

Statement from Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce on Supreme Court Justice Scalia's Incorrect Affirmative Action Claims

Research shows African-American students benefit from attending more selective colleges

(Washington, D.C., December 11, 2015) – Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia’s suggestion during a hearing of oral arguments for the case of *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin* that African-American students do not benefit from attending more academically rigorous colleges is at odds with empirical research on the subject, according to researchers at the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (Georgetown Center).

In prior research, Georgetown Center economists have found that students at more selective colleges, including black and Hispanic students, have higher graduation rates regardless of their level of academic preparation.

“Justice Scalia is making the tired argument that admitting African-American students into white schools is akin to putting ponies in a horse race,” said Nicole Smith, the Georgetown Center’s chief economist. “Like so many, Justice Scalia mistakes African American as a proxy for low readiness, when in fact minority students in more selective colleges and universities not only graduate at relatively higher rates, but also secure high-paying jobs thereafter.”

Prior research by the Georgetown Center finds that:

- Graduation rates double for African-American and Hispanic students who move from open-access colleges to more selective colleges.
- After Texas instituted its Top 10 Percent rule in 1997, which guaranteed admission to public universities in Texas to the top 10 percent of each graduating high school class in the state, graduation rates increased, despite lower preparedness among University of Texas students.

“If Scalia’s theory were true, equally prepared students of all races would do worse at more selective colleges,” said Anthony P. Carnevale, the Georgetown Center’s director. “In fact, we find the opposite is true.”

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