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Fact Sheet

Amici curiae brief filed by MIT, et al. Grutter v. Bollinger and Gratz v. Bollinger

February 17, 2003

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, joined by Stanford University, DuPont, IBM, the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering, Inc., are filing a friend of the court brief in the University of Michigan cases, to provide an additional, but complementary voice to the many that support diversity in higher education and the necessity of race-conscious admissions. The brief focuses on the importance of diversity to science and engineering education, to our nation's science and engineering industry, and, consequently, to our national economy and welfare.

The major points made in the brief are summarized below:

Racial, ethnic, and other kinds of diversity are critical to providing a high quality education in science and engineering to all students. Diversity is just as critical in these fields as it is in the humanities and social sciences. Progress in science and engineering comes from collaboration among people with different backgrounds, ideas and perspectives. The quality of science and engineering education is enhanced by experiences studying, living, and working with other students, faculty and administrators in an academic community that extends beyond the classroom. Providing the intellectual stimulation of a diverse campus community to all of their students is a critical part of MIT's and Stanford's educational missions. Surveys of MIT's students and alumni find that their college education contributed in important or essential ways to their ability to relate well to individuals of different races, and that this ability is important in their lives during and after college.

Diversity in science and engineering education is essential to the vitality of the U.S. economy. Science and engineering are critical drivers of the national and world economies, and the U.S. science and engineering industry needs a diverse and qualified workforce to compete at the highest levels. Only 18% of all bachelor's degrees in this country are earned in natural and physical sciences, mathematics, and engineering. We must increase the number of science and engineering students and researchers by encouraging interest in these fields among all members of our population, not just among those who have traditionally worked in these fields. To compete in a global marketplace, the U.S. must develop a well-educated workforce, comprised of people who have learned to work productively and creatively with individuals from a

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multitude of races and backgrounds. Although minorities comprise 30% of the college-age U.S. population today, and will comprise 38% of such population by 2025, African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans comprise only 7% of the science and engineering workforce, and earn only a combined 13% of the relatively small number of bachelor's degrees that are earned in these fields. These demographics must be changed. If the U.S. cannot provide leadership in the fields of science and engineering, such leadership will shift to other countries. U.S. science and engineering businesses such as DuPont and IBM depend upon a diverse workforce to maintain their innovative edge and ability to compete well in the national and global marketplaces. DuPont and IBM cite broad diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, as a core value and rely on U.S. universities to educate a diverse labor pool.

MIT, Stanford, and many other colleges and universities must consider race and national origin, as one of many factors, to admit the most promising science and engineering students and to achieve a diverse student body. MIT, Stanford, and many other competitive universities receive applications from a much greater number of qualified students than they can admit to their science and engineering programs. Candidates must first demonstrate, without regard to race, that they have the necessary high intellect to succeed in the institution's demanding academic environment. All admitted students meet this first criterion.

In addition, for those candidates who demonstrate their capability of succeeding academically, qualification for admission is defined in much broader terms than just grades and SAT scores. Experienced admissions officers subjectively assess each such candidate as a whole person. Extra-curricular, co-curricular, and other accomplishments and qualities are considered. Race and national origin, among other factors, allow a candidate's creativity, determination, problem-solving orientation, and accomplishments to be viewed through the lens of the individual's culture and community. The design and construction of a solar-powered chili roaster by a Hispanic applicant in the Texas panhandle to cook migrant workers' lunches in the fields, may tell as much about that individual's engineering promise as a national science medal does for another applicant. The National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and NACME have concluded that the weight of scientific evidence supports this approach to admissions. SAT scores are not designed to measure many important factors in admissions. Removing race from the many other considerations that provide such context, would compromise the integrity of the individualized assessment, resulting in a failure to identify the most promising candidates, and also would produce a less diverse student body. Admissions decisions are, by necessity, subjective and closely tied to each institution's mission. The freedom of each university, within the great variety that comprises U.S. higher education, to identify the particular qualities of individuals that further its mission, is one of the great strengths of our system of higher education.

