Research Seminar Series

Monday, September 11th, 2006  3-3:50pm, 112 Thatch Hall

Computing Diversity: Affirmative Action and Race Neutral Policies

Two landmark cases have challenged the University of Michigan’s admissions policies: one focused on its law school admissions, and the other its undergraduate. In Grutter v. Bollinger, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the law school by a vote of 5-4. However, in Gratz v. Bollinger, the Court reversed its decision by a vote of 6-3, in part due to the university’s undergraduate admissions policy of providing “points” for race/ethnicity. Therefore, the Court decided that race could be considered in admission’s decision, but could not be the deciding factor. Although this decision appears to support affirmative action efforts, it limits how race can be used to achieve diversity goals. As a result, some institutions either holistically evaluate admissions applications manually, or they simply exclude diversity as part of the admissions process. To add to the controversy, anti-affirmative action groups have been threatening institutions that have race-based programs. Recently, it was announced that the Supreme Court would hear two new cases on affirmative action, addressing race in high school assignments. In an effort to address these issues, a software application called Applications Quest, was developed by Dr. Juan E. Gilbert. Applications Quest adheres to the Supreme Court rulings and provides holistic review of applications. This tool allows the use of race, ethnicity, gender or any other attributes to be considered in admissions, school assignments, employee hiring or any other application processing area.

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