

PRESS RELEASE

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CGS Statement on the Supreme Court Ruling in Fisher v. UT Austin

Washington, DC — *Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) President Debra W. Stewart today released the following statement in response to the ruling by the Supreme Court of the United States RE: Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin. The case questions whether the University of Texas at Austin is permitted to use race, along with other criteria, in making undergraduate admissions decisions.*

On June 24th, the Supreme Court sent the Fisher v. UT Austin case back for review by the U.S. court of appeals for the 5th circuit. As the case continues to be analyzed, it is important to remember that the diversity of American colleges and universities is one of the greatest strengths of the U.S. higher education system. Diverse student populations provide experiences and perspectives that enhance the education of all students, preparing them to work, collaborate and thrive in a variety of contexts. The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) supports the commitments of its U.S. member universities to meeting this 21st-century objective and to developing a broad base of highly educated U.S. talent that will support the health and prosperity of the nation as a whole.

How best to achieve inclusion in a student population is a complex question, and one that must be answered in individual university contexts. The Council of Graduate Schools believes that it is important to protect the autonomy of U.S. institutions to design admissions policies that are customized to their institutional missions.

The arguments in the Fisher v. UT Austin case are based on undergraduate admissions processes, which tend to be uniform and centralized in the Admissions Office of a university. By contrast, the graduate admissions process is decentralized, more nuanced and customized to the missions of individual graduate programs. Institutional autonomy in achieving diversity has far-reaching implications in the graduate education sector for that reason, especially in programs and disciplines that see less diversity than others.

As the Council of Graduate Schools works to help universities respond to this and future rulings, we will stand by our position that the United States must continue to support and develop the diversity of its talent.

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The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of over 500 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research, and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. Among U.S. institutions, CGS members award 92% of the doctoral degrees and 81% of the master's degrees. The organization's mission is to improve and advance graduate education, which it accomplishes through advocacy in the federal policy arena, research, and the development and dissemination of best practices.*

** Based on data from the 2011 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees*