

To the Daily:

I would like to clarify some remarks attributed to me in a story in Tuesday's Michigan Daily ("Duderstadt criticizes current diversity plan").

Although I would like to see the day when we do not need to consider race in order to enroll a diverse study body, I do not believe that day has arrived. The University's use of race as one factor in admissions is still essential to achieving diversity. The current admissions systems for LS&A and the Law School were modeled after the Supreme Court's Bakke decision, and I firmly believe they are fair and legal under the Constitution.

Over the years, the University has continued to evaluate its admissions processes and to adjust them as necessary. But some essential features have remained the same: the consideration of each student as a whole person and all the qualities that students would bring to our campus. That process has resulted year after year in an outstanding group of students being admitted to the U-M. While I suggested in my interview that large universities like Michigan should make additional investments in their admissions and outreach activities to better evaluate student applicants, this will certainly not replace the need to continue to include race as one element in admissions if we are to achieve our diversity objectives.

As I noted to the Daily reporter, this conclusion seems confirmed by the experience of Texas and California, where percentage admissions plans do not appear successful in attaining adequate minority enrollments in selective institutions. Furthermore, I do not believe that such percentage plans would work in Michigan, a state with quite different demographics and K-12 educational systems.

The achievement of diversity requires many efforts beyond admissions policy, including outreach to schools with substantial minority enrollments, strong financial aid programs, academic support programs, and a campus culture that understands how important diversity is to the achievement of academic excellence. We had considerable success in such efforts during the early 1990s, and I am confident that our current staff is making every effort to conduct similar programs today.

But we can always do more. That is one reason why I worked so hard during my presidency to develop the Michigan Mandate. We must keep the doors of our campus open to students of all races and ethnicities, and not lose ground in creating the kind of diverse academic environment that has made Michigan a great university.

James J. Duderstadt
President Emeritus