, and 183 whites.

The numbers in the table above raise the question: how much weight did Maryland place on being of a certain race/ethnicity compared to being a Maryland resident? How much weight did the college place on gender? What about being a legacy? The next section shows the relative weight placed on race and ethnicity over these other factors. The relative weights are expressed as odds ratios.

## Odds Ratios and Logistic Regression Analysis

A useful way to assess the degree of preference in admissions is to develop statistical models that predict the likelihood of admissions for applicants from the different ethnic and racial groups. The method allows other factors such as test scores and residency to be held constant between groups as the odds between groups are compared.

The odds ratio is a ratio of odds. An odds ratio of 1.00 in admissions means that the odds of admissions of Group A and White applicants are equal. It is the equivalent to a correlation coefficient of zero. Odds ratios greater than 1 means that the odds of applicants from one group being admitted are greater than those for White applicants. Conventionally, an odds ratio of 1.5 to 1 or less is a small odds ratio and therefore a weak correlation. Odds ratios between 1.5 and 3.0 indicate a moderate association. Odds ratios of 3.0 to 1 or more are considered to be large odds ratios and indicate a strong relationship.

From logistic regression equations, we derive the odds of admissions for each group relative to the odds for whites.

| African American to White | 2.82 to 1*** |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Hispanic to White         | 1.62 to 1*** |
| Asian American to White   | 0.72 to 1*** |
|                           |              |
| Female to Male            | 1.15 to 1*** |
| In-State to Out-of-State  | .072 to 1*** |
| Legacy to Non-Legacy      | 0.93 to 1*   |

Table 2. Racial/Ethnic Odds Ratios and Odds Ratios for Other Demographics

\*Statistically significant, p<0.05;

\*\*\*Statistically significant, p<0.001

Total SAT (math plus verbal) scores and high school GPAs were statistically controlled as well as gender, residency, and legacy. What remains mathematically are the odds of one group getting in relative to the odds of another. In Table 1, African American, Hispanic, and Asian American applicants are compared to whites.

In 2021, being African American was a moderate "plus" factor in admissions. The odds of admissions of an African American applicant were almost three times the odds of a white applicant (2.82 to 1), statistically controlling for other factors (test scores, gender, residency, and legacy).

Being Hispanic was also a "plus" factor (at 1.62 to 1), but being Asian American was not (0.72) to 1). Taking the inverse of the Asian American to white odds ratio, the odds ratio favoring whites over Asian Americans was calculated to be 1.39 to 1—a small advantage in admissions.

Women were given a small preference over men (1.15 to 1), as were out-of-state applicants over Maryland residents (0.72 to 1).<sup>4</sup> Taking the inverse, out-of-state applicants were favored by 1.39 to 1. Controlling for other factors, non-legacies were also given preference over legacy applicants. UMCP favored non-legacy applicants by a small odds ratio of 1.08 to 1, where the legacy over non-legacy odds ratio was 0.93 to 1.

The odds ratios also allow calculations of the probability of admissions, given SATs, GPAs, legacy connections, in-state residency, gender, and race. In the next section, probabilities of admissions are calculated by race and residency, based on the premise that the applicant is a non-legacy male. The calculated probabilities also assume that the applicant has SATs and GPAs equal to the medians of African American admittees.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The odds ratio for Asian American to white was 0.721 to 1. The odds ratio for out-of-state applicants over Maryland residents was 0.724 to 1. Both rounded down to 0.72 to 1.



## **Probability of Admissions**

The figure below shows the likelihood of admissions for a non-legacy male with test scores and grades equal to those of African American admittees at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile (i.e., a total SAT of 1340 and a high school GPA of 4.2).





An in-state non-legacy male African American would have a 65% chance of admissions, while an in-state Hispanic male with the same credentials would have a 51% chance. Asian American and white males who were Maryland residents would have even lower chances of admissions (32% and 39%, respectively).

Maryland favors non-Maryland applicants, so chances of admissions were greater compared to Maryland residents. If applicant credentials were equal to those of African American admittees at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile, African American non-residents would have a 72% chance of admissions. Hispanic non-residents would have a 59% probability. Non-resident Asian Americans would have had a 39% chance, while white non-residents, a 47% chance.

But Maryland placed greater weight on being African American and being Hispanic compared to being a non-resident. As a result, both in-state and out-of-state African American and Hispanics were more likely to be admitted compared to Asian Americans and whites with the same credentials.

In the next section, we compare six-year graduation rates among the four racial/ethnic groups. There are racial/ethnic disparities here, too.



### Six-Year Graduation Rates

There were also racial and ethnic disparities in graduation rates.



Figure 12. Six-Year Graduation Rate by Race\*

\*Based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics, "Number of degrees and certificates awarded, by level and race/ethnicity and gender: July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021." https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/institutionprofile.aspx?unitId=163286&goToReportId=6

African American and Hispanic graduation rates were lower than graduation rates for Asian Americans and whites. 83% of African Americans who were first-year enrollees graduated in six years, as did 85% of Hispanics. 92% of Asian Americans, and 90% of whites who started at the same time.

#### Conclusion

Statistical analysis of data from the University of Maryland at College Park shows preferences awarded to non-residents over Maryland applicants. Analysis also finds that the university favors African Americans and Hispanics over Asian Americans and whites when controlling for other factors such as test scores and grades.

This means that UMCP admitted both in-state and out-of-state African Americans and Hispanics with lower test scores and grades compared to in-state Asian Americans and whites. Controlling for other factors, the college also favored out-of-state whites over in-state whites and out-of-state Asian Americans.



As a result, out-of-state African Americans had a greater likelihood of admissions compared to in-state Asian Americans and whites with the same credentials. The same can also be said of out-of-state Hispanics, who were also more likely to be admitted compared to in-state Asian Americans and whites.

## Appendix

Table 2. Logistic Regression Output, University of Maryland at College Park, Fall 2021

|                   | В       | Exp(B) |
|-------------------|---------|--------|
| African American  | 1.038   | 2.824  |
| Hispanic          | .479    | 1.615  |
| Asian American    | 328     | .721   |
| High School GPA   | 2.833   | 16.994 |
| Verbal + Math SAT | .006    | 1.006  |
| Legacy            | 078     | .925   |
| Maryland Resident | 323     | .724   |
| Female            | .139    | 1.149  |
| Constant          | -20.053 | .000   |

All variables statistically significant ( $p \le 0.05$ )

Probability of Admissions=A/(1+A) where A=EXP[(1.038\*African American) +

(0.479\*Hispanic) + (-0.328\* Asian American) +(-.078\*Legacy) + (-.323\*Maryland Resident) + (0.139\*Female) + (-20.053)]



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Linda Chavez, Chairman

