

Statement in response to the Supreme Court of the United States ruling regarding race-based affirmative action in higher education

On June 29, 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its ruling in the cases of *Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College* and *Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina* that the use of race as a factor in the college application review process violates the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. We condemn this decision, as it restricts access to higher education to many racially marginalized people who have already been denied so many opportunities enjoyed in American society. While we are waiting for the full analysis of the ruling and its impact on college admissions, we know that this court decision will limit the ways in which the US recruits, retains, and expands talent, including in STEM and in particular physics, from historically excluded communities. The American Association of Physics Teachers will not be deterred by the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on race considerations in college and university admissions and remains committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in physics and physics education. We will continue to support our diverse community of physics educators, researchers, and learners and will continue to offer programs that support activities to make learning environments inclusive and welcoming to all.

The court's decision will not change who we are as the American Association of Physics Teachers. We stand behind our [diversity, equity, and inclusion vision](#) in which we imagine a “world where all physics educators and AAPT staff experience a sense of belonging in the AAPT community. Where all members feel welcomed and safe at meetings and events. Where historically excluded people are represented, so everyone can say ‘I can see myself doing physics.’” This includes continuing to support and advocate for racially marginalized people in physics learning spaces.

We will not be dissuaded from our organizational mission to create “A future where the understanding of physics, driven by a vibrant, diverse, and empowered community of educators, researchers, and learners, increasingly benefits the world.” We are reminded by the recent [guidance](#) from EducationCounsel, a law firm with a mission focused on improving the US education system, that while the Supreme Court’s ruling is a big setback, there are still many ways everyone can continue to work towards racially just education.

As an organization, we commit to:

1. As an immediate action, we will hold a session at the AAPT 2023 Summer Meeting on the impact of the Supreme Court ruling on institutions of higher education. This session will feature a speaker from the University of California, Davis; California institutions have not been allowed to consider race for 27 years. The speaker will describe the impact of law and how institutions have navigated the situation.
2. Strengthening the availability and quality of physics education in underresourced high schools by advocating for the expansion of offerings and by continuing to support teachers via professional development and materials.

3. Strengthening our partnerships with already existing efforts that support undergraduate and graduate students of color such as our partnership with [TEAM-UP Together](#) and [AAAS SEA Change](#).

As a physics organization whose membership spans the full scope of a student's journey in physics education, we see it as vital to work to support racially marginalized people through dismantling inequities so that truly everyone can thrive in physics learning spaces. These actions are a step towards the vision we put forth. We will continue to work to realize this vision, despite the current setbacks. We invite our membership to share strategic ideas on how we can work together as an organization and encourage physics educators to work across disciplines to support racially marginalized people.

Duane Merrell, President
Kelli Warble, President-Elect
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Toni Sauncy, Past President
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David Marasco, Co-Chair, DEI Council
Clausell Mathis, Chair, Committee on Diversity in Physics
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Resources:

["Education Counsel's Preliminary Guidance Regarding the U.S. Supreme Court's Decision in SFFA V. Harvard and SFFA v. UNC."](#)

["The Supreme Court Affirmative Action Rulings: An Analysis"](#) Lincon Caplan, Harvard Magazine.
[AAAS Diversity and the Law](#)

["After the Supreme Court rulings, what's next for affirmative action,"](#) Carrie Spector, Stanford Graduate School of Education

["What the Supreme Court affirmative action ruling means for California,"](#) Daniel Farber, CalMatters.

["Race-neutral alternatives to affirmative action in college admissions: The research,"](#) by Denise-Marie Ordway, The Journalist's Resource.