U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Education

Print ✖ Close Window

Print ✖ Close Window

Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs

Federal Register
Wednesday, February 23, 1994

Part VIII

Department of Education

Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs;
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Notice

Federal Register / Vol. 59, No. 36 / Wednesday, February 23, 1994 / Notices

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

AGENCY: Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of final policy guidance.

SUMMARY: The Secretary of Education issues final policy guidance on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its implementing regulations. The final policy guidance discusses the applicability of the statute's and regulations' nondiscrimination requirement to student financial aid that is awarded, at least in part, on the basis of race or national origin.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This policy guidance takes effect on May 24, 1994, subject to the transition period described in this notice.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:Jeanette Lim, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 5036-I Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-1174. Telephone (202) 205-8635.

Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number at 1-800-358-8247.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:On December 10, 1991, the Department published a notice of proposed policy guidance and request for public comment in the Federal Register(56 FR 64548). The purpose of the proposed guidance and of this final guidance is to help clarify how colleges can use financial aid to promote campus diversity and access of minority students to postsecondary education without violating Federal antidiscrimination laws. The Secretary of Education encourages continued use of financial aid as a means to provide equal educational opportunity and to provide a diverse educational environment for all students. The Secretary also encourages the use by postsecondary institutions of other efforts to recruit and retain minority students, which are not affected by this policy guidance.

This guidance is designed to promote these purposes in light of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), which states that no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

The Department has completed its review of this issue, taking into account the results of a recent study by the

General Accounting Office (GAO) and public comments submitted in response to the proposed policy guidance. The Secretary has determined that the proposed policy guidance interpreted the requirements of Title VI too narrowly in light of existing regulations and case law. While Title VI requires that strong justifications exist before race or national origin is used as a basis for awarding financial aid, many of the rationales for existing race-based financial aid programs described by commenters appear to meet this standard.

The recent report by GAO on current financial aid programs does not indicate the existence of serious problems of noncompliance with the law in postsecondary institutions. That report found that race-targeted scholarships constitute a very small percentage of the scholarships awarded to students at postsecondary institutions. The Secretary anticipates that most existing programs will be able to satisfy the principles set out in this final guidance.

The Department will use the principles described in this final policy guidance in making determinations concerning discrimination based on race or national origin in the award of financial aid. These principles describe the circumstances in which the Department, based on its interpretation of Title VI and relevant case law, believes consideration of race or national origin in the award of financial aid to be permissible. A financial aid program that falls within one or more of these principles will be, in the Department's view, in compliance with Title VI. This guidance is intended to assist colleges in fashioning legally defensible affirmative action programs to promote the access of minority students to postsecondary education. The Department will offer technical assistance to colleges in reexamining their financial aid programs based on this guidance.

This notice consists of five simply stated principles and a section containing a legal analysis for each principle. The legal analysis addresses the major comments received in response to the notice of proposed policy guidance.

Summary of Changes in the Final Policy Guidance

Almost 600 written responses were received by the Department in response to the proposed policy guidance, many with detailed suggestions and analysis. Many additional suggestions and concerns were raised in meetings between Department officials and representatives of postsecondary institutions and civil rights groups. The vast majority of comments expressed support for the objective of clarifying the options colleges have to use financial aid to promote student diversity and access of minorities to postsecondary education without violating Title VI. Many comments, however, took issue with specific principles in the proposed policy guidance and questioned whether those principles would be effective in accomplishing this purpose.

As more fully explained in the legal analysis section of this document, after reviewing the public comments and reexamining the legal precedents in light of those comments, the Department has revised the policy guidance in the following respects:

(1) Principle 3 - "Financial Aid to Remedy Past Discrimination" - has been amended to permit a college to award financial aid based on race or national origin as part of affirmative action to remedy the effects of its past discrimination without waiting for a finding to be made by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), a court, or a legislative body, if the college has a strong basis in evidence of discrimination justifying the use of race-targeted scholarships.

(2) Principle 4 - "Financial Aid to Create Diversity" - has been amended to permit the award of financial aid on the basis of race or national origin if the aid is a necessary and narrowly tailored means to accomplish a college's goal to have a diverse student body that will enrich its academic environment.

(3) Principle 5 - "Private Gifts Restricted by Race or National Origin" - has been amended to clarify that a college can administer financial aid from private donors that is restricted on the basis of race or national origin only if that aid is consistent with the other principles in this policy guidance.

(4) A provision has been added to permit historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to participate in race-targeted programs for black students established by third parties if the programs are not limited to students at HBCUs.

(5) Provisions in the proposed policy guidance for a transition period have been revised to provide that, as far as the Department's enforcement efforts are concerned-

(a) Colleges and other recipients of federal financial assistance will have a reasonable period of time - up to two years - to review their financial aid programs and to make any adjustments necessary to come into compliance with the principles in this final policy guidance;

(b) No student who has received or applied for financial aid at the time this guidance becomes effective will lose aid as a result of this guidance. Thus, if an award of financial aid is inconsistent with the principles in this guidance, a college or other recipient of Federal financial assistance may continue to provide the aid to a student during the course of his or her enrollment in the academic program for which the aid was awarded, if the student had either applied for or received the aid prior to the effective date of this policy guidance.

Principles

Definitions

For purposes of these principles -

College means any postsecondary institution that receives federal financial assistance from the Department of Education.

Financial aid includes scholarships, grants, loans, work-study, and fellowships that are made available to assist a student to pay for his or her education at a college.

Race-neutral means not based, in whole or in part, on race or national origin.

Race-targeted, *race-based*, and *awarded on the basis of race or national origin* mean limited to individuals of a particular race or races or national origin or origins.

Principle 1: Financial Aid for Disadvantaged Students

A college may make awards of financial aid to disadvantaged students, without regard to race or national origin, even if that means that these awards go disproportionately to minority students.

Financial aid may be earmarked for students from low-income families. Financial aid also may be earmarked for students from school districts with high dropout rates, or students from single parent families, or students from families in which few or no members have attended college. None of these or other race-neutral ways of identifying and providing aid to disadvantaged students present Title VI problems. A college may use funds from any source to provide financial aid to disadvantaged students.

Principle 2: Financial Aid Authorized by Congress

A college may award financial aid on the basis of race or national origin if the aid is awarded under a Federal statute that authorizes the use of race or national origin.

Principle 3: Financial Aid To Remedy Past Discrimination

A college may award financial aid on the basis of race or national origin if the aid is necessary to overcome the effects of past discrimination. A finding of discrimination may be made by a court or by an administrative agency - such as the Department's Office for Civil Rights. Such a finding may also be made by a State or local legislative body, as long as the legislature has a strong basis in evidence identifying discrimination within its jurisdiction for which that remedial action is necessary.

In addition, a college may award financial aid on the basis of race or national origin to remedy its past discrimination without a formal finding of discrimination by a court or by an administrative or legislative body. The college must be prepared to demonstrate to a court or administrative agency that there is a strong basis in evidence for concluding that the college's action was necessary to remedy the effects of its past discrimination. If the award of financial aid based on race or national origin is justified as a remedy for past discrimination, the college may use funds from any source, including unrestricted institutional funds and privately donated funds restricted by the donor for aid based on race or national origin.

A State may award financial aid on the basis of race or national origin, under the preceding standards, if the aid is necessary to overcome its own past discrimination or discrimination at colleges in the State.

Principle 4: Financial Aid To Create Diversity

America is unique because it has forged one Nation from many people of a remarkable number of different backgrounds. Many colleges seek to create on campus an intellectual environment that reflects that diversity. A college should have substantial discretion to weigh many factors - including race and national origin - in its efforts to attract and retain a student population of many different experiences, opinions, backgrounds, and cultures - provided that the use of race or national origin is consistent with the constitutional standards reflected in Title VI, *i.e.* , that it is a narrowly tailored means to achieve the goal of a diverse student body.

There are several possible options for a college to promote its First Amendment interest in diversity. First a college may, of course, use its financial aid program to promote diversity by considering factors other than race or national origin, such as geographic origin, diverse experiences, or socioeconomic background. Second, a college may consider race or national origin with other factors in awarding financial aid if the aid is necessary to further the college's interest in diversity. Third, a college may use race or national origin as a condition of eligibility in awarding financial aid if this use is narrowly tailored, or, in other words, if it is necessary to further its interest in diversity and does not unduly restrict access to financial aid for students who do not meet the race-based eligibility criteria.

Among the considerations that affect a determination of whether awarding race-targeted financial aid is narrowly tailored to the goal of diversity are (1) whether race-neutral means of achieving that goal have been or would be ineffective; (2) whether a less extensive or intrusive use of race or national origin in awarding financial aid as a means of achieving that goal has been or would be ineffective; (3) whether the use of race or national origin is of limited extent and duration and is applied in a flexible manner; (4) whether the institution regularly reexamines its use of race or national origin in awarding financial aid to determine whether it is still necessary to achieve its goal; and (5) whether the effect of the use of race or national origin on students who are not beneficiaries of that use is sufficiently small and diffuse so as not to create an undue burden on their opportunity to receive financial aid.

If the use of race or national origin in awarding financial aid is justified under this principle, the college may use funds from any source.

Principle 5: Private Gifts Restricted by Race or National Origin

Title VI does not prohibit an individual or an organization that is not a recipient of Federal financial assistance from directly giving scholarships or other forms of financial aid to students based on their race or national origin. Title VI simply does not apply.

The provisions of Principles 3 and 4 apply to the use of race-targeted privately donated funds by a college and may justify awarding these funds on the basis of race or national origin if the college is remedying its past discrimination pursuant to Principle 3 or attempting to achieve a diverse student body pursuant to Principle 4. In addition, a college may use privately donated funds that are not restricted by their donor on the basis of race or national origin to make awards to disadvantaged students as described in Principle 1.

Additional Guidance

Financial Aid at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), as defined in Title III of the Higher Education Act (Title III), 20 U.S.C. 1061, are unique among institutions of higher education in America because of their role in serving students who were denied access to postsecondary education based on their race. Congress has made numerous findings reflecting the special role and needs of these institutions in light of the history of discrimination by States and the Federal Government against both the institutions and their students and has required enhancement of these institutions as a remedy for this history of discrimination.

Based upon the extensive congressional findings concerning HBCUs, and consistent with congressional and Executive Branch efforts to enhance and strengthen HBCUs, the Department interprets Title VI to permit these institutions to participate in student aid programs established by third parties that target financial aid to black students, if those programs are not limited to students at the HBCUs. These would include programs to which HBCUs contribute their own institutional funds if necessary for participation in the programs. Precluding HBCUs

from these programs would have an unintended negative effect on their ability to recruit talented student bodies and would undermine congressional actions aimed at enhancing these institutions. HBCUs may not create their own race-targeted programs using institutional funds, nor may they accept privately donated racetargeted aid limited to students at the HBCUs, unless they satisfy the requirements of any of the other principles in this guidance.

Transition Period

Although the Department anticipates that most financial aid programs that consider race or national origin in awarding assistance will be found to be consistent with one or more of the principles in this final policy guidance, there will be some programs that require adjustment to comply with Title VI. In order to permit colleges time to assess their programs and to make any necessary adjustments in an orderly manner - and to ensure that students who already have either applied for or received financial aid do not lose their student aid as a result of the issuance of this policy guidance - there will be a transition period during which the Department will work with colleges that require assistance to bring them into compliance.

The Department will afford colleges up to two academic years to adjust their programs for new students. However, to the extent that a college does not need the full two years to make adjustments to its financial aid programs, the Department expects that the adjustments will be made as soon as practicable.

No student who is currently receiving financial aid, or who has applied for aid prior to the effective date of this policy guidance, should lose aid as a result of this guidance. Thus, if a college determines that a financial aid program is not permissible under this policy guidance, the college may continue to provide assistance awarded on the basis of race or national origin to students during the entire course of their academic program at the college, even if that period extends beyond the two-year transition period, if the students had either applied for or received that assistance prior to the effective date of this policy.

Legal Analysis

Introduction

The Department of Education is responsible for enforcing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, *et seq.*, at institutions receiving Federal education funds. Section 601 of Title VI provides that no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. 42 U.S.C. 2000d.

The Department has issued regulations implementing Title VI that are applicable to all recipients of financial assistance from the Department. 34 CFR part 100. The regulations prohibit discrimination in the administration of financial aid programs. Specifically, they prohibit a recipient, on the basis of race, color, or national origin, from denying financial aid; providing different aid; subjecting anyone to separate or different treatment in any matter related to financial aid; restricting the enjoyment of any advantage or privilege enjoyed by others receiving financial aid; and treating anyone differently in determining eligibility or other requirements for financial aid. 34 CFR 1O0.3(b)(l); see also 34 CFR 1OO.3(b)(2).

In addition to prohibiting discrimination, the Title VI regulations require that a recipient that has previously discriminated "must take affirmative action to overcome the effects of prior discrimination." 34 CFR 100.3(b)(6)(i). The regulations also permit recipients to take voluntary affirmative action "[e]ven in the absence of such prior discrimination * * * to overcome the effects of conditions which resulted in limiting participation by persons of a particular race, color, or national origin" in the recipient's programs. 34 CFR 100.3(b)(6)(ii); see 34 CFR 100.5(i).

The permissibility of awarding student financial aid based, in whole or in part, on a student's race or national origin involves an interpretation of the preceding provisions concerning affirmative action. The Supreme Court has made clear that Title VI prohibits intentional classifications based on race or national origin for the purpose of affirmative action to the same extent and under the same standards as the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. *Guardians Ass'n v. Civil Service Commission of the City of New York, 463 U.S. 582 (1983);* Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, 438 U.S. 265 (1978). Thus, the Department's interpretation of the general language of the Title VI regulations concerning permissible affirmative action is based on case law under both Title VI and the Fourteenth Amendment.

The following discussion addresses the legal basis for each of the five principles set out in the Department's policy guidance.

1. Financial Aid for Disadvantaged Students

The first principle provides that colleges may award financial aid to disadvantaged students. Colleges are free to define the circumstances under which students will be considered to be disadvantaged, as long as that determination is not based on race or national origin.

As some commenters noted, the Title VI regulations prohibit actions that, while not intentionally discriminatory, have the effect of discriminating on the basis of race or national origin. 34 CFR 100.3(b)(2); see *Guardians Ass'n v. Civil Service Commission of the City of New York, supra; Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974). However, actions that have a disproportionate effect on students of a particular race or national origin are permissible under Title VI if they bear a "manifest demonstrable relationship" to the recipient's educational mission. *Georgia State Conference of Branches of NAACP v. State of Georgia*, 775 F.2d 1403, 1418 11th Cir. (1985). It is the Department's view that awarding financial aid to disadvantaged students provides a sufficiently strong educational purpose to justify any racially disproportionate effect the use of this criterion may entail. In particular, the Department believes that an applicant's character, motivation, and ability to overcome economic and educational disadvantage are educationally justified considerations in both admission and financial aid decisions. Therefore, the award of financial assistance to disadvantaged students does not violate Title VI.

2. Financial Aid Authorized by Congress

This principle states that a college may award financial aid on the basis of race or national origin if the use of race or national origin in awarding that aid is authorized by Federal statute. This is because financial aid programs for minority students that are authorized by a specific Federal law cannot be considered to violate another Federal law, *i.e.*, Title VI. In the case of the establishment of federally funded financial aid programs, such as the Patricia Roberts Harris Fellowship, the authorization of specific minority scholarships by that legislation prevails over the general prohibition of discrimination in Title VI. This result also is consistent with the canon of construction under which the specific provisions of a statute prevail over the general provisions of the same or a different statute. See 2A N. Singer *Sutherland Statutory Construction* section 46.05 (5th ed. 1992); *Radzanower v. Touche Ross and Co.*, 426 U.S. 148, 153 (1976); *Morton v. Mancari*, 417 U.S. 535,550-51 (1974); *Fourco Glass Co. v. Transmira Products Corp.*, 353 U.S. 225,228-29 (1957).

Some commenters argued that the existence of congressionally authorized race-targeted financial aid programs supports the position that all race-targeted financial aid programs are permissible under Title VI. However, the fact that Congress has enacted specific Federal programs for race-targeted financial aid does not serve as an authorization for States or colleges to create their own programs for awarding student financial aid based on race or national origin.

3. Financial Aid To Remedy Past Discrimination

Classifications based on race or national origin, including affirmative action measures, are "suspect" classifications that are subject to strict scrutiny by the courts. *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. at 292. The use of those classifications must be based on a compelling governmental interest and must be narrowly tailored to serve that interest. *Richmond v. J.A. Croson Co.*, 488 U.S. 469 (1989); *Wygant v. Jackson Board of Education*, 476 U.S.267 (1986).

The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that the Government has a compelling interest in ensuring the elimination of discrimination on the basis of race or national origin. To further this governmental interest, the Supreme Court has sanctioned the use of race-conscious measures to eliminate discrimination. *United States v. Fordice*, U.S. (1992); *United States v. Paradise*, 480 U.S. 149, 167 (1987); *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenberg Board of Education*, 402 U.S. 1, 15-16 (1971); *McDaniel v. Barresi*, 402 U.S. 39 (1971); *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*, 391 U.S. 430,438 (1968). Most recently, in *United States v. Fordice*, supra, the Court found that States that operated *de jure* systems of higher education have an affirmative obligation to ensure that no vestiges of the de jure system continue to have a discriminatory effect on the basis of race.

The implementing regulations for Title VI provide that a recipient of Federal financial assistance that has previously discriminated in violation of the statute or regulations must take affirmative action to overcome the effects of the past discrimination. 34 CFR 100.3(b)(6)(i). Thus, a college that has been found to have discriminated against students on the basis of race or national origin must take steps to remedy that discrimination. That remedial action may include the awarding of financial aid to students from the racial or national origin groups that have been discriminated against.

The proposed policy guidance provided that a finding of past discrimination could be made by a court or by an administrative agency, such as the Department's Office for Civil Rights. It also could be made by a State or local legislative body, as long as the legislature requiring the affirmative action had a strong basis in evidence identifying discrimination within its jurisdiction for which that remedial action is required.

A number of commenters argued that colleges should be able to take remedial action without waiting for a formal finding by a court, administrative agency, or legislature. The Department agrees. The final policy guidance provides that, even in the absence of a finding by a court, legislature, or administrative agency, a college - in order to remedy its past discrimination - may implement a remedial race-targeted financial aid program. It may do so if it has a strong basis in evidence for concluding that this affirmative action is necessary to remedy the effects of its past discrimination and its financial aid program is narrowly tailored to remedy that discrimination. Permitting colleges to remedy the effects of their past discrimination without waiting for a formal finding is consistent with the approach taken by the Supreme Court in *Wygant v. Jackson Board of Education*, *supra*. In *Wygant*, the Court clarified that a school district's race-conscious voluntary affirmative action plan could be upheld based on subsequent judicial findings of past discrimination by the district. *Wygant v. Jackson Board of Education*, 476 U.S. at 277.

In the *Wygant* case, teachers challenged their school board's adoption, through a collective bargaining agreement, of a layoff plan that included provisions protecting employees from layoffs on the basis of their race. The school board contended, among other things, that the plan's race-conscious layoff provisions were constitutional because they were adopted to remedy the school board's own prior discrimination. *Id*., at 276, 277. Justice Powell, in a plurality opinion, stated that a public employer must have "convincing evidence" that an affirmative action plan is warranted by past discrimination before undertaking that plan. *Id*., at 277. If the plan is challenged by employees who are harmed by the plan, the court must then make a determination that the employer had a "strong basis in evidence for its conclusion that remedial action was necessary." *Id.*

In a concurring opinion, Justice O'Connor agreed that a "contemporaneous or antecedent finding of past discrimination by a court was not a constitutional prerequisite to a public employer's voluntary agreement to an affirmative action plan." *Id.*, at 289. She explained that contemporaneous or antecedent findings were not necessary because "A violation of Federal statutory or constitutional requirements does not arise with the making of findings; it arises when the wrong is committed." Moreover, she explained that important values would be sacrificed if contemporaneous findings were required because "a requirement that public employers make findings that they engaged in illegal discrimination before they engage in affirmative action programs would severely undermine public employers' incentive to meet voluntarily their civil rights obligations." *Id.*, at 289, 290 (citations omitted).

In *Richmond v. J.A. Croson*, *supra*, the Court again emphasized that remedial race-conscious action must be based on strong evidence of discrimination. That case involved the constitutionality of a city ordinance establishing a plan to remedy past discrimination by requiring prime contractors awarded city construction contracts to subcontract at least 30% of the dollar amount of each contract to minority-controlled businesses. The Court found that the city council had failed to make sufficient factual findings to demonstrate a "strong basis in evidence" of racial discrimination "by anyone in the Richmond construction industry." *Richmond v. J.A. Croson*, 488 U.S. at 500.

Evidence of past discrimination may, but need not, include documentation of specific incidents of intentional discrimination. Instead, evidence of a statistically significant disparity between the percentage of minority students in a college's student body and the percentage of qualified minorities in the relevant pool of college-bound high school graduates may be sufficient. Such an approach is analogous to cases of employment discrimination where the courts accept statistical evidence to infer intentional discrimination against minority job applicants. See *Hazelwood School District v. United States*, 433 U.S. 299 (1977).

Based on this case law, Principle 3 provides that a college may award race-targeted scholarships to remedy discrimination as found by a court or by an administrative agency, such as the Department's Office for Civil Rights. OCR often has approved race-targeted financial aid programs as part of a Title VI remedial plan to eliminate the vestiges of prior discrimination within a State higher education system that previously was operated as a racially segregated dual system. As indicated by the *Croson* decision, a finding of past discrimination also may be made by a State or local legislative body, as long as the legislature has a strong basis in evidence identifying discrimination within its jurisdiction. The remedial use of race-targeted financial aid must be narrowly tailored to remedy the effects of the discrimination.

As revised, Principle 3 also allows a college to award student aid on the basis of race or national origin as part of affirmative action to remedy the effects of the school's past discrimination without waiting for a finding to be made by OCR, a court, or a legislative body, if the college has convincing evidence of past discrimination justifying the affirmative action. The Department's Title VI regulations, like the Fourteenth Amendment, do not require that antecedent or contemporaneous findings of past discrimination be made before remedial affirmative action is implemented, as long as the college has a strong basis in evidence of its past discrimination. Allowing colleges to implement narrowly tailored remedial affirmative action if there is strong evidentiary support for it - without requiring that it be delayed until a finding is made by OCR, a court, or a legislative body - will assist in ensuring that Title VI's mandate against discrimination based on race or national origin is achieved.

4. Financial Aid To Create Diversity

The Title VI regulations permit a college to take voluntary affirmative action, even in the absence of past discrimination, in response to conditions that have limited the participation at the college of students of a particular race or national origin. 34 CFR 1O0.3(b)(6)(ii); see 34 CFR 100.5(i). In *Regents of the University of*

California v. Bakke, *supra*, the Supreme Court considered whether the University could take voluntary affirmative action by setting aside places in each medical school class for which only minority students could compete.

The Court considered four rationales provided by the University of California for taking race and national origin into account in making admissions decisions: (1) To reduce the historic deficit of traditionally disfavored minorities in medical schools and the medical profession. (2) To counter the effects of societal discrimination. (3) To increase the number of physicians who would practice in communities lacking medical services. (4) To obtain the educational benefits of a diverse student body. Similar arguments have been advanced in response to the Department's proposed policy guidance on student financial assistance awarded on the basis of race or national origin.

The Court rejected the first three justifications. The first reason was rejected as facially invalid because setting aside a fixed number of admission spaces only to ensure that members of a specified race are admitted was found to be racial "discrimination for its own sake." *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. at 307. In rejecting the second contention that the effects of societal discrimination warranted the racial preferences, the Court recognized that the State had a substantial interest in eliminating the effects of discrimination, but that interest was found to be limited to "redressing the wrongs worked by specific instances of discrimination." *Id.* The third contention, concerning the provision of health care services to underserved communities, was rejected by the *Bakke* Court as an evidentiary matter because the State had "not carried its burden of demonstrating that it must prefer members of particular ethnic groups over all other individuals in order to promote better health-care delivery to deprived citizens." *Id.*, at 311.

With respect to the final objective, the "attainment of a diverse student body," Justice Powell found that -

> This clearly is a constitutionally permissible goal for an institution of higher education. Academic freedom, though not a specifically enumerated constitutional right, long has been viewed as a special concern of the First Amendment. The freedom of a university to make its own judgments as to education includes the selection of its student body.

Id., at 311,312. Thus, colleges have a First Amendment right to seek diversity in admissions to fulfill their academic mission through the "robust exchange of ideas" that flows from a diverse student body. *Id.*, at 312-313. However, the means to achieve this "countervailing constitutional interest" under the First Amendment must comport with the requirements of the Fourteenth Amendment. The Medical School's policy of setting aside a fixed number of admission spaces solely for minorities was found not to pass the Fourteenth Amendment's strict scrutiny test, because the policy's use of race as a condition of eligibility for the slots was not necessary to promote the school's diversity interest. *Id.*, at 315-316. Justice Powell found that the Medical School could advance its diversity interest under the First Amendment in a narrowly tailored manner that passed the Fourteenth Amendment's strict scrutiny test by using race or national origin as one of several factors that would be considered as a plus factor for an applicant in the admissions process. *Id.*, at 317-319.

Following the *Bakke* decision, the Department reexamined its Title VI regulations to determine whether any changes were necessary. In a policy interpretation published in the Federal Register(44 FR 58509), the Department concluded that no change was warranted. The Department determined that the Title VI regulatory provision authorizing voluntary affirmative action was consistent with the Court's decision and that the provision would be interpreted to incorporate the limitations on voluntary affirmative action announced by the Court. Thus, if a college's use of race or national origin in awarding financial aid meets the Supreme Court's test under the Fourteenth Amendment for permissible voluntary affirmative action, it will also meet the requirements of Title VI.

In the Department's proposed policy guidance on financial aid, a principle was included permitting the use of race or national origin as a "plus" factor in awarding student aid. The basis for the principle was the *Bakke* decision and the Department's assessment that using an approach that had been approved by the Supreme Court as narrowly tailored to achieve diversity in the admissions context also would be permissible in awarding financial aid.

In response to the proposed policy, many colleges submitted comments arguing that the use of race or national origin as a plus factor in awarding financial aid may be inadequate to achieve diversity. They contended that, in some cases, it may be necessary to designate a limited amount of aid for students of a particular race or national origin. According to those commenters, a college's financial aid program can serve a critical role in achieving a diverse student body in at least three respects: First, the availability of financial aid set aside for members of a particular race or national origin serves as a recruitment tool, encouraging applicants to consider the school. Second, it provides a means of encouraging students who are offered admission to accept the offer and enroll at the school. Finally, it assists colleges in retaining students until they complete their program of studies.

The commenters argued that a college - because of its location, its reputation (whether deserved or not) of being inhospitable to minority students, or its number of minority graduates - may be unable to recruit sufficient minority applicants even if race or national origin is considered a positive factor in admissions and the award of aid. That is, the failure to attract a sufficient number of minority applicants who meet the academic requirements of the college will make it impossible for the college to enroll a diverse student body, even if race or national origin is given a competitive "plus" in the admissions process. In addition, a college that has sufficient minority applicants to offer admission to a diverse group of applicants may find that, absent the availability of financial aid set aside for minority students, its offers of admission are disproportionately rejected by minority applicants.

Furthermore, commenters were concerned that, while there may be large amounts of financial aid available for undergraduates at their institutions, there may be insufficient aid for graduate students, almost all of whom are able to demonstrate financial need. Thus, it is possible that a college that is able to achieve a diverse student body in some of its programs using race-neutral financial aid criteria or using race or national origin as a "plus" factor may find it necessary to use race or national origin as a condition of eligibility in awarding limited amounts of financial aid to achieve diversity in some of its other programs, such as its graduate school or particular undergraduate schools.

The Department agrees with the commenters that in the circumstances they have described it may be necessary for a college to set aside financial aid to be awarded on the basis of race or national origin in order to achieve a diverse student body. Whether a college's use of race-targeted financial aid is "narrowly tailored" to achieve this compelling interest involves a case-by-case determination that is based on the particular circumstances involved. The Department has determined, based on the comments, to expand Principle 4 to permit those case-by-case determinations.

The Court in *Bakke* indicated that race or national origin could be used in making admissions decisions to further the compelling interest of a diverse student body even though the effect might be to deny admission to some students who did not receive a competitive "plus" based on race or ethnicity. However, the use of a set-aside of places in the entering class was impermissible because it was not necessary to the goal of diversity. In cases since *Bakke*, the Supreme Court has provided additional guidance on the factors to be considered in determining whether a classification based on race or national origin is narrowly tailored to its purpose. These factors will be considered by the Department in assessing whether a college's race-targeted financial aid program meets the requirements of Title VI.

First, it is necessary to determine the efficacy of alternative approaches. *United States v. Paradise*, 480 U.S. at 171. Thus, it is important that consideration has been given to the use of alternative approaches that are less intrusive (e.g., the use of race or national origin as a "plus" factor rather than as a condition of eligibility). *Metro Broadcasting, Inc. v. F.C.C.*, 497 U.S. at 583; *Richmond v. J.A. Croson*, 488 U.S. at 507. Financial aid that is restricted to students of a particular race or national origin should be used only if a college determines that these alternative approaches have not or will not be effective.

Second, the extent, duration, and flexibility of the racial classification must be addressed. *Metro Broadcasting, Inc. v. F.C.C.*, 497 U.S. at 594; *United States v. Paradise*, 480 U.S. at 171. The extent of the use of the classification should be no greater than is necessary to carry out its purpose. *Richmond v. J.A. Croson*, 488 U.S. at 507. That is, the amount of financial aid that is awarded based on race or national origin should be no greater than is necessary to achieve a diverse student body.

The duration of the use of a racial classification should be no longer than is necessary to its purpose, and the classification should be periodically reexamined to determine whether there is a continued need for its use. *Metro Broadcasting, Inc. v. F.C.C.*, 497 U.S. at 594. Thus, the use of race-targeted financial aid should continue only while it is necessary to achieve a diverse student body, and an assessment as to whether that continues to be the case should be made on a regular basis.

In addition, the use of the classification should be sufficiently flexible that exceptions can be made if appropriate. For example, the Supreme Court in *United States v. Paradise* found that a race-conscious promotion requirement was flexible in operation because it could be waived if no qualified candidates were available. 480 U.S. at 177. Similarly, racial restrictions on the award of financial aid could be waived if there were no qualified applicants.

Finally, the burden on those who are excluded from the benefit conferred by the classification based on race or national origin (*i.e.*, non-minority students) must be considered. *Id.*, at 171. A use of race or national origin may impose such a severe burden on particular individuals - for example, eliminating scholarships currently received by non-minority students in order to start a scholarship program for minority students - that it is too intrusive to be considered narrowly tailored. See *Wygant v. Jackson Board of Education*, 476 U.S. at 283 (use of race in imposing layoffs involves severe disruption to lives of identifiable individuals). Generally, the less severe and more diffuse the impact on non-minority students, the more likely a classification based on race or national origin will address this factor satisfactorily. However, it is not necessary to show that no student's opportunity to receive financial aid has been in any way diminished by the use of the race-targeted aid. Rather, the use of race-targeted financial aid must not place an undue burden on students who are not eligible for that aid.

A number of commenters argued that race-targeted financial aid is a minimally intrusive method to attain a diverse student body, far more limited in its impact on non-minority students, for example, than race-targeted admissions policies. Under this view, and unlike the admissions plan at issue in *Bakke*, a race-targeted financial aid award could be a narrowly tailored means of achieving the compelling interest in diversity.

The Department agrees that there are important differences between admissions and financial aid. The affirmative action admissions program struck down in *Bakke* had the effect of excluding applicants from the university on the basis of their race. The use of race-targeted financial aid, on the other hand, does not, in and of itself, dictate that a student would be foreclosed from attending a college solely on the basis of race. Moreover, in contrast to the number of admissions slots, the amount of financial aid available to students is not necessarily fixed. For example, a college's receipt of privately donated monies restricted to an underrepresented group might increase the total pool of funds for student aid in a situation in which, absent the ability to impose such a limitation, the donor might not provide any aid at all.

Even in the case of a college's own funds, a decision to bar the award of race-targeted financial aid will not necessarily translate into increased resources for students from non-targeted groups. Funds for financial aid restricted by race or national origin that are viewed as a recruitment device might be rechanneled into other methods of recruitment if restricted financial aid is barred. In other words, unlike admission to a class with a fixed number of places, the amount of financial aid may increase or decrease based on the functions it is perceived to promote.

In summary, a college can use its financial aid program to promote diversity by considering factors other than race or national origin, such as geographic origin, diverse experiences, or socioeconomic background. In addition, a college may take race or national origin into account as one factor, with other factors, in awarding financial aid if necessary to promote diversity. Finally, a college may use race or national origin as a condition of eligibility in awarding financial aid if it is narrowly tailored to promote diversity.

5. Private Gifts Restricted by Race or National Origin

The fifth principle sets out the circumstances under which a recipient college can award financial aid provided by private donors that is restricted on the basis of race or national origin.

As noted by many commenters, pursuant to the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, all of the operations of a college are covered by Title VI if the college receives any Federal financial assistance. 42 U.S.C. 2000d-4a(2)(A) . Since a college's award of privately donated financial aid is within the operations of the college, the college must comply with the requirements of Title VI in awarding those funds.

A college may award privately donated financial aid on the basis of race or national origin if the college is remedying its past discrimination pursuant to Principle 3 or attempting to achieve a diverse student body pursuant to Principle 4. In other words, Principles 3 and 4 apply to the use of privately donated funds and may justify awarding these funds on the basis of race or national origin in accordance with the wishes of the donor. Similarly, under Principle 1, a college may award privately donated financial aid that is restricted to disadvantaged students.

Some commenters were uncertain whether it is permissible under Title VI for a college to solicit private donations of student financial aid that are restricted to students of a particular race or national origin. If the receipt and award of these funds is permitted by Title VI, that is, in the circumstances previously described, it is similarly permissible to solicit the funds from private sources.

Financial Aid at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

To ensure that the principles in this policy guidance do not subvert congressional efforts to enhance historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), these institutions may participate in student aid programs established by third parties for black students that are not limited to students at the HBCUs and may use their own institutional funds in those programs if necessary for participation. See 20 U.S.C. 1051, 1060, and 1132c (congressional findings of past discrimination against HBCUs and of the need for enhancement).

This finding is based upon congressional findings of past discrimination against HBCUs and the students they have traditionally served, as well as the Department's determination that these institutions and their students would be harmed if precluded from participation in programs created by third parties that designate financial aid for black students. That action would have an unintended negative effect on their ability to recruit excellent student bodies and could undermine congressional actions aimed at enhancing these institutions.

Congress has repeatedly made findings that recognize the unique historical mission and important role that HBCUs play in the American system of higher education, and particularly in providing equal educational opportunity for black students. 20 USC 1051, 1060, and 1132c. Congress has created programs that strengthen and enhance HBCUs in Titles II through VII of the Higher Education Act, as amended by Public Law 99-498, 20 U.S.C. 1021-1132i-2. It has found that "there is a particular national interest in aiding institutions of higher education that have historically served students who have been denied access to postsecondary education because of race or national origin . . . so that equality of access and quality of postsecondary education opportunities may be enhanced for all students." 20 U.S.C. 1051. "A key link to the chain of expanding college opportunity for African American youth is strengthening the Nation's historically Black colleges and universities." House Report No. 102-447, 1992 U.S. Code Cong. and Adm. News p. 353.

Congress has found that "the current state of HBCUs is partly attributable to the discriminatory action of the States and the Federal Government and this discriminatory action requires the remedy of enhancement of Black postsecondary institutions to ensure their continuation and participation in fulfilling the Federal mission of equality of educational opportunity." 20 U.S.C. 1060. See also, House Report No. 102-447, 1992 U.S. Code Cong. and Adm. News p. 353; House Report No. 99-383, 1986 U.S. Code Cong. and Adm. News 2592-2596. This includes providing access and quality education to low-income and minority students, and improving HBCUs' academic quality. 20 U.S.C. 1051.

For these same reasons, every Administration in recent years has recognized the special role and contributions of HBCUs and expressed support for their enhancement. See "Revised Criteria Specifying the Ingredients of Acceptable Plans to Desegregate State Systems of Public Higher Education," 43 FR 6658 (1977); Exec. Orders Nos. 12232, 45 FR 53437 (1980); 12320, 46 FR 48107 (1981); 12677, 54 FR 18869 (1989); and 12876, 58 FR 58735 (1993). The Department's own data indicate that HBCUs continue to play a vital role in providing higher education for many black students. In 1989 and 1990, more than one in four black bachelor's degree recipients received their degree from an HBCU (26.7%). See, "Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 1976-90" (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, July 1992).

This policy guidance is not intended to limit the efforts to enhance HBCUs called for by Congress and the President. The Department recognizes, however, that Principle 3 (remedying past discrimination) and Principle 4 (creating diversity) may not provide for HBCUs the same possibility of participating in race-targeted programs of financial aid for black students established by third parties as are provided for other colleges and universities. As some commenters pointed out, HBCUs continue to enroll a disproportionate percentage of black students and need to be able to compete for the most talented black students if they are to improve the quality and prestige of their academic environments and, therefore, enhance their attractiveness to all students regardless of race or national origin.

HBCUs' abilities to recruit, enroll and retain talented students will be undermined unless HBCUs are permitted to attract talented black students by participating in aid programs for black students that are established by third parties in which other colleges, *i.e.*, those that meet Principle 3 or 4, participate. Limiting or precluding HBCUs' participation in private programs, such as the National Achievement Scholarship program, would have an unintended negative effect on their ability to recruit a talented student body. Under this scholarship program, which is restricted to academically excellent black students, one type of National Achievement Scholarship is funded by the institution. If HBCUs were unable to participate in this program, some top black students might be forced to choose between (1) receiving a National Achievement Scholarship to attend a school that met Principle 3 or 4 and (2) attending an HBCU. For these reasons, the Department interprets Title VI to permit HBCUs to participate in certain race-targeted aid programs for black students, such as the National Achievement Scholarship program.

The Department reads Title VI consistent with other statutes and Executive orders addressing the special needs and history of HBCUs. In particular, the Department notes congressional findings of discrimination against black students that are the basis for enhancement efforts at HBCUs. Additionally, the Department interprets Title VI to permit limited use of race to avoid an anomalous and absurd result,*i.e.*, penalizing HBCUs and students who seek admission to HBCUs, and putting HBCUs at a disadvantage with respect to other schools precisely because of the special history and composition of the HBCUs.

The use of race-targeted aid by HBCUs that the Department is interpreting Title VI to permit under this provision is narrowly tailored to further the congressionally recognized purpose of enhancement of HBCUs. HBCUs may not discriminate on the basis of race or national origin in admitting students. They may not create their own race-targeted financial aid programs using their own institutional funds unless they satisfy the requirements of any of the other principles in this guidance. Nor may they accept private donations of race-targeted aid for black students that are limited to students at the institution unless otherwise permitted by the guidance. Because HBCUs have traditionally enrolled black students, it should not subvert the goal of enhancing the institutions to require that they not restrict aid to black students if using their own funds or funds from private donors that wish to set up financial aid programs at these institutions. However, because the applicant pool that is attracted to HBCUs presently consists primarily of black students, HBCUs would be placed at a distinct disadvantage with regard to other colleges in attracting talented students if they could not participate in financial aid programs set up by third parties for black students. Thus, the Department interprets Title VI to permit an HBCU to participate in race-targeted financial aid programs for black students that are created by third parties, if the programs are not restricted to students at HBCUs.

The participation by HBCUs in those race-targeted aid programs will be subject to periodic reassessment by the Department. The Department will regularly review the results of enhancement efforts at HBCUs, including the annual report to the President on the progress achieved in enhancing the role and capabilities of HBCUs required by Section 7 of Executive Order 12876. If an HBCU has been enhanced to the point that the institution is attractive to individuals regardless of their race or national origin to the same extent as a non-HBCU, then that institution may participate in only those race-targeted aid programs that are consistent with the other principles in this policy guidance.

Transition Period

The proposed policy guidance would have provided a four-year transition period for individual students to ensure that they did not lose their financial aid as a result of the guidance. Commenters pointed out that, in some cases, four years may not be a sufficient time for a student to complete his or her academic program at a college. In addition, commenters expressed concern that revising the policies and procedures used in recruiting minority students and in providing student financial assistance would require time to develop and implement. The revisions that have been made to the final policy guidance should result in far fewer instances in which colleges will be required to change their financial aid programs. However, the Department recognizes that colleges may need to conduct extensive reviews of their current programs and that in some cases adjustments to those programs may be necessary. As a result, the Department is expanding the proposed transition period.

The Department is providing colleges a reasonable period of time to review and, if necessary, adjust their financial aid programs in an orderly manner that causes the least possible disruption to their students. Colleges must adjust their financial aid programs to be consistent with the principles previously set out no later than two years after the effective date of the Department's policy guidance. However, colleges may continue to provide financial aid awarded on the basis of race or national origin to students who had either applied for or received

that assistance prior to the effective date of this guidance during the full course of those students' academic program at the college, even though, in many cases, this will extend beyond the two-year period and, in some cases, the four-year period identified in the proposed policy.

Although some commenters questioned the Department's authority to create a transition period, such a period for adjustments is consistent with the Department's approach in the past under other civil rights statutes it enforces. See 34 CFR 106.41(d) (transition period to permit recipients to bring their athletic programs into compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972); 34 CFR 104.22(e) (transition period to permit recipients to make facilities accessible to individuals with disabilities, as required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973). It is based on the Department's recognition of the practical difficulties that some colleges may face in making changes to their recruitment and financial aid award processes.

The transition period also is consistent with the Department's policy, in approving plans for the desegregation of State systems of higher education, that students who have been the beneficiaries of past discriminatory conduct not be required to bear the burden of corrective action. For example, while the Department requires State higher education systems to take remedial action to increase the enrollment of previously excluded students, it does not require the expulsion of any student in order to permit admission of those previously excluded. See *Wygant v. Jackson Board of Education*, 476 U.S. at 282-85.

Finally, the transition period is consistent with the Department's obligations under Title VI to seek voluntary compliance by recipients that have been found in violation of the statute. 42 U.S.C. 2000d-1. During the transition period, the Department will provide colleges with technical assistance to help them make any necessary changes to their financial aid programs in order to achieve compliance with Title VI.

Program Authority: 42 U.S.C. 2000d.

Dated: February 17, 1994.

Richard W. Riley,

Secretary of Education.

[FR Doc.94-4010 Filed 2-22-94; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P

Top