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"Education is the very foundation of good citizenship."

— Brown v. Board of Education, 1954

Court preserves affirmative action

Race can factor in college admissions, Court justices rule

By Anne Gearan
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — In its most significant statement about race in a generation, a divided Supreme Court allowed the nation's colleges and universities to select students based in part on race, ruling Monday that diverse classrooms mold good citizens and strong leaders.

The court emphasized that race cannot be the overriding factor, but a majority acknowledged a broad social value in encouraging all races to learn and work together.

"In order to cultivate a set of leaders with legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry, it is necessary that the path to leadership be visibly open to talented and qualified individuals of every race and ethnicity," Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote for the 5-4 majority.

At issue was whether admissions policies that give one racial group an edge unconstitutionally discriminate against other groups.

In two decisions involving the University of Michigan, the court underscored that racial quotas are unconstitutional but left room for the nation's public universities — and by extension other public and private institutions — to seek ways to take race into account.

"The court has in essence provided the nation with a road map on how to construct affirmative action programs in higher education that are constitutionally acceptable," said NAACP President Kweisi Mfume.

The court preserved the rules outlined 25 years ago in a landmark ruling that underpin the consideration of race at institutions or gatherings as diverse as military academies, corporate boardrooms and campus leadership retreats.

In the earlier ruling a different group of justices struck down a quota system that had excluded a white student from medical school, but they allowed less structured forms of affirmative action.

"Diversity is one of America's greatest strengths," President George W. Bush said after Monday's ruling. "Today's decisions seek a careful balance between the goal of campus diversity and the fundamental principle of equal treatment under the law."

Opponents of affirmative action, including some of Bush's close advisers, had hoped the



Left: Students celebrate on the campus of the University of Michigan on Monday after the Supreme Court's decision on the use of race in admission policy was announced.

Below: Steve Lee, a recent graduate of the University of Michigan School of Law, studies for the bar exam in the school's library. The Supreme Court ruled that the nation's public universities may consider race in admissions.

SYLVIA KAPUSCINSKI • KRT CAMPUS

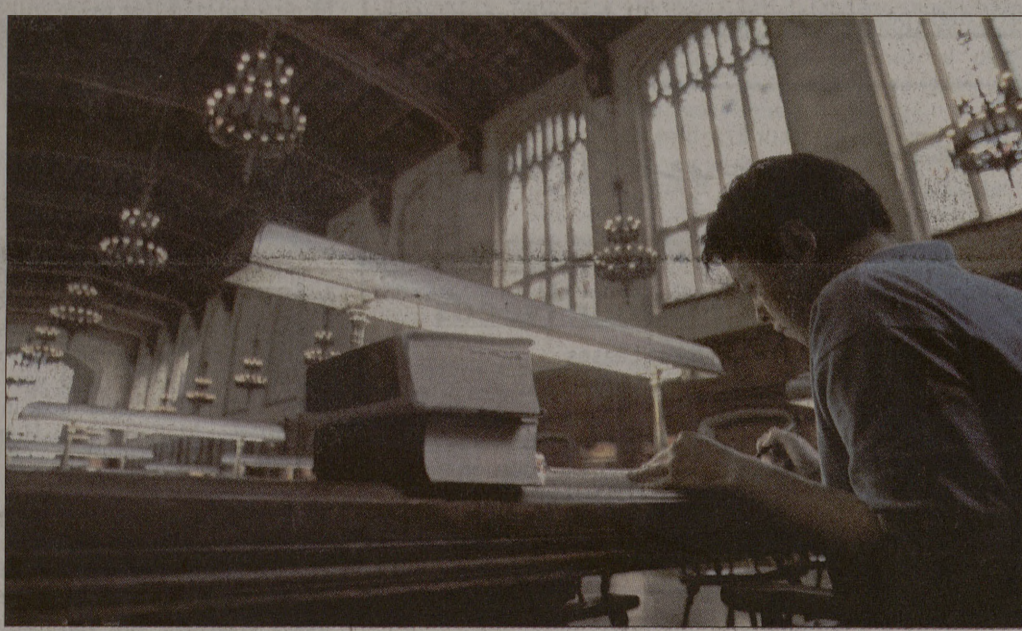
Supreme Court would use this opportunity to ban most considerations of race in any government decision. The court is far more conservative than in 1978, when it last ruled on affirmative action in higher education admissions, and the justices have put heavy conditions on government affirmative action in other arenas over the past decade.

O'Connor said the value of diverse classrooms extends far beyond the campus. Justices John Paul Stevens, David Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer joined her endorsement of a program in place at the University of Michigan's law school.

The law school uses an inexact admissions formula that gives extra consideration to blacks, Hispanics and to applicants from other groups the school says have historically suffered from discrimination.

The program has produced minority enrollment of between 12 percent and 20 percent over the past decade. There is no fixed target, the school said.

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J. KYLE KEENER • KRT CAMPUS

A&M weighs top 10 percent, academic merit in admissions but is race-neutral

By Justin Smith
THE BATTALION

In a 5-4 ruling Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court allowed universities to give minority applicants an edge in admissions.

Texas A&M officials said it is too early to tell what impact the decision will have on A&M.

"We will look to the State Attorney General's office to interpret

what the U.S. Supreme Court decision means for universities in Texas," A&M President Robert M. Gates said in a statement.

Bill Perry, executive associate provost, said admissions at A&M are currently governed by two factors.

The first factor is the top 10 percent rule, which allows for students in the top 10 percent of their graduating high school class to receive automatic acceptance into A&M.

The second factor affects all stu-

dents who are applying, but are outside of the top 10 percent of their high school class. These students are considered on a multitude of factors including academic record, performance on standardized tests and community service.

Race is not one of these factors, Perry said.

"Admissions at Texas A&M is race-neutral," he said. "We have targeted certain schools and certain regions."

Members of the A&M chapter of The Young Texas Conservatives said the decision was disappointing.

Mark McCaig, a junior business administration major and vice chairman of Legislative Affairs for the A&M YTC, said other factors should be considered when deciding who is admitted to the University and who is not.

"We feel that race should not be a factor and admissions should be based on merit," he said.

McCaig said YTC feels the top 10 percent rule is a substitute for affirmative action.

The African American Student Coalition could not be reached for comment.

The ruling affects tax-supported schools and, by extension, private schools as well as other institutions that have looked for ways to boost minority enrollment without violating the Constitution's guarantee against discrimination.

A&M seeks relief plan to stem insurance woes

By True Brown
THE BATTALION

Graduate students and part-time workers in the Texas A&M System will be met with significant increases in their health insurance costs in 2004, but University officials say a plan will be put in place to lessen the burden on graduate students.

The System's insurance plan for 2004 was released Friday, and it shows some part-time workers facing as much as a \$379.48 per month increase in health care costs. Some part-time employees and graduate students will go from paying nothing for their health insurance to paying as much as \$179.35 per month.

The A&M System offers three health care plans to its part-time workers, and the new rates show major increases in all three categories. Employees

with families face the most severe increases. In 2003, employees with families paid \$92.26 per month, but those same families will now pay \$475.74. On one of A&M's other plans, part-time employees with families will see their rates increase by \$317.48 after paying just \$10 per month in 2003.

Chris Lavergne, a graduate teaching assistant in agricultural education, is married and has two children, ages 2 and 5. Lavergne's family could see insurance costs go from \$108.80 per month to \$426.67, a 392 percent increase. Lavergne's wife stays at home with their children, leaving him as the household's sole source of income.

"(The increases are) disappointing to say the least," Lavergne said. "We'll have to make some contingency plans

Health Insurance Increases Average monthly health insurance increases for A&M System part-time employees in 2004

Employee only	\$156.85
Employee and spouse	\$275.95
Employee and children	\$235.43
Employee and family	\$338.28

SOURCE: TAMU HUMAN RESOURCES

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because that's really expensive. The first word that comes to my mind is disappointment. It's unfortunate because one of the good selling points of A&M was that they provided affordable health insurance to grad students, and now that it's so expensive it could, in a way, hurt the school."

Full-time employees are also subject to increases, with the biggest totaling \$135.08 per

month for employees with families. Employees with a spouse will see their monthly total rise by \$102.11. A&M Vice Provost Bill Perry said the University is taking the necessary steps to help out graduate students with the added costs.

"We're looking at ways to ameliorate those costs," Perry said. "We're going to do

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Writing program aims at improving science rhetoric

By Megan Orton
THE BATTALION

A \$481,850 grant was awarded by the National Science Foundation to the creators of a writing program that incorporates writing assignments into courses such as mathematics, biology and physics where writing is not typically part of the curriculum.

The program, titled Writing for Assessment and Learning in the Natural and Mathematical Sciences, has shown evidence of greater student learning at Texas A&M and the University of California at Los Angeles.

The goal of WAL is to promote a deeper understanding of content in students' current course work, said Margaret Hobson, Texas Engineering Experiment Station's director. Programs like these teach stu-

dents to think about how to learn things, referred to as metacognition, Hobson said.

"Most students think of each of their courses as separate and encouraging students to piece them together makes learning deeper," Hobson said. "Connections are easier to make, and they learn at a higher level."

Dr. Nancy Simpson, director for the Center for Teaching Excellence at A&M, will serve as the project's principal investigator.

Each of the three departments will employ a co-principal investigator from A&M: Dr. Comer Patterson for biology, Dr. A. Lewis Ford for physics and Dr. Michael Stecher for mathematics. A co-principal investigator from UCLA, Dr. Arlene

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