



Dear Members of the Harvard Community,

Yesterday, the Supreme Court [announced a decision](#) that could put forty years of legal precedent at risk. Colleges and universities could lose the freedom and flexibility to create diverse campus communities that enrich education for all. Our admissions process, in which race is considered as one factor among many, makes us stronger. It prompts learning in day-to-day exchanges in our classrooms and laboratories, in our residential houses, and on our playing fields and stages. Our students understand these truths and see them reflected in their interactions with their classmates. Diversity opens our eyes to the promise of a better future.

Harvard celebrates and nurtures individuality as intensely as this nation. Those who challenge our admissions policies would ask us to rely upon a process far more mechanistic, a process far more reliant on simple assessments of objective criteria. Each of us is, however, more than our numbers, more than our grades, more than our rankings or scores. Ask yourself, how much have you learned from other people at this University? How much have you grown from conversations across difference? Would these conversations have been as rich if you had shared the same interests, the same life experiences, and—yes—the same racial or ethnic background as your fellow community members? This is why applications of any kind routinely go beyond mere numbers to include interviews, samples of work product, recommendations, and references. Narrowly drawn measures of academic distinction are not the only indicators of individual promise.

As the Supreme Court has recognized many times, race matters in the United States. I long for the day when it does not, but we still have miles to go before our journey is complete. Harvard will continue to defend with vigor admissions policies that were endorsed in the thoughtful decisions of two federal courts that concluded that we do not discriminate; our practices are consistent with Supreme Court precedent; there is no persuasive, credible evidence warranting a different outcome. Though I wish yesterday had turned out differently, I remain confident that the rule of law—and the respect for precedent that perpetuates it—will prevail.

Sincerely,
Larry