

Talking Point B: Affirmative Action Works!

Affirmative action is beneficial to the workforce. According to President Clinton's 1995 federal study of affirmative action, affirmative action programs "have worked to advance equal opportunity by helping to redress problems of discrimination and by fostering the inclusion needed to strengthen critical institutions, professions, and the whole economy. Five million men of color and six million white and minority women have benefited from affirmative action in the workforce.

Affirmative action is beneficial to colleges. In the period from 1976 to 1993, the numbers of African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and American Indians attending college rose 36.6%, 160.1%, 274.4%, and 61.7%, respectively.

- During this same period, the proportional representation of Latinos in college doubled from 3.6% to 7.4%, while the proportional representation of Asian Americans nearly tripled, from 1.8% to 5.1%
- Notably, the numbers of whites in college increased 17.6% during this period, undercutting the notion that affirmative action in college admissions is a "zero sum game" where some groups benefit only at the expense of others.
- Black college enrollment was at an all-time high (11.3%) in 1990, around the time that rollbacks in college affirmative action programs began.

Affirmative action is fair. The federal study (from U.S. Labor Department, "Reverse Discrimination," 1995, cited in Mississippi State's "[Ten Myths About Affirmative Action](#)") also concluded that affirmative action programs on the whole are "fair and do not unduly burden nonbeneficiaries."

Diversity encourages complex thinking. Recent studies by the American Psychological Association found that students who experienced diversity in their college classrooms and social lives increased their scores on tests of complex thinking, were able to demonstrate critical reasoning skills, and showed a greater understanding that group differences are compatible with societal unity.