

Impact of affirmative action bans in graduate fields of study

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Important findings on the impact of banning affirmative action in higher education were just published in the *American Educational Research Journal (AERJ)* in Online First. Affirmative action in university admissions has long been a matter of public debate, and *Fisher v. University of Texas, Austin* has placed its use in admissions policy as an issue before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The article, "Understanding the Impact of [Affirmative Action](#) Bans in Different Graduate Fields of Study," presents the results of a study undertaken by Liliana M. Garces, George Washington University. Garces examines the effects of affirmative action bans on the enrollment of [students](#) of color across six fields of graduate study in four states—California, Florida, Texas, and Washington. The six fields of graduate study are the natural sciences, engineering, social sciences, business, education, and humanities.

Garces' research shows that the impact of affirmative action bans was most pronounced in engineering, natural sciences, and social sciences, fields in which students of color already are underrepresented. She encourages educators to reconsider their admissions practices and consider the benefits of campus diversity for all students, benefits that include enhanced critical thinking skills, cultural awareness, civic engagement, and workforce competencies/[leadership skills](#).

In light of national concerns over underrepresentation of students of color in the [fields of science](#) and engineering, Garces says that banning

all affirmative action considerations in admissions in graduate fields of study has consequences. "As institutions struggle to increase the representation of students of color in graduate programs, particularly in STEM fields, the findings from this study suggest that bans on affirmative action are inhibiting these efforts. . . . Graduate education programs will need to rise to the challenge and adopt innovative outreach and recruitment practices and adopt admissions criteria to help reverse this trend."

More information: Garces, L. M. (2013). Understanding the impact of affirmative action bans in different graduate fields of study. *American Educational Research Journal* (Advance online publication: [doi: 10.3102/0002831212470483](https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831212470483) , January 14, 2013)

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