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Associations Release Statement in Support of Diversity in Higher Education

The American Council on Education along with more than 50 other organizations and associations have expressed their support for diversity in a recently released statement on the importance of diversity in higher education. The statement was released earlier this month and appeared in the *Washington Post* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

ACE continuously has supported programs to achieve diversity in higher education; its board of directors last year approved a resolution outlining the council's support for diversity programs. ACE was one of a number of higher education association organizations that issued such statements. The joint statement shows widespread support for diversity within the higher education community. *Cont. on p. 3*

On the Importance of Diversity in Higher Education

Cont. from p. 1

America's colleges and universities differ in many ways. Some are public, others are independent; some are large urban universities, some are two-year community colleges, others small rural campuses. Some offer graduate and professional programs, others focus primarily on undergraduate education. Each of our more than 3,000 colleges and universities has its own specific and distinct mission. This collective diversity among institutions is one of the great strengths of America's higher education system, and has helped make it the best in the world. Preserving that diversity is essential if we hope to serve the needs of our democratic society.

Similarly, many colleges and universities share a common belief, born of experience, that diversity in their student bodies, faculties, and staff is important for them to fulfill their primary mission: providing a quality education. The public is entitled to know why these institutions believe so strongly that racial and ethnic diversity should be one factor among the many considered in admissions and hiring. The reasons include:

- **Diversity enriches the educational experience.** We learn from those whose experiences, beliefs, and perspectives are different from our own, and these lessons can be taught best in a richly diverse intellectual and social environment.
- **It promotes personal growth—and a healthy society.** Diversity challenges stereotyped preconceptions; it encourages critical thinking; and it helps students learn to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds.

- **It strengthens communities and the workplace.** Education within a diverse setting prepares students to become good citizens in an increasingly complex, pluralistic society; it fosters mutual respect and teamwork; and it helps build communities whose members are judged by the quality of their character and their contributions.

- **It enhances America's economic competitiveness.** Sustaining the nation's prosperity in the 21st century will require us to make effective use of the talents and abilities of all our citizens, in work settings that bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

American colleges and universities traditionally have enjoyed significant latitude in fulfilling their missions. Americans have understood that there is no single model of a good college, and that no single standard can predict with certainty the lifetime contribution of a teacher or a student. Yet, the freedom to determine who shall teach and be taught has been restricted in a number of places, and come under attack in others. As a result, some schools have experienced precipitous declines in the enrollment of African-American and Hispanic students, reversing decades of progress in the effort to assure that all groups in American society have an equal opportunity for access to higher education.

Achieving diversity on college campuses does not require quotas. Nor does diversity warrant admission of unqualified applicants. However, the diversity we seek, and the future of the nation, do require that colleges and universities continue to be able to reach out and make a conscious effort to build healthy and diverse learning environments appropriate for their missions. The success of higher education and the strength of our democracy depend on it. >

ENDORSEMENTS

AACSB - The International Association for Management Education
ACT (formerly American College Testing)
American Association for Higher Education
American Association of Colleges For Teacher Education
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of Dental Schools
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of University Administrators
American Association of University Professors
American College Personnel Association
American Council on Education
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
American Medical Student Association
American Society for Engineering Education
APPA: The Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers
Association for Institutional Research
Association of Academic Health Centers
Association of American Colleges and Universities
Association of American Law Schools
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Universities
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Coalition of Higher Education Assistance Organizations
College and University Personnel Association
Consortium on Financing Higher Education
Council for Advancement and Support of Education
Council for Higher Education Accreditation
Council of Graduate Schools
Council of Independent Colleges
Educational Testing Service
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
Law School Admission Council
Lutheran Educational Conference of North America
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of Graduate and Professional Students
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Association of Student Personnel Administrators
National Collegiate Athletic Association
National Council of Educational Opportunity Associations
NAWE: Advancing Women in Higher Education
Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science
The College Board
The College Fund/UNCF
The Education Trust
University Continuing Education Association
