# *Navigating the SCOTUS Decision in Graduate Admissions*

## Peter Harries
## Dean of Graduate School

# Immediate Impact of the Decision

- **SCOTUS decision on June 29, 2023**
  - Race/ethnicity can no longer be used as an element in admissions decisions
  - Decision required immediate changes to the admissions process
- **Graduate School response**
  - Access to the race/ethnicity question removed for all making admissions decisions

# Trends in the Graduate Population

**2013-2022 Enrollment Change**
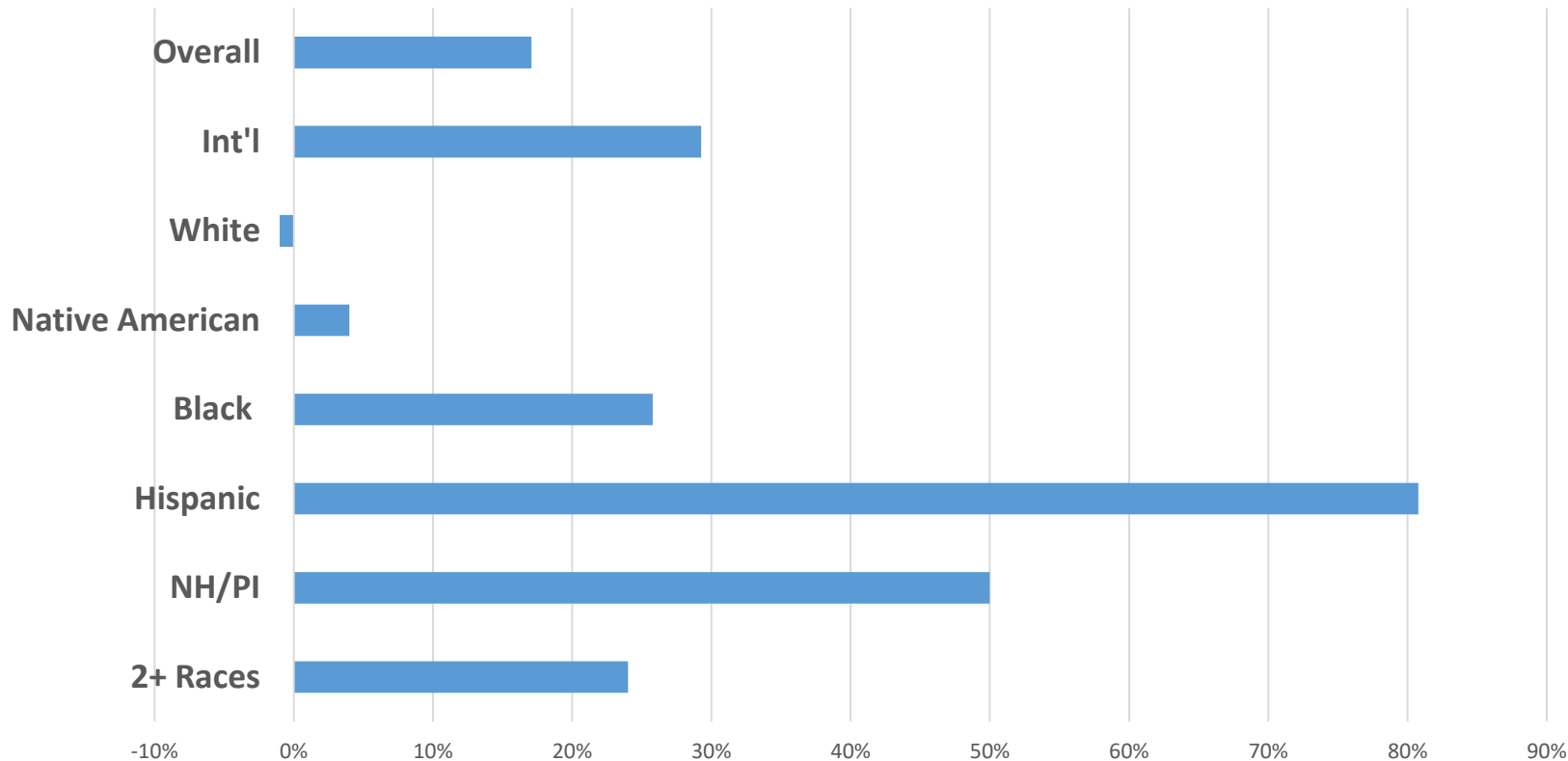
# **Graduate School Initiatives**

- Taking part in a broad range of recruitment events at HBCUs and HSIs and beyond

- Annual recruiting funds @ $3k/program

- Broader recruiting projects @ $10k (requires a $5k match)

- Created a group working across the colleges to coordinate DEIB initiatives

- Continue to be involved in funding opportunities to promote diversity

- Partnering with programs, such as NC-AGEP, to enhance the experiences of diverse students

- Keeping programs informed of approaches to align with the current law

# Strategies for Equity-Based Holistic Review

These slides are intended to present a general outline of the workshop. Please do not reproduce or distribute without the facilitators' permission.

Workshops developed by

## Julie R. Posselt

Assoc Professor, Higher Education
Assoc Dean, Graduate School
University of Southern California

## Casey W. Miller

Professor, College of Science
Sr. Assoc Dean, Research & Faculty Affairs
Rochester Institute of Technology

# A Framework for Holistic Review

**Comprehensive:**
Numerous, diverse criteria related to achievements, competencies, and potential

**Contextualized** assessment of metrics, achievements, and alignment with your program mission.

**Systematic** review to ensure efficiency, minimize bias, and improve transparency and accountability

**Equity-minded:**
Attuned to equity implications of what we do and how we think in admissions
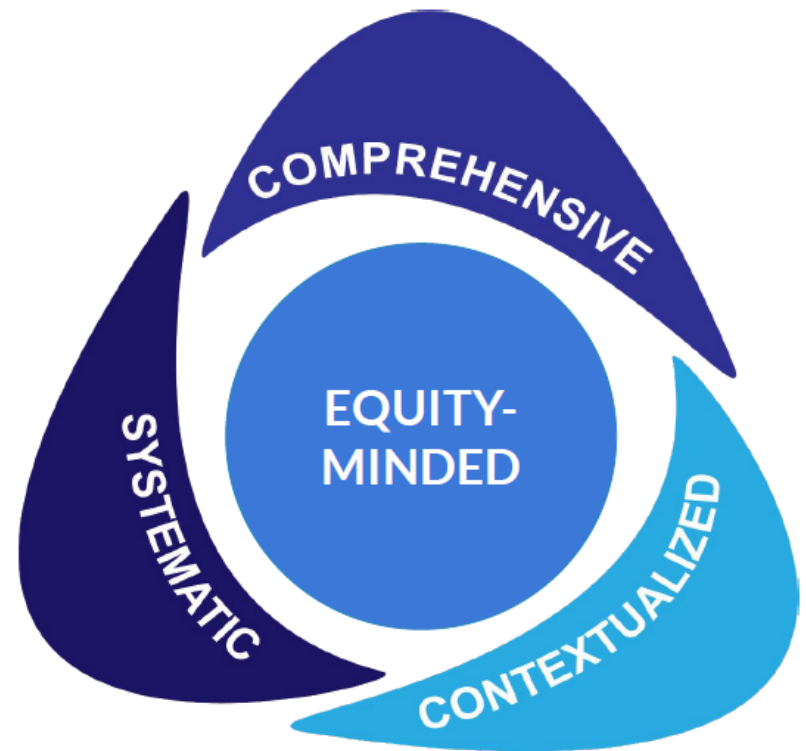
## Socio-Emotional Competencies

- Social and emotional behaviors that we use to navigate life

- Measurable

- Decades of psychology research (developmental, social, and industrial-organizational)
  - ➢ Predict academic/job performance
  - ➢ Complement cognitive measures that may produce disparate impact (e.g., SAT/GRE)
  - ➢ Research shows few, if any, group differences by gender and race

# Socio-Emotional Competencies

## Self Management
Optimism
Trustworthiness
Achievement Orientation
Conscientiousness
Adaptability
Emotional Self-Control
Initiative

## Self Awareness

Accurate Self-Assessment
Emotional Awareness
Self-Confidence

## Relationship Management
Teamwork and Collaboration
Communication
Building Bonds
Conflict Management
Influence
Change Catalyst
Inspirational Leadership
Developing Others

## Social Awareness

Cultural Awareness
Organizational Awareness
Empathy
Service Orientation

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Emotional Social Competence Inventory; Goleman & Boyatzis

# Options for Assessing Socio-Emotional Competencies

**Exchange personal statement for several short answer items (e.g. ~150 words each)**

➢ Tailor application to a rubric
➢ Most immediately feasible
➢ Levels the playing field relative to an open-ended statement

**Structured interviews for the short list**

**For either of these options, consider the following prompts:**

- If we called your faculty mentors, what would they say you are really good at?

- What are you most proud of accomplishing?

- Describe an academic challenge you faced, how you handled the situation, and what you learned from it.

- What will be the biggest challenge for you in graduate school?

- Why graduate school?

Stassun et al. (2011)

# Rubrics: Comprehensive, Contextualized, Systematic, Equity Minded

| Dimensions | Ratings | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | High | Medium | Low |
| Academic Preparation | | | |
| Scholarly Potential | | | |
| Alignment with Program | | | |
| Alignment with Diversity Values | | | |
| Socio-Emotional Competencies | | | |

# Rubrics: Comprehensive, Contextualized, & Systematic

| Category | High | Medium | Low |
|---|---|---|---|
| Academic Preparation | A- or better in all core STEM courses AND B or better in non-STEM courses; received at least one academic honor | B or better in all core STEM courses; Concerning grades have a reasonable explanation | Lower than a B in 2 or more core STEM courses; Grades of C or lower do not have a reasonable explanation |
| Scholarly potential | Clear commitment to and enthusiasm for research AND experience at least equal to a senior thesis or other original research project | Clear commitment to and enthusiasm for research, BUT experience less than a senior thesis or other original research project | Signals that a PhD is more of a next step than a clear passion. |
| Potential to contribute to an inclusive learning environment | Record of positive contributions to a diverse, inclusive working or learning environment (e.g., expertise or training; action, advocacy, service; lived experiences) | Discusses future contributions and commitment to specific actions, but has limited record thus far. | Little to no evidence of contributions, commitment to specific actions, or learning toward creating diverse, inclusive environments. |
| Alignment with Program | Research interests align with multiple faculty AND stated career goals align with program training | Research interests align with one faculty member AND stated career goals align with program training | Limited alignment with faculty research interests OR limited evidence of alignment between career goals and program training |
| Realistic Self-Appraisal | Clearly delineates strengths and weaknesses AND clear evidence of effort on self development | Basic statements about strengths and weaknesses AND does seek positive and negative feedback | Over or understates abilities; indications that self-assessment or learning from experiences are limited |
| Preference for long-term goals | Clearly communicates long-range goals beyond the PhD AND has a record of engaging in long-term endeavors | Clearly communicates long-range goals beyond the PhD OR Has a record of engaging in long-term endeavors | Goals are short range (e.g., specific coursework) AND limited history of engagement in long-term projects |

## Implementing Rubrics

- **Norming:** Committee members independently rate the same two applications, then discuss their scores, focusing on differences.

- Have two people score each application. After norming, a divergence in scores may signal a meaningful difference in observations.

- Plan how to evaluate unexpected cases; revise rubric annually.

- Adoption is more likely when users
  - Understand how it can benefit them and their program
  - Participate in its development as a group
  - Feel competent in using it

- Caveats:
  - Not a panacea or fool proof
  - Beware symbolic adoption
  - The time required is an investment; it will save time in the end.

# **Final Thoughts**

- The need to continue our efforts within the confines of the current legal landscape

- Working to refine our admissions approaches to be more effective from a holistic perspective

- Developing departmental/program cultures to enhance DEIB elements

- Working on developing mentoring skills, especially those associated with cross-cultural elements

# Questions?