

No. 11-345

In the
Supreme Court of the United States

ABIGAIL NOEL FISHER,
Petitioner,

v.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN, ET AL.,
Respondents.

ON WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

**BRIEF OF SOCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL
PSYCHOLOGISTS AS AMICI CURIAE
SUPPORTING RESPONDENTS**

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QUESTION PRESENTED

Whether the University of Texas at Austin's limited consideration of race in its individualized admissions policy is narrowly tailored to serve a compelling governmental interest in achieving the significant benefits of diversity in higher education, as articulated in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003), and supported by recent social science research.

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IDENTITY AND INTEREST OF AMICI CURIAE

Amici curiae are social and organizational psychologists who study intergroup contact and the physiological and/or psychological effects of a diverse environment.¹ Amici are college and university faculty who have published numerous books and peer-reviewed articles on topics such as the influence of diversity on cognitive function, bias, and academic achievement. Amici, listed in the Appendix, file this brief to acquaint the Court with current social science research and its consequences for the constitutionality of race-conscious admissions policies.

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

The Court ruled in *Grutter v. Bollinger* that a race-conscious university admissions policy meets strict scrutiny review if it fulfills a compelling governmental interest in student body diversity and is narrowly tailored to achieve this interest. 539 U.S. 306, 325-26 (2003). Building on the social science that informed the Court's opinion in *Grutter*, this brief updates the Court with the most recent social science research and offers a deeper understanding of why diversity is even more crucial to academic achievement and civic engagement than previously understood. This brief complements but

¹ Petitioner and Respondents have consented to the filing of this brief in letters on file in the Clerk's office. No counsel for Petitioner or Respondents authored this brief in whole or in part, and no counsel or party made a monetary contribution intended to fund the preparation or submission of this brief. No person other than amici curiae, their members, and their counsel, made a monetary contribution to its preparation or submission.

is distinct from other social science briefs submitted on behalf of Respondents. Amici discuss research—presented for the first time to the Court—on how diversity facilitates better physiological regulation of stress and threat responses in interracial interactions, improves academic performance, reduces prejudice, and has broad positive effects on civic and economic life.

The University of Texas (“UT” or “University”) employs a holistic admissions policy that, when combined with the Top Ten Percent Plan (the “Plan”), is narrowly tailored to achieve the University’s compelling interest in a diverse student body. Historical circumstances have resulted in disproportionate nationwide hypersegregation and disparate educational opportunities that cannot be accurately assessed without incorporating race as a factor in a holistic and individualized review of each applicant. UT’s admissions policy recognizes and accounts for these circumstances. It is narrowly designed to preserve individualized assessment by considering race as only one of many factors in evaluating a student’s unique personal and life experiences.

The Court should affirm the Fifth Circuit’s decision because UT’s holistic admissions policy is narrowly tailored to achieve the University’s compelling interest in a diverse educational environment and its significant attendant physiological and psychological benefits.

ARGUMENT**I. DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION IS A COMPELLING INTEREST**

As the Court has long recognized, promoting diversity in higher education is a compelling governmental interest. *See Grutter*, 539 U.S. at 329. In *Grutter*, the Court made clear that “attaining a diverse student body is at the heart of [an institution’s] mission,” *id.*, and that public universities have a compelling interest in “obtaining the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body.” *Id.* at 343. The Court explained that these educational benefits were substantiated by “studies show[ing] that student body diversity promotes learning outcomes, and better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce and society, and better prepares them as professionals.” *Id.* at 330 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). Building on the social science findings the Court considered in *Grutter*, this brief presents the newest social science research offering a deeper understanding of how diversity functions and why it is even more crucial than previously understood. This research confirms that racial diversity among students furthers critical educational, economic, and societal benefits that underlie UT’s compelling interest.

A. Recent Social Science Studies Deepen Scientists' Understanding of the Benefits of Diversity

1. Diversity Helps All Students by Reducing Anxieties That May Result from Interracial Interactions

Since *Grutter*, social scientists have expanded the breadth of research demonstrating the benefits of diversity.² This research shows that initial interactions with “outgroup” members (i.e., individuals from distinct racial, socio-economic, or gender groups) can stimulate anxiety and distress. This initial anxiety manifests physiologically in cardiovascular reactivity, increased production of cortisol (commonly called the “stress hormone”), and changes in the regularity of heart rate per breathing cycle. See Jim Blascovich, Wendy Berry Mendes, Sarah B. Hunter, Brian Lickel & Neneh Kowai-Bell, *Perceiver Threat in Social Interactions With Stigmatized Others*, 80 J. Personality & Soc. Psychol. 253, 254 (2001); Elizabeth Page-Gould, Wendy Berry Mendes & Brenda Major, *Intergroup Contact Facilitates Physiological Recovery Following Stressful Intergroup Interactions*, 46 J. Experimental Soc. Psychol. 854, 855 (2010). However, empirical data shows that increased short- and long-term contact with outgroup members ameliorates these stress responses.

Research provides strong evidence that past experience with diverse groups of people,

² This research directly refutes assertions by Petitioner’s amici. See Brief for Amici Curiae Pacific Legal Foundation et al. at 10-15.

particularly through interracial contact, predicts faster and more efficient physiological regulation across various stress systems in the body. Previous interracial contact predicts better recovery from an autonomic nervous system (ANS)³ stress response, enabling faster return to a regular heart rate, and quicker neuroendocrine recovery (measured by changes in cortisol levels), rapidly ceasing the production of excess cortisol. Page-Gould, *Intergroup Contact, supra*, at 854-56. Exposure to diversity also helps regulate cardiovascular threat response, measured by vascular contractility and lowered circulatory resistance to blood flow. Blascovich, *supra*, at 263. For example, non-Black college students who have high levels of past interracial contact and who interact with a Black fellow student to perform a specific task show lower cardiovascular threat responses than college students with low levels of past interracial contact. *Id.* This physiological regulation facilitates interaction with outgroup members and adaptive coping with intergroup stress and improves long-term cardiovascular and psychological health, preventing chronic hypertension and increasing mental resilience. Page-Gould, *Intergroup Contact, supra*, at 855, 858.

The physiological benefits of interracial interactions that occur in diverse settings are not

³ To assess recovery from ANS stress responses, the authors of the study monitored changes in respiratory sinus arrhythmia, a measure of parasympathetic activation that reflects heart rate acceleration and deceleration during the respiratory cycle. Page-Gould, *Intergroup Contact, supra*, at 855.

just cumulative; they can appear in a matter of weeks or even days, which is critical for students who arrive at college with little or no previous interracial contact. A 2008 survey of Latino and White participants at a selective public university found that students who were implicitly prejudiced or concerned about outgroup rejection responded to their first interracial interaction with an excessive release of cortisol, which appeared in saliva within twenty minutes of first meeting the outgroup member. Elizabeth Page-Gould, Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton & Linda R. Tropp, *With a Little Help From My Cross-Group Friend: Reducing Anxiety in Intergroup Contexts Through Cross-Group Friendship*, 95 *J. Personality & Soc. Psychol.* 1080, 1085, 1089 (2008). This physiological reaction significantly decreased over the course of only three interracial friendship meetings. *Id.* at 1089. This data suggests that interracial contact lowers anxiety levels “relatively early in the development of cross-group friendship.” *Id.* (finding also that, after their final cross-group meeting, “implicitly prejudiced participants sought out more intergroup interactions, and participants felt less anxious in the diverse university environment”). Thus, interracial interactions can produce short- and long-term physiological benefits to students by reducing their threat and stress responses.

2. Diversity Reduces Prejudice and Bias

In addition to improved physiological reactions and lower anxiety levels, social science research shows that interracial interactions reduce implicit and explicit prejudices in the development of interpersonal relationships. In 2012, researchers

from Columbia, Stanford, and Tufts Universities released a study that examined over forty years' worth of research on interracial interactions, compiling data from 81 different studies with an aggregate of 12,463 participants. Negin R. Toosi, Nalini Ambady, Laura G. Babbitt & Samuel R. Sommers, *Dyadic Interracial Interactions: A Meta-Analysis*, 138 *Psychol. Bull.* 1, 6-7 (2012). This meta-analysis found that participants engaging in interracial interactions report feeling more negative emotions (e.g., anxiety) than participants engaging in same-race interactions. Over time, however, repeated interracial interactions produced more positive emotional experiences comparable to those of participants engaging in same-race interactions. *Id.* at 16, 18. Another post-Grutter meta-analysis of over 200 studies, including samples of college students, demonstrated that intergroup contact also reduces prejudice and improves attitudes towards the outgroup. See Thomas F. Pettigrew & Linda R. Tropp, *A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory*, 90 *J. Personality & Soc. Psychol.* 751 (2006). These analyses indicate that the benefits of interracial interaction increase over time and help reduce bias, anxiety, and other negative emotional responses.

The benefits of diversity can begin to flourish even when an individual has only indirect contact with an outgroup, since an individual's prejudice towards the outgroup is reduced simply by virtue of extended contact through an ingroup mutual friend. Rhiannon N. Turner et al., *Reducing Explicit and Implicit Outgroup Prejudice Via Direct and Extended Contact: The Mediating Role of Self-Disclosure and Intergroup Anxiety*, 93 *J. Personality & Soc. Psychol.*

369, 384 (2007) (studying White and South Asian high school students). Empirical evidence demonstrates that “[e]xtended contact [is] associated with lower intergroup anxiety . . . which in turn [is] associated with more positive outgroup attitudes.” *Id.* at 377.⁴ Therefore, by engaging in interracial contact or having close friends who do, individuals experience less anxiety, increased empathy, and lower levels of prejudice towards outgroup members.

In a university setting, students who acquire more cross-group friends during their undergraduate years demonstrate decreased prejudice. *See* Colette Van Laar, Shana Levin, Stacey Sinclair & Jim Sidanius, *The Effect of University Roommate Contact on Ethnic Attitudes and Behavior*, 41 *J. Experimental Soc. Psychol.* 329, 330 (2004) (“[S]tudents with more outgroup friendships . . . during their second and third years of university showed less prejudice at the end of university . . .”). One longitudinal study examining two thousand university students showed that both the random assignment of interracial first-year roommates and voluntarily selected second-year interracial roommate pairings are associated with reduced prejudice and increased “ethnic heterogeneity of [students’] friendship circle[s].” *Id.* at 338. Interracial roommate relationships are also “associated with increased interethnic competence [and] decreased interethnic unease.” *Id.* at 341. A more recent study surveyed the attitudes of White freshmen randomly assigned to a Black roommate in

⁴ Another study yielded similar findings with a larger independent sample. *See* Turner, *supra*, at 369.

college and found similar results after only a ten-week quarter, indicating that

racial attitudes of White students in interracial rooms became more positive toward [Blacks], whereas the attitudes of White students in same-race rooms did not change. Participants in interracial rooms also reported decreased intergroup anxiety toward [Blacks] at the end of the quarter, whereas participants in same-race rooms did not exhibit [such] change

Natalie J. Shook & Russell H. Fazio, *Interracial Roommate Relationships: An Experimental Field Test of the Contact Hypothesis*, 19 *Psychol. Sci.* 717, 721 (2008). These studies show that White students' implicit racial attitudes improve while living with an outgroup roommate for a mere quarter term, underscoring the significance of interracial interactions in the college setting in reducing prejudice. Because college is where many individuals experience their first meaningful and sustained contact with people of different races and backgrounds, *see infra* Section I.B, these early interactions can influence how those students will interact with others as they seek to become productive members of society.

3. Diversity Reduces the Racial Isolation or Solo Status of Underrepresented Students

Diversity within the classroom also reduces “solo status,” the isolation experienced by underrepresented students that adversely impacts classroom learning and performance. Denise

Sekaquaptewa & Mischa Thompson, *The Differential Effects of Solo Status on Members of High- and Low-Status Groups*, 28 *Personality & Soc. Psychol. Bull.* 694, 694 (2002) (defining solo status as “being the only member of one’s social category in an otherwise homogenous group”). While solo status can undermine the educational objectives of any student, it disproportionately impacts the classroom performance of students from historically stigmatized groups. *Id.* at 703.

Social scientists previously determined that solo status experienced during performance-oriented tasks (e.g., taking an exam, giving a presentation, or interviewing) increases evaluation apprehension because of the increased attention directed at the individual, which increases the salience of social categorizations such as race. *See id.* at 696. Pre-Grutter research showed that individuals from stereotypically low-status groups perform worse than groups not bearing this stereotype, *id.* at 703, and that “the impact of being different from the rest of one’s group is greatest when it counts the most: when one is called on to demonstrate one’s abilities and skills under the scrutiny of others.” *Id.* at 705.

New social science findings reveal that students experiencing solo status see themselves as representatives of their racial group and may intensify their collective self-construal—the degree to which their sense of self is tied to social group membership. Denise Sekaquaptewa et al., *Solo Status and Self-Construal: Being Distinctive Influences Racial Self-Construal and Performance Apprehension in African American Women*, 13 *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychol.* 321, 321 (2007). Researchers suggest that this increased

race representativeness and collective self-construal among individuals experiencing solo status or racial isolation can derail performance. *Id.* at 322. Conversely, they predict that individuals from historically marginalized groups may positively respond to settings where “their race is perceived to be adequately or fairly represented.” *Id.* at 326. The research indicates that diversity in the classroom positively affects student performance by mitigating the race representativeness and collective self-construal that occurs when students are racially isolated.

Social science research also demonstrates that students who enter college with high sensitivity to being rejected or dismissed because of their race report greater anxiety after they complete their second or third year than those who enter with low rejection sensitivity. Students with high rejection sensitivity show especially heightened anxiety about discussing an academic problem with faculty, depressed attendance to academic review sessions, and a significant academic achievement gap compared to those with low rejection sensitivity. Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton et al., *Sensitivity to Status-Based Rejection: Implications for African American Students’ College Experience*, 83 *J. Personality & Soc. Psychol.* 896, 913-14 (2002). Opportunities for diverse peer engagement may, however, reduce the alienation that Black and other underrepresented students feel in educational environments. *Id.* at 914.

Researchers re-analyzed earlier studies examining the interplay of race, stigmatization, job satisfaction, and institutional commitment for faculty and students in higher education. They

found that solo minority status is associated with high levels of stigmatization, which in turn predicts lower levels of job satisfaction among faculty and lower levels of commitment among students. John F. Dovidio et al., *Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Differences in Responding to Distinctiveness and Discrimination on Campus: Stigma and Common Group Identity*, 57 *J. Soc. Issues* 167, 169, 176 (2001) (citing Yolanda Flores Niemann & John F. Dovidio, *Relationship of Solo Status, Academic Rank, and Perceived Distinctiveness to Job Satisfaction of Racial/Ethnic Minorities*, 83 *J. Applied Psychol.* 55 (1998), and Kevin Snider & John F. Dovidio, *Ind. St. U., A Survey of the Racial Climate at Indiana State University*, 136-d (1996)). Research has long shown that Black students experience higher rates of discrimination and feel “significantly less a part of the university community and [are] substantially less committed to the university than [are] Whites.” Dovidio, *Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Differences, supra*, at 177. After reexamining the data, researchers concluded that feelings of community belonging, rather than experiences of discrimination, “significantly [predict] institutional commitment.” *Id.* A diverse learning environment is thus essential to defusing feelings of stigmatization and increasing institutional commitment.

4. Diversity Reduces the Effects of Stereotype Threat on Academic Performance

In the absence of a sufficiently diverse environment, racial isolation or solo status and other forms of anxiety and awareness about one’s racial group’s performance capabilities can result in “stereotype threat.” Stereotype threat is a disruptive

apprehension that individuals feel when they fear their performance will confirm a salient negative stereotype about the intellectual ability and competence of their identity group. *See* Claude M. Steele & Joshua Aronson, *Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans*, 69 *J. Personality & Soc. Psychol.* 797, 797 (1995).⁵ This fear of confirming an underperformance stereotype has been found to impair intellectual performance and ability. *Id.* at 808.

Social science research has demonstrated that the academic performance of underrepresented students, including Blacks and Latinos, can be explained by stereotype threat. *See Stereotype Threat: Theory, Process, and Application* (Michael Inzlicht & Toni Schmader eds., 2012) (discussing research conducted over the last fifteen years). The findings on stereotype threat are now supported by over two decades of peer-reviewed research that confirms the real-world effects that stereotype threat has on academic performance.⁶

⁵ *See also* Toni Schmader et al., *An Integrated Process Model of Stereotype Threat Effects on Performance*, 115 *Psychol. Rev.* 336, 337 (2008) (finding that stereotype activation is triggered by “situations that pose a significant threat to self-integrity” when “one’s concept of self and expectation for success conflict with primed social stereotypes suggesting poor performance,” which then result in “physiological manifestations of stress”).

⁶ The Petitioner’s amici err in their analysis of the social science data that exist on stereotype threat. *See* Brief for Scholars of Economics and Statistics (“SES”) at 31-32; Brief for Gail Heriot et al. at 29-34; Brief for Richard Sander and Stuart Taylor, Jr. (“Sander”) at 25-26. Amici respectfully refer the Court to the Respondent’s amici for a more thorough discussion

- a. Stereotype threat experiences are linked to physiological stress reactions.

Experiencing stereotype threat can result in physiological changes in the body and brain, thus undermining academic performance expectations, increasing feelings of self-doubt, and generally reducing an individual's cognitive resources precisely when they are needed most. See Toni Schmader, Chad E. Forbes, Shen Zhang & Wendy Berry Mendes, *A Metacognitive Perspective on the Cognitive Deficits Experienced in Intellectually Threatening Environments*, 35 *Personality & Soc. Psychol. Bull.* 584, 585-95 (2009); see also Schmader, *Stereotype Threat Effects*, *supra* note 5, at 342. Students who experience stereotype threat endure elevated levels of anxiety manifested in their cardiac functioning during outcome-oriented tasks, such as taking an exam. This strain results in the physiological production of cortisol, which greatly increases when one "fears being negatively evaluated during a task." Schmader, *Stereotype Threat Effects*, *supra*, at 343. In large quantities, cortisol impairs the process of memory stores, such as "working memory"—the coordination of cognition and behavior to achieve performance goals in the presence of other competing information that can distract an individual's attention when focusing on a challenging task. *Id.* at 340. Consequently, students may not have full access to their own internal cognitive processes during the very

of stereotype threat and academic underperformance. See Brief for Experimental Psychologists.

moments when they are being called upon to perform tasks that require high cognitive functioning. *Id.* at 351.

- b. The actual and perceived diversity of a university environment is an important part of developing a sense of belonging—a predictor for academic success—for students who experience stereotype threat.

Physiological reactions to stereotype threat can be mitigated when students have a strong sense of “social belonging,” or have positive relationships with and connections to other people. *See* Gregory M. Walton & Geoffrey L. Cohen, *A Question of Belonging: Race, Social Fit, and Achievement*, 92 *J. Personality & Soc. Psychol.* 82, 82 (2007). Social belonging is fundamental to students’ well-being and intellectual achievement. Students who perceive themselves as outside their social cohort perform poorly academically and can even suffer health problems. *See* Gregory M. Walton & Geoffrey L. Cohen, *A Brief Social-Belonging Intervention Improves Academic and Health Outcomes of Minority Students*, 331 *Sci. Mag.* 1447, 1447 (2011) (“Social isolation . . . harm[s] not only subjective well-being but also intellectual achievement and immune function and health.”) (citations omitted). Black students are particularly susceptible to feeling uncertain about their place in a university. *Id.* at 1448.

A three-year Stanford University study published in 2011 demonstrates that the

achievement gap between Black and White undergraduate students can be narrowed with a social belonging intervention. *Id.* at 1447. After receiving an intervention at the end of their first semester at which older students assured younger Black students that concerns over “fitting in” diminish with time, the younger students improved their GPAs significantly by senior year, narrowing the achievement gap by 52%. *Id.* at 1448.⁷ Moreover, the academic performance and self-reported health and well-being of the Black students improved over the three years. *Id.* at 1449. These results suggest that stereotype threat can be mitigated in diverse environments where students can identify as individuals and not solely as members of their racial group.

Belonging and acceptance have implications for not only school performance but also college trajectories and career choices. Findings across the board show that a lack of belonging can turn students away from opportunities as surely as a gatekeeper in admissions. Sapna Cheryan, Victoria C. Plaut, Paul G. Davies & Claude M. Steele, *Ambient Belonging: How Stereotypical Cues Impact Gender Participation in Computer Science*, 97 *J. Personality & Soc. Psychol.* 1045, 1058 (2009) (“Across all studies, the degree to which people . . . felt they belonged in the environment strongly predicted whether they chose to join that group.”).

⁷ Social science research demonstrates that diversity encourages intellectual engagement and improves academic achievement, contrary to the propositions made by Petitioner’s amici. See Sander Br. 7-13; SES Br. 31-32; Brief for Abigail Thernstrom et al. (“Thernstrom”) at 24-32.

Diversity helps allay these concerns.⁸ Academic and work environments that emphasize diversity to underrepresented students increase a sense of belonging and foster motivation to participate in those environments.

B. Social Science Studies Show That Diversity Leads to A More Vibrant and Productive Workforce and Civic Life

Diversity is crucial to preparing all students—including our next generation of leaders—to enter the workforce and civic society and collaborate with members of other racial groups. The Court has found that racial diversity in higher education imparts skills that are vital to professionals working in heterogeneous environments. *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265, 313-14 (1978).

This finding is supported by extensive social science evidence that college is a critical place for students to learn how to work with those from different backgrounds. *See* Gurin, *Diversity and Higher Education*, *supra* note 8, at 334-36. White students often have little or no contact with students from other racial and ethnic groups before entering

⁸ Educational outcomes are also enhanced by extensive and meaningful informal interracial interaction. Patricia Gurin et al., *Diversity and Higher Education: Theory and Impact on Educational Outcomes*, 72 Harv. Educ. Rev. 330, 359 (2002). In a national longitudinal study of data collected from over 11,000 students at 184 institutions, interracial interactions consistently accounted for higher levels of intellectual engagement and self-assessed academic skills for Black, Asian American, Latino, and White students. *Id.*

higher education. See Gary Orfield & Dean Whitla, “Diversity and Legal Education: Student Experiences in Leading Law Schools,” in *Diversity Challenged: Evidence on the Impact of Affirmative Action* 143, 156 (Gary Orfield ed., 2001) (finding that fifty percent of White students at Harvard and University of Michigan law schools had little or no interracial contact prior to entering college or law school). Due to patterns of *de facto* segregation, see *infra* Section II.B, college provides the first opportunity to teach and learn cross-cultural competence.

Recent social science research shows that diversity also leads to increased innovation, as group members collaborate with one another more when they recognize that alternative perspectives exist, leading to novel insights and solutions. Katherine W. Phillips et al., *Surface-Level Diversity and Decision-Making in Groups: When Does Deep-Level Similarity Help?*, 9 *Group Processes & Intergroup Rel.* 467, 475-77 (2006) (finding that diverse groups spent more time discussing a certain task, which improved performance); see also Anthony Lising Antonio et al., *Effects of Racial Diversity on Complex Thinking in College Students*, 15 *Psychol. Sci.* 507, 509 (2004) (finding a strong association between the racial diversity of a student’s close friends and classmates and the integrative complexity of that student’s group discussions); Scott E. Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* 23, 47-50 (2007) (explaining that introducing diverse perspectives creates new ways of organizing knowledge to find efficient solutions and mitigates inefficiencies attributable to groupthink). The

inclusion of diverse viewpoints in decision-making thus produces creativity and efficiency.

The mere presence of individuals from other racial or ethnic groups, even when their views are not adopted, also improves the performance of White group members. Samuel R. Sommers, *On Racial Diversity and Group Decision Making: Identifying Multiple Effects of Racial Composition on Jury Deliberations*, 90 *J. Personality & Soc. Psychol.* 597, 606 (2006). The benefits of diversity extend well beyond having diverse viewpoints adopted or represented in decision-making; rather, the data show that diverse environments and the accompanying expectation of interacting with an outgroup member “can lead White individuals to exhibit more thorough information processing.” Samuel R. Sommers et al., *Cognitive Effects of Racial Diversity: White Individuals’ Information Processing in Heterogeneous Groups*, 44 *J. Experimental Soc. Psychol.* 1129, 1132 (2008) (“That simple awareness of group composition can produce such effects suggests that the general influence of racial diversity cannot be attributed in whole to the novel informational contributions” of individuals from other racial groups). Indeed, when individuals from other racial groups are part of a group, the changes in the decision-making process of the entire group are largely attributed to the White participants, and lead to divergent thinking, more creativity, and more accurate judgments. See Sommers, *On Racial Diversity, supra*, at 606 (“[T]hese differences did not simply result from Black participants adding unique perspectives to the discussions. Rather, White participants [are] largely responsible for the influence of racial composition, as

they raised more case facts, made fewer factual errors, and were more amenable to discussion of race-related issues when they were members of a diverse group.”). These recent social science findings challenge prior assumptions that the benefits of racial diversity were singularly attributable to the informational contributions of individuals from underrepresented racial or ethnic groups. Current research provides compelling evidence that “even absent social interaction or exchange of information, mere awareness of a diverse group composition [is] sufficient to impact the cognitive tendencies” of White individuals, allowing for a more robust and productive decision-making environment. Sommers, *Cognitive Effects of Racial Diversity*, *supra*, at 1134.

Civic and social life also improve with increased interaction with outgroup members. Research has long shown that students with diverse college experiences are more willing to influence the political structure, help others in need, engage in community service, resolve conflict, and overcome social division. See Patricia Gurin et al., *The Benefits of Diversity in Education for Democratic Citizenship*, 60 J. Soc. Issues 17, 31-32 (2004); see also Gurin, *Diversity and Higher Education*, *supra*, at 347. Social science research since *Grutter* supports these findings and confirms the importance of diversity in civic engagement. See, e.g., Sylvia Hurtado, *The Next Generation of Diversity and Intergroup Relations Research*, 61 J. Soc. Issues 595, 601-05 (2005) (“[S]tudents who reported frequent contact with diverse peers displayed greater . . . self-confidence in cultural awareness, development of a pluralistic orientation, believe that conflict enhances democracy, and tend to vote in federal and state

elections.”). Indeed, students who experience diverse campus environments find such experiences essential to democracy. *See id.*; Gurin, *The Benefits of Diversity*, *supra*, at 28-30 (finding that campus diversity encourages students to increase their engagement on campus and instills democratic values).⁹

* * *

The foregoing facts and empirical evidence illustrate the many social, economic, intellectual, physiological, cognitive, and psychological benefits of diversity. Social science research demonstrates that diversity has broad positive effects on civic and economic life, improves academic performance for all students, reduces both implicit and explicit prejudice and bias, and facilitates better physiological regulation of stress and threat responses in interracial interactions. This research has important implications for the Court’s understanding of why diversity matters.

In *Grutter*, the Court underscored the university’s need to determine pedagogical goals for university education and select a student population that would best serve those goals.¹⁰ 539 U.S. at 329.

⁹ Contrary to the findings put forth by Petitioner’s amici, *see* Sander Br. 23-24 and Thernstrom Br. 9-18, the most recent social science research overwhelmingly shows that increased contact and cross-racial understanding produce a positive effect, thus reinforcing the empirical data underlying the Court’s ruling in *Grutter*. *See supra* Sections I.A-B.

¹⁰ In *Parents Involved*, the Court recognized that when applying strict scrutiny, “context matters” and “universities occupy a special niche in our constitutional tradition.” *Parents Involved in Cmty. Sch. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1*, 551 U.S. 701,

Recent social science findings show that there is an even wider array of benefits to diversity in higher education and bolster the Court's conclusion that promoting such diversity is a compelling interest. *Id.* at 329. Diversity is an essential tool that enables schools to fulfill their purpose of educating all students, ensuring that students perform their best academically, and preparing students to be future leaders.

II. UT'S HOLISTIC ADMISSIONS POLICY IS NARROWLY TAILORED AND NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE ITS COMPELLING DIVERSITY INTEREST

The use of race in higher education admissions is constitutional where the means chosen are “narrowly tailored” and “necessary to further a compelling governmental interest.” *Grutter*, 539 U.S. at 326-27 (explaining that “strict” constitutional scrutiny ensures that the government is pursuing a sufficiently important goal). UT's carefully rendered admissions policy is narrowly framed, preserving individualized review of an applicant's entire file in an admissions process otherwise based on a single metric: high school class rank. UT's policy is also necessary. The Plan, while increasing enrollment of underrepresented groups, does not ensure that students who do not automatically qualify have a meaningful opportunity to be considered for

724-25 (2007) (citations omitted). “[T]he expansive freedoms of speech and thought associated with the university environment” underlie the deference given to universities in making “complex educational judgments,” *Grutter*, 539 U.S. at 328, that are “unique to institutions of higher education.” *Parents Involved*, 551 U.S. at 724 (citations omitted).

admission to the University of Texas. The University cannot rely on the Plan alone because it depends on existing high school segregation in Texas to achieve limited diversity and disproportionately excludes Black and Latino students due to residential hypersegregation.

Nor can UT rely on an admissions policy that fails to consider race to achieve the benefits of diversity. Black and Latino students' relative disadvantage in university admissions results from dozens of demographic, social, and economic factors that vary depending on localized conditions. Universities simply cannot effectively analyze the complex factors that contribute to racial disadvantage as an alternative to considering race. However, the convergence of these factors with race allows UT to consider race as one of many individualized factors as a means to provide a meaningful opportunity for all students to attend UT. A truly holistic race-conscious admissions policy, employed in conjunction with the Plan, is necessary and indispensable to fulfilling UT's critical goals of ensuring that its student body is broadly diverse and the individualized characteristics of each student are considered for admission. For these reasons, UT's holistic admissions policy is narrowly tailored to achieve its compelling interest in diversity.

A. UT's Policy Is Narrowly Tailored Because It Preserves Individualized Review

UT's policy is narrowly tailored to account for the limitations of the Plan and the pedagogical needs of the University because it considers race as one

part of a holistic, individualized admissions process. An admissions policy is narrowly tailored if each applicant's file is evaluated in a "highly individualized" way, "giving serious consideration to all the ways an applicant might contribute to a diverse educational environment." *Grutter*, 539 U.S. at 337; *see also Fisher v. Univ. of Texas at Austin*, 631 F.3d 213, 220-21 (5th Cir. 2011) (explaining that, under *Grutter*, a "university admissions program is narrowly tailored only if it allows for individualized consideration of applicants of all races" so that an applicant is "valued for all her unique attributes"). A holistic admissions policy "adequately ensures that all factors that may contribute to student body diversity are meaningfully considered alongside race in admissions decisions." *Grutter*, 539 U.S. at 337.

UT's admissions process is both individualized and constitutional. The University considered seriously and in good faith "workable race-neutral alternatives that [would] achieve the diversity the university seeks." *Grutter*, 539 U.S. at 339-40 (finding that the law school "sufficiently considered" these alternatives) (citation omitted); *see also Proposal to Consider Race and Ethnicity in Admissions*, U. Tex. at Austin (June 25, 2004), in Supplemental Joint Appendix, filed May 21, 2012 ("SJA") at 1a-39a. However, UT determined that a policy that ignored race was not a "workable race-neutral alternative." SJA 1a-39a.

As in *Grutter*, UT's policy properly gives "substantial weight to diversity factors besides race." *Grutter*, 539 U.S. at 338. Since 1997, UT has

employed two metrics to determine freshman admission for non-guaranteed¹¹ applicants: an “Academic Index” and a “Personal Achievement Index” (“PAI”). *Fisher*, 631 F.3d at 222-23. In the fall of 1999, the year before the Texas Legislature enacted the Plan, UT began an extensive evaluation of undergraduate impressions and empirical data regarding campus diversity over fifteen semesters through 2003. *See* SJA 1a-39a. After this careful analysis, UT concluded in 2004 that considering race in admissions was crucial to achieving diversity and began including it as one of many “special circumstance[s]” within the personal achievement factors. *Fisher*, 631 F.3d at 230.

Race constitutes only one component of an applicant’s personal achievement score, which itself is only one third of the overall PAI, and is thus not a predominant or “defining feature” in UT’s decision-making. *See Grutter*, 539 U.S. at 393 (Kennedy, J., dissenting) (reasoning that an admissions policy that considers race is constitutional where the educational institution ensures that “each applicant receives individual consideration and that race does not become a predominant factor in the

¹¹ UT’s admissions policy affects only those in-state applicants whose grade point averages (“GPA”), as reflected in their class rank, place them outside the top ten percent of their high school class. *Fisher*, 631 F.3d at 227; *Plaintiffs’ Statement of Facts in Support of Motion for Partial Summary Judgment*, in Joint Appendix, filed May 21, 2012 (“JA”) at 140a. Under the original version of the Plan, applicants within the top ten percent of their classes were guaranteed admission to UT, which accounted for over eighty percent of UT’s enrolled class. *Fisher*, 631 F.3d at 227. There is a current cap of 75% that expires in 2015. JA 140a.

admissions decision-making.”). UT’s admissions policy appropriately considers each applicant’s race as “one modest factor among many others” that, in concert with the matrix of considerations that UT examines as part of its holistic review, constitute a particularized and truly individualized assessment. *Grutter*, 539 U.S. at 392-93 (Kennedy, J., dissenting) (“To be constitutional, a university’s compelling interest in a diverse student body must be achieved by a system where individual assessment is safeguarded through the entire process.”).

**B. UT’s Policy Is Necessary to Achieve
A Compelling Interest**

Petitioner incorrectly argues that “the success of UT’s prior race-neutral admissions system in increasing minority enrollment, primarily through the [Plan],” renders the race-conscious admissions procedure unnecessary and therefore not narrowly tailored. Pet’r’s Br. 38. To the contrary, UT’s race-conscious admissions policy is carefully tailored to compensate for the limitations of the Plan in achieving the University’s compelling interest in creating a diverse student body. UT’s inclusion of race as one “special circumstance” within its holistic and individualized admissions process is necessary because Blacks and Latinos disproportionately reside in racially isolated, lower educational opportunity environments, inhibiting their ability to benefit from the Plan alone or with an admissions policy that excludes race. Without a holistic admissions policy, falling outside of the top ten percent would effectively deny many Black and Latino students a realistic chance to be considered for admission to UT.

Research demonstrates that a broad range of complex variables such as socioeconomic status, parental education, school environment, residential stability, and geographic diversity disproportionately affect the educational opportunities available to Blacks and Latinos. All of these factors intersect with race. Given the number and complexity of variables that contribute to racial disadvantage, an admissions policy limited to race-neutral factors cannot capture their cumulative effect on educational opportunity. Considering race within a broader, holistic admissions policy therefore remains the only way to account for the uneven distribution of educational opportunities within and across school districts and generate a broadly diverse student body at UT. UT simply cannot rely on the Plan alone or in conjunction with a race-neutral admissions policy to accomplish this goal.

1. The Convergence of Multiple Factors Inextricably Linked to Race Inhibits Educational Opportunity

In *Brown*, the Court concluded that “it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity to an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.” *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483, 493 (1954). Education is important for economic opportunity, civic participation, and democratic engagement. See *supra* at Section I.B. The Court’s decisions in *Brown* and *Grutter* both recognize the role education serves for both individuals and society as a whole; accordingly, education must be provided under conditions of equality. See *Brown*, 347 U.S. at 493;

Grutter, 539 U.S. at 332 (“[U]niversities . . . represent the training ground for a large number of our Nation’s leaders.”); *see also Parents Involved*, 551 U.S. at 787 (Kennedy, J., concurring) (“The enduring hope is that race should not matter; the reality is that too often it does.”).

Standing against this aspiration is the reality that educational opportunity remains uneven across our nation and the state of Texas. Varying local conditions, including teacher quality, teacher experience, per-pupil expenditures, local tax base capacity, school poverty rates, extracurricular activities, textbooks and classroom technology, neighborhood conditions, average parental educational levels, and amenities such as proximity or access to libraries and other educational supports can vastly inhibit or improve student performance. *See, e.g.*, Linda Darling-Hammond & Peter Youngs, *Defining “Highly Qualified Teachers”: What Does “Scientifically-Based Research” Actually Tell Us?*, 31 *Educ. Researcher* 13 (2002); Linda Darling-Hammond, *Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A Review of State Policy Evidence*, 8 *Educ. Pol’y Analysis Archives* 1 (2000); Linda Darling-Hammond et al., *Does Teacher Certification Matter? Evaluating the Evidence*, 23 *Educ. Evaluation & Pol’y Analysis* 57 (2001); Eric A. Hanushek, *The Impact of Differential Expenditures on School Performance*, 18 *Educ. Researcher* 45 (1989); Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America’s Schools*, Crown Publishers, Inc. (1991); Jonathan Kozol, *Still Separate, Still Unequal: America’s Educational Apartheid*, 311 *Harper’s Mag.* 41 (2005). Research demonstrates that these varying factors each correlate with

educational outcomes, and when clustered together have a tremendous influence on educational attainment and college matriculation. See Linda Darling-Hammond, *The Color Line in American Education: Race, Resources, and Student Achievement*, 1 Du Bois Rev. 213 (2004).

Uneven educational opportunity is largely a result of the interaction of race with economic segregation and isolation. Residing in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and racial segregation has a direct effect on education: it is equivalent to missing an entire year of school. See Robert J. Sampson et al., *Durable Effects of Concentrated Disadvantage on Verbal Ability Among African-American Children*, 105 Proc. Nat'l Acad. Sci. 845, 845-52 (2008). The interaction between racial segregation and income segregation is profound,¹² and results in the exclusion of disproportionate numbers of Black and Latino students from educational opportunities. One out of every six Black or Latino students attends a hypersegregated school—in which the student population is 99-100% racially or ethnically homogenous. Erica Frankenberg et al., *A Multiracial Society with Segregated Schools: Are We Losing the Dream?*, Harv. U. C.R. Project, 28 (2003).

¹² Between 1970 and 2009, income segregation—“the extent to which high- and low-income families live in separate neighborhoods”—grew dramatically in the vast majority of metropolitan regions. Sean F. Reardon & Kendra Bischoff, *Growth in the Residential Segregation of Families by Income, 1970-2009*, US2010 Project at 1, 8 (2011) (finding that income segregation increased substantially more among Black and Latino families than White families from 1970 to 2007, including “very sharp[]” growth between 2000 and 2007).

Roughly two of every five Black or Latino students in the United States attend “intensely segregated schools,” in which 90-100% of the student body is racially homogenous, up from one-third in 1988. *Id.* at 31. More than three quarters of these schools are high poverty schools. Gary Orfield & Chungmei Lee, *Racial Transformation and the Changing Nature of Segregation* Harv. U. C.R. Project, 31 (2006). Even though there are more poor Whites in absolute numbers, three of four persons living in concentrated poverty—neighborhoods where over 40% of residents live below the Federal Poverty Line—are Black or Latino. Paul A. Jargowsky, *Stunning Progress, Hidden Problems: The Dramatic Decline of Concentrated Poverty in the 1990s*, Brookings Inst., 61 (2003).

The net effect of coming from a family living in generational poverty disproportionately impacts Black and Latino students in significant ways. For example, high levels of parental education correlate with higher test scores, higher grade point averages, and greater educational aspirations for their children. J. R. Campbell et al., *NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress: Three Decades of Student Performance*, 2 Nat’l Center for Educ. Stat. 469 (2000). Similarly, wealth is highly correlated with student performance and educational attainment. *See, e.g.*, Amy J. Orr, *Black-White Differences in Achievement: The Importance of Wealth*, 76 Am. Soc. Ass’n 281 (2003); College Board, *2009 College-Bound Seniors: Total Group Profile Report*, 1, 4 (2009) (illustrating that in 2009, the highest average score on the SAT was posted by students who reported their family income as greater than \$200,000 annually); Anthony P. Carnevale & Stephen J. Rose,

“Socioeconomic Status, Race/Ethnicity, and Selective College Admissions,” in *America’s Untapped Resource: Low Income Students in Higher Education* 106, 141 (Richard D. Kahlenberg ed., 2004) (finding that 74% of students at the 146 most selective four-year colleges and universities in the U.S. came from the top socioeconomic status quarter of American families, versus 3% from the bottom quarter). Racially isolated Blacks and Latinos are disproportionately overrepresented across these and most other determinative factors that inhibit access to educational opportunity. See Marta Tienda & Sunny Xinchun Niu, *Capitalizing on Segregation, Pretending Neutrality: College Admissions and the Texas Top 10% Law*, 8 *Am. L. & Econ. Rev.* 312, 328 (2006) (“By definition, students who attend minority-dominated schools are mostly [B]lack and [Latino], . . . are usually poorer; [and] on average, their parents are less likely to have college degrees”); see also Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration* 2 (2010) (“[Racial s]egregation . . . isolates disadvantaged groups from access to public and private resources, from sources of human and cultural capital, and from the social networks that govern access to jobs, business connections, and political influence. It depresses their ability to accumulate wealth and gain access to credit.”).

Given the complex and compounded disadvantages these students face, race is an essential factor in assessing an applicant’s past academic and personal achievement and future potential. A holistic, race-conscious admissions policy is consistent with the Court’s goal of ensuring educational opportunity, articulated in *Brown*, and

its guidance in *Grutter* explaining the need for individualized assessments to achieve this goal.

2. Residential Segregation
Necessitates A Race-Conscious
Admissions Policy to Achieve UT's
Diversity Interest

The economic and social systems that lead to residential segregation and concentrated poverty contribute to the implicit biases, prejudices, racial isolation, and physiological stress responses examined in Section I, *supra*, and reinforce the marginalization of Blacks and Latinos. The Plan relies upon patterns of segregation to ensure some racial diversity at UT, but the Plan alone cannot effectively address the hypersegregation that inhibits the opportunity for racially and economically marginalized youth to compete for admission, thereby requiring additional steps to ensure that these students are not effectively excluded from consideration for admission. See Angel Harris & Marta Tienda, *Minority Higher Education Pipeline: Consequences of Changes in College Admissions Policy in Texas*, 627 *Annals Am. Acad. Pol. & Soc. Sci.* 60 (2010).

Black and Latino students are disproportionately affected by hypersegregation. Seventy-five percent of Black families nationwide reside in only 16% of census block groups. Craig Gurian, *Mapping and Analysis of New Data Documents Still-Segregated America*, Remapping Debate (Jan. 18, 2011), available at <http://www.remappingdebate.org/map-data-tool/mapping-and-analysis-new-data-documents-still-segregated-america-0>; see also U.S. Census Bureau, American

Community Survey, *2009 Data Release* (Dec. 8, 2011), *available at* http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2009_release/. Demographic and residential patterns in Texas also result in the disproportionate concentration of Latino students in high schools that are mostly or predominantly Black and Latino. *See* Tienda, *supra*, at 341 (finding that this disproportionate concentration “reflects two circumstances[:] (1) that [Latino] high school seniors outnumber [B]lack seniors by a factor of three to one and (2) that within the state, [Latino] seniors are more regionally concentrated than [B]lacks, largely in South and West Texas.”). Consequently, residential hypersegregation and corresponding racial concentration channel Blacks and Latinos into hypersegregated educational environments. *See id.* (explaining that “Texas public high schools are highly segregated”).

As discussed in Section II.B.1, *supra*, of Black and Latino students nationwide, one in six attends a hypersegregated school and roughly forty percent attend intensely segregated schools. Frankenberg, *A Multiracial Society*, *supra*, at 28, 31. More than three-quarters of hypersegregated and intensely segregated schools are high poverty. Orfield, *Racial Transformation*, *supra*, at 31; *see also* Tienda, *supra*, at 341 (stating that “[s]patial segregation is a powerful force perpetuating the concentration of economic disadvantage” and “school racial mix and social class composition often are tightly coupled”). “The pernicious underside of school segregation is that it accentuates class differences, which easily trump any admission advantages afforded to Blacks and [Latinos] clustered in predominantly minority schools.” Tienda, *supra*, at 341. Given the operative

patterns of hypersegregation, the vast majority of Blacks and Latinos—and a disproportionately high percentage relative to other racial groups—may only be considered for admission by additional measures outside of the Plan. *Id.* at 342 (“[B]y itself, [the Plan] appears to be insufficient to broaden educational opportunity for minorities even in the face of pervasive segregation.”).

In light of this stark reality and the Plan’s limitations, which affect its present and long-term viability, UT took affirmative race-neutral steps to increase diversity. The University created programs that targeted low-income students, actively recruited students from lower opportunity environments, instituted summer training programs, and encouraged private individuals to recruit underrepresented students to apply for admission. *See Fisher*, 631 F.3d at 223-25; JA 146a-150a. However, these race-neutral policies and programs, executed alongside the Plan, predictably failed to effectively account for the many variables that cause Blacks’ and Latinos’ lower educational opportunity and resulted in a continuing lack of meaningful diversity at UT.

The University’s race-neutral efforts were simply insufficient for it to fulfill its mission of achieving a diverse student body and providing an opportunity for public college education to Texas high school students. The Court has recognized that government actors and other policy makers need not passively permit systems that exclude. *See, e.g., City of Richmond v. J.A. Croson Co.*, 488 U.S. 469, 492 (1989) (“Thus, if the city could show that it had essentially become a ‘passive participant’ in a system of racial exclusion practiced by elements of the local

construction industry, we think it clear that the city could take affirmative steps to dismantle such a system.”); *Parents Involved*, 551 U.S. at 788 (Kennedy, J., concurring) (“To the extent the plurality opinion suggests the Constitution mandates that state and local school authorities must accept the status quo of racial isolation in schools, it is, in my view, profoundly mistaken.”). In connection with its post-*Grutter* decision to reintroduce race and ethnicity to admissions in 2004, the University found that the percentage of classes of five or more students containing zero or one Black or Latino student actually *increased* between 1999 and 2003. See SJA 1a-39a. As a result of the University’s reintroduction of race as one consideration within its admissions policy, enrollment of Black and Latino students increased. *Fisher*, 631 F.3d at 226. UT therefore appropriately considered race as one of many individualized characteristics to account for the myriad complex, ingrained, and variable factors that inhibit educational opportunity.¹³

* * *

Social science research demonstrates that diversity in higher education is critical to reducing negative physiological and psychological responses, improving academic performance, and better

¹³ Petitioner and their amici ask the Court to adopt an inapplicable “strong basis in evidence” standard to establish the necessity of race in university admissions to satisfy strict scrutiny review. Even if the Court were to adopt this standard, UT has amply satisfied it, having considered and amassed far more than the requisite quantum of evidence to further its compelling interest in a diverse student body.

preparing our future leaders. An admissions policy that fails to consider race cannot ensure this diversity given the numerous and variable factors that disproportionately disadvantage Black and Latino students in university admissions. Considering race within a broader, holistic admissions policy, therefore, remains the only effective and efficient way for the University to promote equal educational opportunity for all students and achieve UT's compelling interest in the many benefits of diversity in higher education.

CONCLUSION

Amici curiae urge the Court to affirm the judgment of the court of appeals.

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APPENDIX: LIST OF AMICI CURIAE¹⁴

Dr. Evan Apfelbaum is a social psychologist and Assistant Professor of Organization Studies at MIT Sloan School of Management. Dr. Apfelbaum has extensively researched the implications of race-blind versus race-conscious practices in contexts ranging from cross-race interactions and organizational teams to the educational system and the law.

Dr. Max H. Bazerman is the Jesse Isidor Straus Professor at the Harvard Business School. In addition, Dr. Bazerman is formally affiliated with the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, the Psychology Department, and the Program on Negotiation. He is the author, co-author, or co-editor of nineteen books (including *Blind Spots* [with Ann Tenbrunsel], Princeton University Press, 2011) and over 200 research articles and chapters. His work focuses on how humans engage in unethical actions without their own awareness, with implicit discrimination as one form of this bounded ethicality.

Dr. Wendy Berry Mendes is the Sarlo/Ekman Professor of Human Emotion in the Department of Psychiatry at University of California, San Francisco. Her expertise is in the area of neurobiological responses stemming from intergroup anxiety and stereotype threat.

Dr. Sapna Cheryan is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Washington. Her research interests include identity, stereotypes, and prejudice. Dr. Cheryan has received numerous

¹⁴ Affiliations are listed for identifications purposes only. Amici submit this brief in their individual capacities alone, and not on behalf of any institution or organization.

awards for her research, including the National Science Foundation CAREER Award and the American Psychological Association Dissertation Research Award.

Dr. Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of California, Berkeley. His research focuses on intergroup relations and the negative impact of stigmatization and lack of inclusion on minority students' educational outcomes.

Dr. Elizabeth Page-Gould is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Toronto. Dr. Page-Gould's research has primarily taken an experimental and longitudinal approach to understand the role that cross-ethnic friendship plays in psychological and physiological thriving in diverse contexts.

Dr. Katherine W. Phillips is the Paul Calello Professor of Leadership and Ethics in the Management Division at Columbia Business School at Columbia University. Dr. Phillips has published numerous papers on the effects of diversity on work team process and performance, including empirical work on how diversity increases cognitive processing of information and motivation.

Dr. Victoria C. Plaut is a Professor of Law and Social Science and Affiliated Psychology Faculty at the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Plaut has conducted extensive empirical research on diversity and intergroup relations, including research on the experiences of inclusion and psychological engagement of both majority and underrepresented students and employees.

Dr. Denise Sekaquaptewa is a Professor of Psychology, and Faculty Associate at the Research Center for Group Dynamics, at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Dr. Sekaquaptewa's research focuses on stereotyping, stereotype threat, and effects of solo status on test performance and academic identification.

Dr. Stacey Sinclair is an Associate Professor of Psychology and African American Studies at Princeton University. Dr. Sinclair has conducted extensive research on how interpersonal interactions shape unconscious prejudice and the benefits of inter-ethnic contact in academic settings.

Dr. Samuel R. Sommers is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Tufts University. An experimental social psychologist, Dr. Sommers' research examines issues related to stereotyping, prejudice, and group diversity. His scholarly work focuses on two often overlapping topics: race and social perception, judgment, and interaction; and the intersection of psychology and law.

Dr. Negin R. Toosi is a Postdoctoral Research Scholar and Adjunct Assistant Professor at Columbia Business School, Columbia University. Dr. Toosi conducts experimental research on diversity in group settings, examining the importance of context and various social identities.

Dr. Linda R. Tropp is a Professor of Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Dr. Tropp has conducted extensive research on the effects of intergroup contact, including meta-analytic, experimental, and longitudinal studies on the expectations, experiences, and outcomes of contact among diverse racial and ethnic groups.