


College Advising after the End of Race Conscious Admissions

The Supreme Court's decision in *Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) vs. Harvard University* and *SFFA vs. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill* overturned decades of precedent that said campus diversity was a compelling interest that justified the consideration of race as one factor among many in a holistic admissions process.

Four things should be kept in mind about the decision:

- 1 Although media coverage has repeatedly referred to the SFFA decision as a ban on affirmative action, in reality the majority opinion was narrowly focused on college admissions decisions. The phrase "affirmative action" does not appear in the majority opinion, and the opinion does not address recruitment, college counseling, campus diversity programs, hiring practices, or financial aid.
- 2 Because the vast majority of colleges and universities did not consider race in their admissions process before the SFFA decision, the majority opinion directly affects a small number of colleges and universities.
- 3 It will be important for counselors and college access organizations to be on the look-out for ripple effects on financial aid, campus programming, hiring practices, and more. Some public institutions of higher education have already eliminated scholarships that were connected to an applicant's race.
- 4 It will likely take a couple years to weigh the impact of the SFFA decision, but students and the people who help them through the college admissions process cannot wait.

The following list of **Dos and Don'ts** is intended to help provide clarity. It is based on the advice that experts from college admissions, school counseling, college access organizations, and advocacy groups provided in [a series of webinars Education Reform Now hosted in fall 2023](#).




GENERAL TIPS

<div style="background-color: #1a3d4d; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">DO THIS</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engage students in thinking about how race, identity, and community shape their lives and others. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advise students to answer application questions about how they identify by race and ethnicity. The answers to those questions will not be used in the admissions process, but gathering data on race is more important than ever. 	<div style="background-color: #1a3d4d; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">NOT THAT</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advise students to withhold any information about themselves that they want to share.
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LIST BUILDING

<div style="background-color: #1a3d4d; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">DO THIS</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continue to encourage students to apply where they think they will thrive, which may include increased attention to campus climate and institutions that have shown a strong commitment to diversity. 	<div style="background-color: #1a3d4d; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">NOT THAT</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tell students to cut colleges from their list based on the SFFA decision. We will not know the impact of the decision on any college or university for several years.
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ESSAYS

<div style="background-color: #1a3d4d; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">DO THIS</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take the initiative to talk to students about how they may discuss race, identity, and community in their personal essay or in supplemental questions some colleges ask. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Explain that the Supreme Court explicitly said that students can write about how race, identity, and community contributed to their character and experience if they wish to do so. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Explain that supplemental essay questions about race, identity, and community are invitations for students to talk about their individual lives. 	<div style="background-color: #1a3d4d; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">NOT THAT</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wait until students come to you with questions about including reflections on race, identity, and community in their essays. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tell students of color that they must write about race, identity, or community or that they should shy away from doing so. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advise students to focus on or to shy away from painful or traumatic stories in their essays. It is up to students to determine how they want to represent themselves in their applications.
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EXTRACURRICULARS

<div style="background-color: #1a3d4d; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">DO THIS</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tell students that it is their choice which activities, clubs, and other extracurriculars to include in their application. 	<div style="background-color: #1a3d4d; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">NOT THAT</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tell students to conceal any information that they wish to include in their application.
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LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

<div style="background-color: #1a3d4d; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">DO THIS</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Feel free to discuss how a student's race, identity, or community has shaped their character or provides context for understanding their application in letters of recommendation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Speak with teachers to make sure they know that the SFFA decision has no impact on letters of recommendation, as noted in guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consider providing students with questionnaires that include opportunities to reflect on race, identity, and community and that can be shared with recommenders to better understand how best to help students with letters. 	<div style="background-color: #1a3d4d; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">NOT THAT</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Avoid talking about a student's race, identity, or community in letters of recommendation.
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SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION PROFILES

<div style="background-color: #1a3d4d; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">DO THIS</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revisit your school or organization's profile to determine whether it could be updated to better reflect the diversity of the students you serve. 	<div style="background-color: #1a3d4d; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">NOT THAT</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Remove demographic data from your profile.
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FINANCIAL AID

<div style="background-color: #1a3d4d; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">DO THIS</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stay informed about colleges and universities that might eliminate higher education scholarships connected to race, particularly if your former students received one of them or current students are eligible for one. These scholarships may be eliminated later in the year. 	<div style="background-color: #1a3d4d; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">NOT THAT</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tell students not to apply to a college simply because they have eliminated a race-based scholarship or may do so.
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