

..... ENGAGING SOCIOLOGY

Preference Policies at the University of Michigan

To enhance diversity on the campus—a practice that many argue makes a university a better learning environment and enhances the academic reputation of the school—many colleges have preference policies in admissions. However, the University of Michigan was sued by applicants who felt they were not admitted because others replaced them on the roster due to their racial or ethnic background.

The University of Michigan is a huge university where a numbering system is needed to handle the volume (tens of thousands) of applicants; the admissions staff cannot make a decision based on personal knowledge of each candidate. Thus, they give points for each quality they deem desirable in the student body. A maximum of 150 points is possible, and a score of 100 would pretty much ensure admission. The university feels that any combination of points accumulated according to the following formula will result in a highly qualified and diverse student body.

For academics, up to 110 points are possible:

- 80 points for grades (a particular grade point average in high school results in a set number

of points; e.g., a 4.0 result in 80 points, and a 2.8 results in 56 points)

- 12 points for standardized test scores (ACT or SAT)
- 10 points for the academic rigor of high school (so all students who go to tougher high schools earn points)
- 8 points for the difficulty of the curriculum (e.g., points for honors curriculum versus keyboarding courses)

For especially desired qualities, including diversity, up to 40 points are possible for any combination of the following (but no more than 40 in this “desired qualities” category):

- Geographical distribution (10 for Michigan resident, an additional 6 for underrepresented Michigan county)
- Legacy—a direct relative has attended Michigan (4 points for a parent, 1 point for a grandparent or sibling)
- Quality of submitted essay (3 points)
- Personal achievement—a special accomplishment that was noteworthy (up to 5 points)

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