

FACT CHECK: SFFA

Harvard College's admissions process reflects its commitment to excellence, diversity, and expanding opportunity to educate world-changing citizens and citizen leaders. The allegations from Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA), a private organization working to end the consideration of race in admissions, are dangerously misleading, distorting data to reach preconceived and wrong conclusions. Here are the facts:

- **Flawed use of data by SFFA produces wrong conclusions.**

Professor David Card, a nationally recognized economist and professor at the University of California at Berkeley, comprehensively analyzed six years of data across **all** domestic applicants to Harvard College, using **all** factors of consideration in the admissions database, and found **no** evidence of discrimination against Asian Americans.

Professor Card found that the average marginal effect of being Asian American on an applicant's likelihood of admission was statistically indistinguishable from zero, and in fact was slightly positive in three of six years at issue in this case.

SFFA's allegations of racial balancing ignore data showing that the racial composition of the admitted class meaningfully varies from year to year. SFFA's own expert admitted that there are changes over time in the racial composition of the admitted class.

The percentage of Asian Americans in the admitted class has grown significantly by 27% since 2010; Asian Americans comprise nearly 23% of the admitted class of 2022.

SFFA misrepresents documents and the University's treatment of documents from Harvard's Office of Institutional Research (OIR). Some OIR employees attempted to model the admissions process, with what the documents themselves recognize was limited information and an incomplete understanding of the admissions process itself. The OIR documents explicitly state that they could not draw conclusions precisely because of the incomplete nature of the information available to OIR, a fact SFFA fails to mention.

- **SFFA's descriptions of Harvard's admissions process irresponsibly misrepresent the truth.**

SFFA completely misrepresents the personal rating, which reflects a wide range of applicant information, such as personal essays, recommendations from teachers and guidance counselors, and alumni interview reports. The success of prospective students is not just a function of their prior academic, extracurricular, and athletic successes; Harvard also values a broader range of other characteristics.

As Professor Card explains, there is no reliable way for a statistical model to estimate how race affects the personal rating, due to unobservable factors.

SFFA's mischaracterizes data the admissions office periodically reviews, falsely suggesting that Harvard places too much weight on applicants' racial or ethnic identities. In fact, these documents contain a broad snapshot of the tentatively admitted class and the prior class, noting the number of applicants by geography, intended concentration, gender, athletic recruits, legacy students, applicants for financial aid, applicants deemed socioeconomically disadvantaged based on a review of their application file, applicants who requested a waiver of their application fee, dual citizens, U.S. citizens, citizens of other countries, permanent residents, and race.

- **Harvard considers race in accordance with Supreme Court precedent.**

The unrebutted testimony of Harvard's admissions officers—which SFFA ignores entirely—describes a process in which race is indeed a factor that can contribute to a student's admission, but merely one factor among many, many others.

Harvard takes the same approach to race that the Supreme Court embraced in Justice Powell's opinion in *Bakke*, and in *Grutter*, and *Fisher II*.

Professor Card found exactly what one would expect: applicants must have **multiple** areas of strength to be admitted to Harvard, and race does not determine admissions outcomes any more than a number of other factors.

- **Harvard's consideration of race-neutral alternatives follows the law.**

For the past several decades, Harvard has engaged in race-neutral strategies to achieve the educational benefits of diversity—including several suggested by SFFA's own expert.

Harvard devotes tremendous resources to recruitment, and since the 1970s has maintained a dedicated program aimed at the recruitment of racial and ethnic minorities, including Asian Americans.

Harvard eliminated—then reinstated—its early action program when it found that the elimination of early action was hindering efforts to achieve racial diversity.

Harvard's world-leading financial aid program is designed to ensure that every admitted student can attend Harvard regardless of ability to pay.

If Harvard stopped taking race into consideration as one factor in its admissions process and adopted the race-neutral alternatives that SFFA suggested, the result would be a class that fails to achieve the diversity and excellence that Harvard seeks. Harvard has concluded that such a result would severely compromise its ability to achieve the educational benefits that flow from a student body that is diverse across many dimensions, including race.