

Dear Provost Mitchell, Dean Sorett, Dean Chang, Dean Rosen-Metsch, and other members of Columbia's working group on Columbia Admissions Policy,

We are writing to you to demand an end to legacy admissions at Columbia University.

In July of this year, the Supreme Court ruled to end Affirmative Action. This devastating decision shifts how college admissions function in the United States—Affirmative Action has helped to [make colleges and universities more equitable and diverse](#) environments for over 50 years, and this ruling will function to [decrease racial diversity on campuses](#). In the context of this ruling, it is more unjust than ever to continue to consider legacy status, which overwhelmingly favors white applicants, in the admissions process. As you meet to discuss and reform Columbia's admissions policies, we, as students of Columbia University, are writing to demand that the University end legacy admissions as a first step towards creating a more equitable admissions process in the wake of this detrimental decision.

Columbia University has a unique obligation to be a leader in the fight for racial equity in higher education, specifically because of its historical support for segregation and racial violence. Built at the edge of Harlem, perhaps the most famous majority-Black neighborhood in the country, Columbia has [a long history of directly displacing](#) Black residents through expansion, pricing out our neighbors [through gentrification](#), and enacting [outright anti-Black violence](#) upon residents of Harlem as well as its own Black students. From Columbia's infamous attempt in the 1960s to turn a portion of Morningside Park into a segregated gym, to the involvement of Columbia Public Safety in [the largest gang raid in NYPD History](#) just a few blocks north of campus, to Columbia's recent abuse of eminent domain in order to demolish local housing in [Manhattanville](#), Columbia's proximity to Harlem has always allowed the school to enact unique and specific harms to the Black and brown communities that surround our campus. In this context, Columbia University has a moral obligation to be not just a participant, but a *leader* in fighting for more racially equitable practices in higher education.

Further, in the 1920s, alongside NYU, Columbia pioneered the practice of instituting [admissions quotas of Jewish students](#) to curtail the number of Jewish students admitted, a practice that quickly spread to every other Ivy League Institution. Columbia's history of pioneering exclusionary and inequitable admissions practices makes it all the more imperative for Columbia to seize this moment to set a moral, equitable standard among its peers and pave the way for more inclusive admissions practices in the 21st century.

The time has come to recognize that ending legacy admissions is the first step to promoting ethnic and financial diversity in the student body. The use of legacy admissions feeds an unequal cycle of admission into universities like Columbia for white and upper class students: as of 1995, [96% of Ivy League graduates were white](#). Such alumni are now the parents of

students who are old enough to apply to college, and this massive racial imbalance in legacy applications can be seen empirically—although Columbia University has not released data on its admissions, at comparable schools such as Harvard University, the overwhelming majority of legacy applicants and admits are white. As of 2019, [69% of legacy students at Harvard were white](#). The use of legacy admissions directly and overwhelmingly benefits white applicants, promoting cultural homogeneity and the exclusion of already-marginalized populations. In addition to giving white students an unfair advantage in the admissions process, legacy admissions also benefits upper-class students. Legacy applicants are more likely to belong to wealthier families, given that [78% of legacy applicants to elite schools are above the 90th income percentile](#). Admission data from elite colleges, including the Ivy League, Duke, and Stanford, suggests that legacy students belonging to the top [1% of income brackets were seven times more likely than the average applicant to be accepted, as well as five times more likely than students with comparable applications](#). Legacy admissions are functioning as a pipeline into the Ivy League for wealthy white students, and ending legacy admissions would promote equity in admissions for students coming from low-income families and foster a diverse range of socioeconomic and racial backgrounds in the student population. Further, schools such as [MIT](#) and [Johns Hopkins](#) have either eliminated or never utilized legacy admissions without compromising their status as "elite" institutions. Columbia has nothing to lose by ending this inequitable and unfair policy.

As students at Columbia University, we value the diversity of this institution. Having the opportunity to live and learn in such a diverse environment has immeasurable value, and is a reason many of us chose to attend Columbia. Without this diversity, Columbia would not provide the same opportunities and education that it currently offers, and we demand that Columbia take steps to preserve this diversity, starting with putting an end to legacy admissions.

Ending legacy admissions at Columbia is the first step of many in rebuilding an equitable admissions process after this summer's Supreme Court decision. Columbia University must live up to its reputation as the Ivy League University in the most diverse city in the world, as well as reaffirm its commitments to racial equity, by putting an end to legacy admissions.

Thank you,  
The Human Rights Center of the Columbia Policy Institute

**Co-Signed by:**

Columbia Policy Institute  
Sci-Inspire  
Greenborough House  
Columbia Chapter of the Young Democratic Socialists of America  
Columbia Sunrise Movement

Columbia University First Generation Low Income Network  
Columbia University Democrats  
Afghan Student Association  
IGNITE at Columbia University  
Columbia University Students for Human Rights  
Columbia Women in Law and Politics  
Columbia Remedy Project  
Student-Worker Solidarity  
Asian American Alliance  
Columbia University Mock Trial