Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven
But No One Wants to Die:

How to Use Non-Cognitive Admissions Selection Criteria
to Meet Affirmative Action Goals in College Admissions

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• Overview
• Current Admission Process
• Non-cognitive Admission Selection
  • Implementation Solutions
  • Review of Handouts
• Session Discussion
Agenda

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- Non-cognitive Admission Selection
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Majority Opinion

“The [Supreme] Court expects that 25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary to further the interest approved today.”

Justice Sandra Day O’Connor writing the US Supreme Court majority opinion for Grutter v. Bollenger.
Based on an invariant system, that is procedurally based and consistent from beginning to end.

Ultimately it comes down to a synthesis of information to arrive at a decision.

Highly Subjective.
Cognitive Admission Criteria

- Grades
  - What grades mean
  - Fit & match as displayed in the personal essay
  - Standardized Tests
- Letters of Recommendation
- Extra-curricular activities
- *Interview
- *Talent based material
Problems with (Cognitive Process)

- Reliance of Past Performance.
- Process is Static and unchanged for 100+ years.
- Rewards past performance not future potential.
- Does not meet the current realities of today’s students and today’s educational process.
- Prone to Blowback.
2008 Minorities in Higher Education:

**College enrollment (in millions)**

- 1995: 10
- 2005: 15

**College enrollment (by race %)**

- **Asian American**
  - Not-enrolled: 70%
  - Enrolled: 30%

- **Whites**
  - Not-enrolled: 60%
  - Enrolled: 40%

- **African American**
  - Not-enrolled: 80%
  - Enrolled: 20%

- **Hispanic & Am In**
  - Not-enrolled: 90%
  - Enrolled: 10%
Non-cognitive Selection

A process that seeks to level the playing field by focusing assessment of student abilities or admissibility on other criteria than standardized tests. Most of this work has been extensively researched and explained by Dr. William E. Sedlacek, in his book Beyond the Big Test: Noncognitive Assessment in Higher Education (2004).
According to Dr. Sedlacek

- This process promotes the importance of diversity & offers administrators and faculty:
  - Legal grounding for enrollment, financial aid and support of diverse student groups;
  - New ways to integrate academic and non-academic programs; and
  - Usable instruments that you can copy and distribute.
College Admission Interpretation

- Out-of-the-box approach to the Admission and Selection process.
- In addition to using all of the older criteria [cognitive] for admission, it means integrating newer, forward-looking criteria as well.
Great Candidates for Non-Cognitive Application Review

- Underrepresented minority (URM) students
- Student athletes
- First generation students
- Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds
- Applicants with compelling personal stories
- Students who have demonstrated examples of overcoming adversity
- Student who have demonstrated instances of self-advocacy
- Instances of students who have been adversely affected because of race, gender or ethnicity
Non-Cognitive Selection Criteria

- A true holistic approach to application review - acknowledging the entire application and noticing what is said between the lines
- Understanding the institutional “Threshold for Pain” (The tipping point at which an institution reached the limits of its will to make diversity changes)
- Commitment to a time consuming and expensive process
Identifying success markers:

- Persistence
- Hard work
- Love of learning
- Commitment to the learning process
- Future long range goals
- Understands and fits institutional culture
- Ability to handle failure
- Willing to take (appropriate) academic risks
- Great work ethic
- Working to potential
- Demonstrated seeker of support services
Understand Institutional Threshold

“Threshold for Pain” - the tipping point at which an institution reached the limits of its will to make diversity changes
Learning Delta ($\Delta$) assessment criterion

- $\Delta$ captures the intangible factors that illustrate overall effort within the learning process. $\Delta$ acknowledges that not everyone starts from the exact same spot or the exact same knowledge base. By focusing on $\Delta$, you can zero in on a specific student’s individual growth.
Non-Cognitive Selection Criteria Con’t

- Minimizing the *micro-iniquities* inherent in yours and all admissions processes.
  - Micro-inequities, coined by Stephen Young (2006), are cumulative, subtle messages that occur when these signals are negative or promote a negative bias.
  - Micro-inequities are not one-time events. They are cumulative, repeated behaviors that devalue, discourage, and impair performance.
Non-Cognitive Implementation Issues

- (AKA) “Threshold for Pain”
- Institutional racism
- Micro-messages and micro-inequities:
  - In the application;
  - As an institution and office;
  - As an individual.
- Lack of allies within the office of admissions and external to the office of admissions
- A fear of the unknown
Potential Solutions for Implementation

- Cultivate institutional buy-in, not a traditional top-down edict.
  - Understand the difference between the doers and the thinkers.
  - Write it down for all to see. (e.g. your institution’s Strategic goals as an example)
- Build allies in office and on campus.
Potential Solutions for Implementation

- Create documents/benchmark/create processes that can be used as part of the admission process non-cognitive selection process.
- Keep the process simple and open.
- Discuss as an office the non-cognitive selection process and the proper ways to use it.
Potential Solutions for Implementation

- Find ways to use Learning Delta. Seek faculty input.
- Go through the application and the process to see how many micro-inequities are inherent in the current process.
- Own the process.
- Expect pushback and embrace it.
Potential Solutions for Implementation

- Methodically look for blowback and how that will affect the students that you admit.
- Be prepared to manage success. Can campus support the needs of 10% more African American students?
- Be transparent.
Potential Solutions for Implementation

- Tie this process as closely as possible to the institutional diversity plan.
- Involve University Counsel after you’ve formulated a process.
Handout I. “Digging Deeper”

- Understand how to effectively dig deeper
- Use a combination of cognitive and non-cognitive criteria
- Identify and understand likely candidates for non-cognitive criteria
- Understand and document non-cognitive factors
Handout I: “Digging Deeper”

- Read each application as a puzzle that requires you to pull details from “between the lines” of the application.
- Be prepared to set aside (within reason) standardized scores.
- Concentrate on rigor/course selection and high school transcript within the context of the school/curriculum.
Handout I: “Digging Deeper”

- Be prepared to identify non-cognitive factors when making an assessment.

- Look for the “backbeat” in the application. These are indicators of hidden or easily overlooked factor(s) that can affect your review.
Handout 1: “Digging Deeper”

- Look for Community Based Organization affiliations that may give you an indication of the level of commitment to learning.
- Look for persistence and academic risk taking.
- Find signs of resilience.
Handout II: Supporting Documentation

- Traditional (Cognitive Questions) such as:
  - Missing application pieces
  - Student’s GPA
  - Highest GPA in class
  - Student’s class rank
  - Total number in senior class
  - Any new test scores available? (SAT I/II or ACT)
  - Is a fee waiver warranted?
Handout II: Supporting Documentation

- Non-cognitive questions
  - Can you give me an example of a time that __________ did not succeed? (This will address the student’s resilience)
  - Can you tell me what __________ did after not doing so well? (This will address the student’s ability to self-advocate)
Non-cognitive Questions

Ask for examples that demonstrates the applicant is:

- Persistent;
- Willing to take appropriate academic risks;
- Demonstrating a love of learning; or
- Working to potential.
Resident Population of US by Gender & Race/Ethnicity

- Hispanic Women: 8%
- Hispanic Men: 8%
- Black Women: 7%
- Black Men: 6%
- Asian Women: 2%
- Asian Men: 2%
- White Women: 33%
- White Men: 32%
- Other Men: 1%
- Other Women: 1%

Resident Population of US by Gender & Race/Ethnicity

- Majority: 65%
- URM: 29%
- Asian: 4%
- Other: 2%
Testing Gap Issues
Average SAT scores in various categories for the high school class of 2010. By score and group:

- **1721**: Students reporting family incomes of more than $200,000 a year
- **1714**: Students who had taken AP or honors courses in natural sciences
- **1636**: Asians
- **1580**: Whites
- **1558**: Students who took core curriculum
- **1546**: Students who previously took PSAT/NMSQT (a pre-SAT)
- **1523**: Boys
- **1510**: Students reporting family incomes of $60,000 to $80,000 a year
- **1509**: National average
- **1496**: Girls
- **1444**: American Indian or Alaskan natives
- **1407**: Students who did not take core curriculum
- **1400**: Students who did not take PSAT/NMSQT
- **1369**: Mexican and Mexican Americans
- **1363**: Latinos (excluding Mexicans, Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans)
- **1349**: Puerto Ricans
- **1329**: Students reporting family incomes of less than $20,000 a year
- **1277**: African Americans

Source: SAT 2010
Almost No Blacks Have SAT Scores Equal to the Median Score of Whites at the Nation’s Highest-Ranked Universities. In fact, Whites Outnumber Blacks at the Highest-Scoring Levels by About 40 to 1.

Number of Blacks and Whites Scoring 700 or Above on the SAT, 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAT Verbal</td>
<td>47,971</td>
<td>1,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT Math</td>
<td>51,587</td>
<td>1,132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The College Board.
Chart: The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education.
Testing Gap Issues SAT’s

- African American Testers: 98%
- 700+ Math: 1%
- 700+ Verbal: 1%
DISCUSSION
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