

DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION REMAINS AN ESSENTIAL NATIONAL PRIORITY

ACT

American Association of Colleges
for Teacher Education

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

American Association of Collegiate
Registrars and Admissions Officers

American Association of Community Colleges

American Association of State
Colleges and Universities

American Association of University Professors

American College Personnel Association

American Council on Education

American Dental Education Association

American Indian Higher Education Consortium

APPA—Leadership in Educational Facilities

Association of American Colleges and Universities

Association of American Law Schools

Association of American Medical Colleges

Association of American Universities

Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities

Association of Community College Trustees

Association of Governing Boards
of Universities and Colleges

Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

Association of Research Libraries

College and University Professional Association
for Human Resources (CUPA-HR)

College Board

Council for Higher Education Accreditation

Council for Opportunity in Education

Council on Governmental Relations

Council of Graduate Schools

Educational Testing Service

EDUCAUSE

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators
in Higher Education

National Association for College
Admission Counseling

National Association of College
and University Business Officers

National Association of Independent
Colleges and Universities

National Association of Student
Financial Aid Administrators

National Collegiate Athletic Association

UNCF

In 1957, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter articulated the “four essential freedoms” of a university—to determine for itself on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study.” More than 50 years after Frankfurter’s elegant formulation, the Supreme Court recently reaffirmed the fourth of these freedoms. The decision in *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin et al.* leaves intact the longstanding legal principle that the educational benefits of a widely diverse student body are a compelling governmental interest. We strongly agree.

The case now returns to the Fifth Circuit for review under clarified standards of strict scrutiny, and it will be some time before there is a final decision. But a central issue for colleges and universities—the educational benefits of diversity—remains unchanged.

A diverse student body enables all students to have the transformational experience of interacting with their peers who have varied perspectives and come from different backgrounds. These experiences, which are highly valued by employers because of their importance in the workplace, also prepare students with the skills they need to live in an interconnected world and to be more engaged citizens. Our economic future, democracy, and global standing will suffer if the next generation is not ready to engage and work with people whose backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives are different from their own.

Our nation’s higher education institutions, whether they are community colleges or four-year institutions, public or private, nonprofit or for-profit, religiously affiliated or secular, professional, vocational, or liberal-arts focused, stand committed to furthering the goals of equal opportunity and diversity in education.

We pledge to reinvigorate our work to ensure that all who enroll in higher education experience a rigorous, horizon-expanding, and intellectually challenging education. We remain dedicated to the mission of discovering and disseminating knowledge, including the knowledge gained through direct experiences with diverse colleagues—a resource for achieving a stronger democracy and nation.

For more information, please visit whes.org.