

For Immediate Release

Research Shows Importance of Diversity AERA Reacts to Court Decisions on Michigan Cases

WASHINGTON, June 23, 2003—The American Educational Research Association (AERA) applauds the decisions today by the U.S. Supreme Court in the cases of *Grutter v. Bollinger, et al.* and *Gratz v. Bollinger, et al.* that uphold the principle of affirmative action and support the narrowly defined, race-conscious admissions policy at the University of Michigan's law school. Both of the Court's decisions support and endorse diversity.

"We are ecstatic that the Supreme Court has affirmed the importance of diversity in higher education," comments Felice J. Levine, Executive Director of AERA. "The Court's acknowledgement that there is a compelling interest in considering race as a factor in admissions underscores that social science research contributes to the most important of public policies."

Dr. Levine adds "the Court today has recognized the substantial body of social science research that outlines the benefits of a diverse learning environment for university communities and for an increasingly multicultural workforce. We are heartened that the Court sees the importance of racially integrated education for the benefit of all. The social science data are powerful, and we are pleased that research could weigh in."

Indeed, as the Court made clear in citing recent research and in quoting the AERA et al briefs, "student body diversity promotes learning outcomes, and 'better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce and society, and better prepares them as professionals.'"

In filing friend-of-the-court briefs in the two cases, AERA affirmed the association's belief in the value of research findings in establishing criteria that define a compelling governmental interest. In light of today's court decision—and as a means of acknowledging support for diversity in higher education—AERA encourages the academic community to continue its support of acceptable policies that promote and maintain racial and cultural diversity as a priority of campus life.

In the historic 1954 case of *Brown v. the Board of Education*, the Supreme Court recognized the value of research findings for the judicial process and used those findings as one basis in its decision that racially segregated schools were unconstitutional. Today's Supreme Court ruling takes a step forward in providing access to education for professional school students

For additional information and comment, please contact AERA's Felice J. Levine at (202) 223-9485, ext. 122 or flevine@era.net.

The American Educational Research Association represents approximately 20,000 educators who conduct research and evaluation in education. Founded in 1916 and based in Washington, D.C., AERA offers a comprehensive program of scholarly publications, training, fellowships and meetings to advance educational research, to disseminate knowledge, and to improve the capacity of the profession for the public's good. Members center their efforts on ensuring that educational research addresses fundamental problems and informs practice and policy.