



The Commission on
INDEPENDENT
Colleges & Universities
in New York

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President

Affirmative Action and Underrepresented Students at Selective Independent Colleges and Universities

ENROLLMENT ANALYSIS AND PROJECTIONS

THE COMMISSION ON INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
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Introduction

New York's 100+ independent colleges and universities are deeply committed to fostering diverse and welcoming campus environments and are gravely concerned about the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling to ban the consideration of race in college admissions. This Supreme Court ruling is a major setback in ensuring that higher education is accessible to all.

Background

Affirmative Action refers to policies and practices that aim to increase opportunities for groups that have historically faced discrimination or underrepresentation in areas like education, employment, and government contracting. These groups may include racial minorities, women, people with disabilities, and veterans.

In the context of college admissions, Affirmative Action refers to policies and practices that consider an applicant's race or ethnicity along with other factors, such as grades and test scores, to increase diversity on campus. In June 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that universities cannot consider race solely as a factor in admissions, prompting ongoing discussions about alternative approaches to promote campus diversity.

Unintended Consequences

A recent national study shows that in states with prior Affirmative Action bans in place, Black (or African American) and Hispanic enrollment declined over time at more selective higher education institutions and increased at less selective institutions.¹ If race is not considered in the admissions process at more selective independent institutions in New York, recent enrollment gains by black and Hispanic students at these institutions could be lost.

This matters because graduates of highly selective institutions are overrepresented in positions of power, earn higher salaries², work at prestigious firms more often, and, in general, have more advantages throughout their careers³.

CICU reviewed federal enrollment data at highly selective and selective four-year independent colleges and universities in New York State to determine how representation of Black and Hispanic students changed over the past decade with Affirmative Action in place and project how it could change in the coming decade with Affirmative Action now banned.⁴ Representation in the enrollment of full-time, first-time (or, first-year) students is compared to representation of race and ethnicity in New York State's population. The analysis illustrates how the ban on Affirmative Action

¹ Janice Kai Chen and Daniel Wolfe, "State affirmative action bans helped White, Asian students, hurt others," Washington Post, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/06/29/affirmative-action-banned-what-happens/>

In 2021, banned states include: Arizona, California, Florida, Idaho, Michigan, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, and Washington.

² Sarah Reber, Gabriela Goodman, and Rina Nagashima, November 7, 2023, "Admissions at most colleges will be unaffected by Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action," Brookings, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/admissions-at-most-colleges-will-be-unaffected-by-supreme-court-ruling-on-affirmative-action/>

³ Scott Jaschik, "College Selectivity and Income," Inside Higher Ed, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/08/22/study-finds-graduates-most-selective-colleges-enjoy-earnings-payoff>

⁴ Source of enrollment data is the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). For this analysis, we define highly selective as acceptance of 25 percent or fewer, and selective as 26 percent to 50 percent of applicants. See Appendix A for a list of these institutions. The admissions policies of individual institutions are not publicly available.

(or, the removal of consideration of race in the admissions process) could reverse hard-won gains in enrollment of Black and Hispanic students made over the past decade and further erode representation of these students at more selective institutions.

Key Findings

- While Black and Hispanic students are still underrepresented at four-year independent colleges and universities in New York compared to the state's overall population, their representation has improved over the past decade.
 - In 2011, 14 percent of New York's population was Black. At highly selective and selective four-year independent colleges and universities, 8 percent of first-year students were Black, meaning that Black students were 6 percent below parity⁵ in representation in 2011. By 2021 representation had improved, and Black students were 4 percent below parity.
 - In 2011, 18 percent of New York's population was Hispanic. At highly selective and selective four-year independent colleges and universities, 12 percent of first-year students were Hispanic, meaning that Hispanic students were 6 percent below parity in representation in 2011. By 2021 representation had improved, and Hispanic students were 2 percent below parity.
- Based on outcomes observed in states with prior Affirmative Action bans, CICU projects that the gains in representation of Black and Hispanic students at highly selective and selective four-year independent institutions in New York State could be lost over the next decade without Affirmative Action in place.
 - The projections indicate that enrollment of Black students could slide from 4 percent below parity in representation in 2021 to 5 percent below in 2031, even as the Black population in New York is projected to remain steady over the same period.
 - The projections also indicate that enrollment of Hispanic students could slide from 2 percent below parity in 2021 to 7 percent below parity in 2031, despite projections that New York's Hispanic population will grow by 16 percent over the same period.
 - The declines in representation for Black and Hispanic students could result in each group comprising a smaller percentage of total first-year student enrollment at highly selective and selective institutions. Between 2021 and 2031, the share of Black students enrolled could fall from 9 percent to 8 percent and the share of Hispanic students could fall from 18 percent to 15 percent. In contrast, by 2031, New York State's population is projected to be 13 percent Black and 22 percent Hispanic.
- Ultimately, it is estimated that without Affirmative Action in place, losses in representation of first-year Black and Hispanic students at highly selective and selective four-year independent institutions could result in significant declines in full-time undergraduate students among these groups.
 - Enrollment of Black undergraduates could decline by 11 percent by 2031.
 - Enrollment of Hispanic undergraduates could decline by 16 percent by 2031.

⁵ Representation that mirrors the general population.

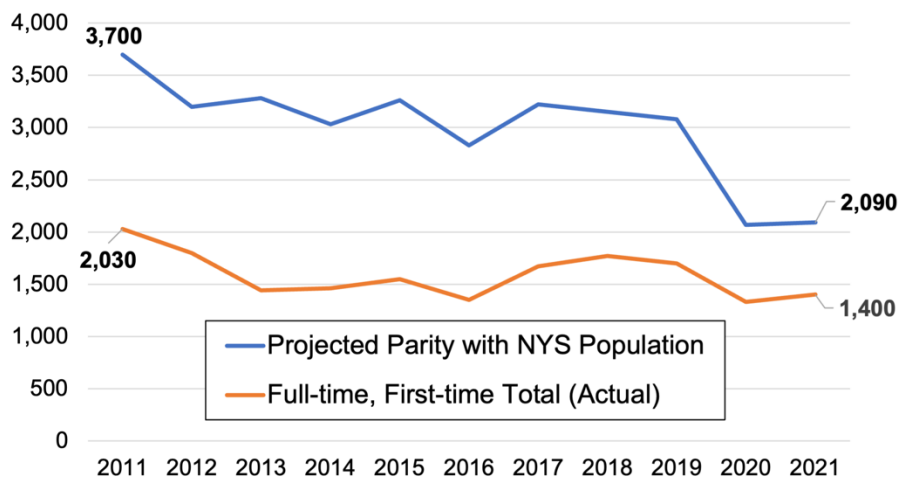
Analysis

CICU reviewed race and ethnicity data of first-year students at highly selective and selective four-year independent colleges and universities in New York State. Highly selective is defined as accepting 25 percent of applicants or fewer; selective is defined as accepting 50 percent of applicants or fewer — 20 independent colleges in New York fit those definitions and were included in this analysis (see Appendix A). This analysis shows that when considering representation of first-year Black and Hispanic students at these institutions, despite being underrepresented, each group experienced gains in representation relative to New York’s population over the past decade. For example, in 2011, 14 percent of New York’s population was Black (2.8 million of 19.5 million). At highly selective and selective four-year independent colleges and universities in 2011, 8 percent of first-year students were Black (2,030 of 25,900), meaning there were 6 percent fewer Black students enrolled than population trends would predict.

By fall 2021, Black students were underrepresented by 4 percent: 9.1 percent of first-year students were Black (1,400 of 15,400)⁶ and 13.6 percent of New York’s population was Black (2.76 million of 20.3 million).

The chart below illustrates the diminishing gap between parity – or representation that mirrors the general population – and actual enrollment. The downward slope of both lines reflects a slight decline in the Black population in New York and a declining number of total first-time, full-time students enrolled. The enrollment decline accelerated during the pandemic (beginning in 2020).

Full-time, First-time Undergraduate Black Students Enrolled at Highly Selective and Selective 4-Yr Independent Institutions in New York State



Source: IPEDS.

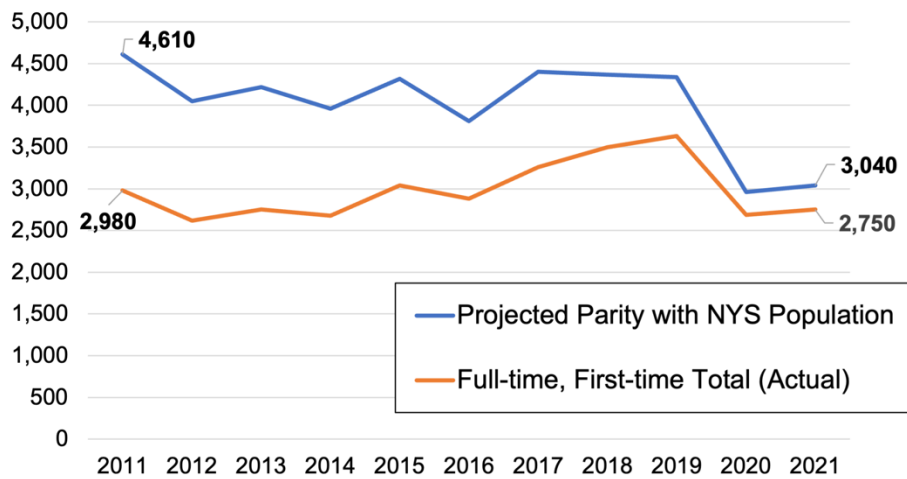
Projected undergraduate students at institutions with acceptance of 50% or fewer students. Totals are rounded.

Representation of Hispanic first-year students improved over the past decade as well. In 2011, 18 percent of New York’s population was Hispanic (3.5 million of 19.5 million). At highly selective and selective four-year independent colleges and universities in fall 2011, 12 percent of all first-

⁶ Total full-time, first-time students enrolled at these institutions declined from 25,900 in 2011 to 15,400 in 2021. Source: IPEDS.

year students were Hispanic (2,980 of 25,900), meaning there were 6 percent fewer Hispanic students than population trends would predict. By fall 2021, Hispanic students were underrepresented by only 2 percent; 18 percent of first-year students were Hispanic (2,750 of 15,400) and 20 percent of New York’s population was Hispanic (4 million of 20 million).

Full-time, First-time Undergraduate Hispanic Students Enrolled at Highly Selective and Selective 4-Yr Independent Institutions in New York State



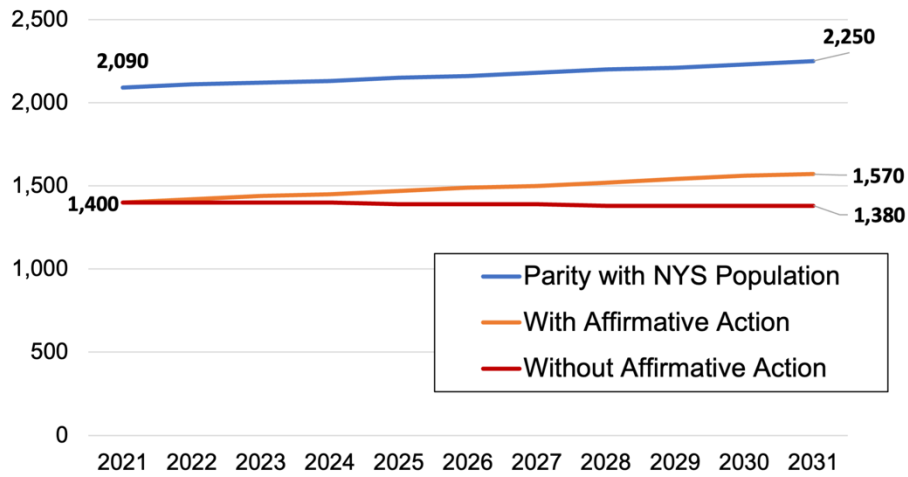
Source: IPEDS.

Projected undergraduate students at institutions with acceptance of 50% or fewer students. Totals are rounded.

Projections

Based on outcomes observed in states that banned Affirmative Action prior to the 2023 Supreme Court ruling, we project that the gains in representation experienced by Black students over the past decade could be reversed by 2031, with their enrollment sliding from 4 percent below parity in representation in 2021 to 5 percent below parity by 2031. This loss in representation could occur despite the projected stability of the Black population in New York State over the next decade (2.76 million in 2021 to 2.73 million in 2031, a decline of less than 1 percent).

Projected Full-time, First-time Undergraduate Black Students Enrolled at Highly Selective and Selective 4-Yr Independent Institutions in New York State

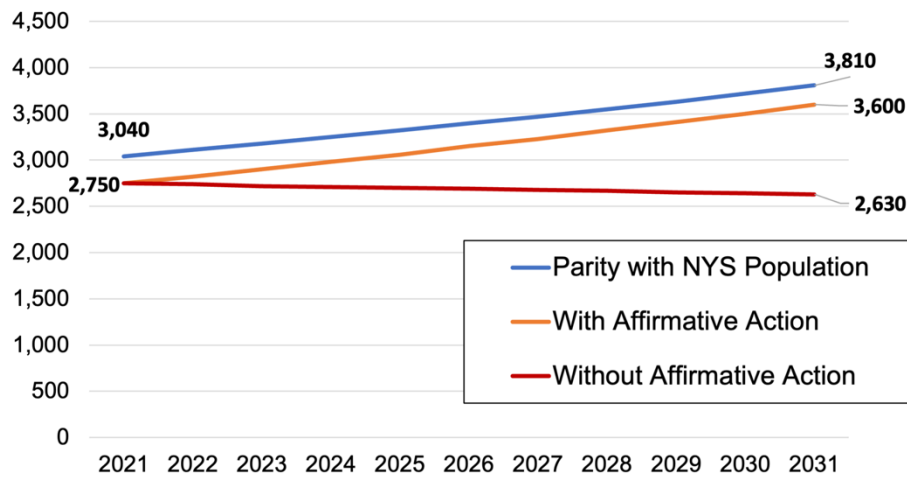


Source for actual data is IPEDS. Projection by CICU.
 Projected undergraduate students at institutions with acceptance of 50% or fewer students. Totals are rounded.

When considering total full-time undergraduate enrollment, projections indicate that the undergraduate population of Black students at these selective and highly selective institutions could decline by 11 percent (6,200 in 2021 to 5,500 in 2031).

Similarly, we estimate that the gains in representation experienced by Hispanic students over the past decade could be reversed by 2031, with first-time undergraduate enrollment falling to 7 percent below parity in 2031 from 2 percent below in 2021. This loss in representation could occur despite the projected 16 percent increase of the Hispanic population in New York State over the next decade (4.01 million in 2021 to 4.63 million in 2031).

Projected Full-time, First-time Undergraduate Hispanic Students Enrolled at Highly Selective and Selective 4-Yr Independent Institutions in New York State

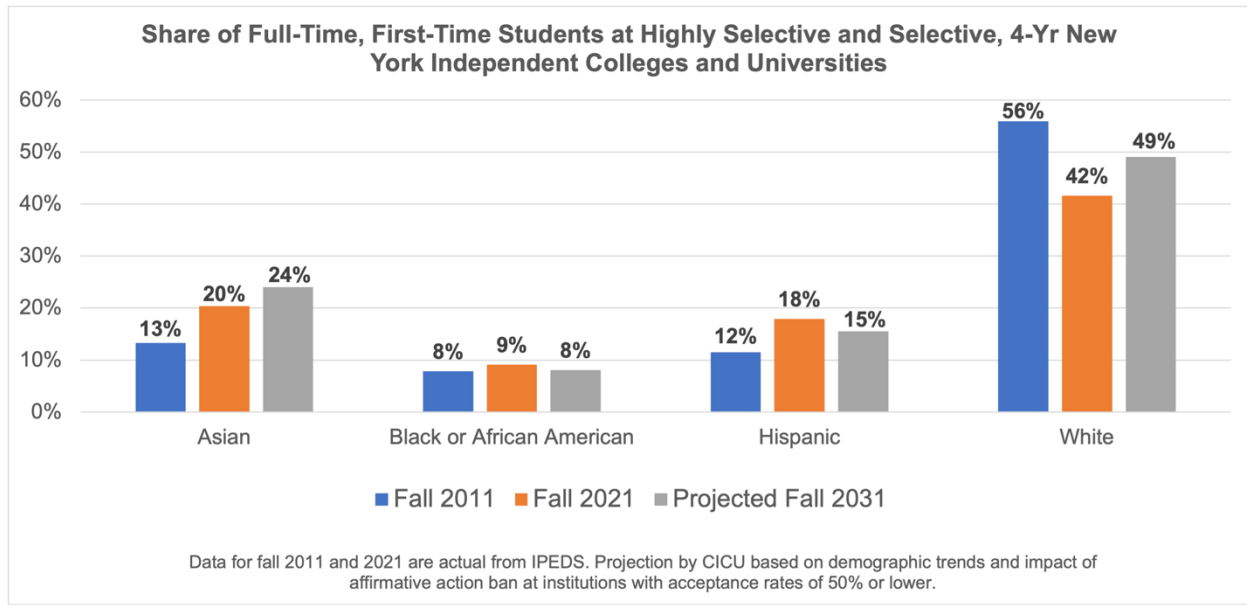


Source for actual data is IPEDS. Projection by CICU.
 Projected undergraduate students at institutions with acceptance of 50% or fewer students. Totals are rounded.

When considering total full-time undergraduate enrollment, projections indicate that the undergraduate population of Hispanic students at selective and highly selective institutions could decline by 16 percent (12,600 in 2021 to 10,600 in 2031).

CICU’s analysis of states with prior bans on Affirmative Action indicates that with Affirmative Action banned, enrollment gains experienced by Black and Hispanic first-year students between fall 2011 and fall 2021 could be lost by fall 2031. Between 2021 and 2031, projected shares for each group could decline from 9 percent to 8 percent for Black students, and 18 percent to 15 percent for Hispanic students.

Conversely, Asian and white students could gain share between 2021 and 2031, increasing from 20 percent to 24 percent and 42 percent to 49 percent of total full-time undergraduate enrollment, respectively.



Conclusion

The data show that enrollment of Black and Hispanic students at highly selective and selective colleges and universities in New York was increasing in the decade prior to the ban on Affirmative Action policies issued by the U.S. Supreme Court in June 2023. Over time, those policies were closing the gap between actual enrollment of Black and Hispanic students and the enrollment level predicted by population trends.

With consideration of race and ethnicity in admissions now banned, that progress is likely to be lost. While full-time, first-time enrollment is projected to increase slightly between 2021 and 2031 at selective and highly selective institutions, enrollment of Black and Hispanic students could see an opposite trend.

Studying the impact of Affirmative Action bans in other states provides a window into New York's future without Affirmative Action specific to higher education admissions. The likely result will be that the gains Black and Hispanic students made in enrollment between 2011 and 2021 will be erased. The gap between actual enrollment of those students and enrollment that is in line with overall population trends will continue to widen.

The consequences of that widening gap will be felt on individual and societal levels. Individuals will be less likely to earn degrees at selective and highly selective institutions and will therefore have less access to the most competitive employment opportunities. At the societal level, this will erode representation across industries, exacerbating structural inequalities and reversing hard-won positive trends in representation. Black and Hispanic New Yorkers will have added barriers standing between them and the C-suite at major companies.

Just as public policy like the Supreme Court's decision can trigger these negative impacts on enrollment and representation, carefully crafted public policy could also mitigate those affects.

Appendix A

Independent Sector Acceptance Categories, Fall 2021

Selectivity Category and Institution	4-Yr Institution Count	Fall 2021 Acceptance Rate
Highly Selective (25% or less)	11	
American Musical and Dramatic Academy	1	22%
Barnard College	1	11%
Colgate University	1	17%
Columbia University in the City of New York	1	4%
Cornell University	1	9%
Hamilton College	1	14%
New York University	1	13%
The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art	1	15%
The Juilliard School	1	7%
Vassar College	1	20%
Webb Institute	1	20%

Selective (26% to 50%)	9	
Helene Fuld College of Nursing	1	39%
Jewish Theological Seminary of America	1	50%
Manhattan School of Music	1	49%
Maria College of Albany	1	37%
Skidmore College	1	31%
The King's College	1	44%
Trocaire College	1	47%
Union College	1	47%
University of Rochester	1	41%

Notes

- This analysis focusses on full-time, first-time undergraduate students at four-year, independent colleges and universities in New York State. International, part-time, and non-degree-seeking students are not considered in this analysis. Graduate students are also excluded.
- All totals are rounded for clarity.
- Highly selective and selective institutions are defined using the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) acceptance data from the fall 2021 term.
 - Highly selective: accepted 25 percent or fewer applicants.
 - Selective: accepted 26 percent to 50 percent of applicants.
- General population and projection data is sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau, Cornell Program on Applied Demographics, Pew Research Center, and Statista.