

BACKGROUND

Regents of the U. of California v. Bakke (1978)

Background Summary & Questions (•••)

In the early 1970s, the medical school of the University of California at Davis devised a dual admissions program to increase representation of "disadvantaged" students. Under the regular admissions procedure, a screening process was used to evaluate candidates for further consideration. Candidates whose overall undergraduate grade point averages fell below 2.5 on a scale of 4.0 were automatically rejected. Of the remaining candidates, some were selected for interviews. Following an interview, the admissions committee rated candidates who survived the screening process on a scale of 1 to 100. The rating considered the interviewer's evaluation, the candidate's overall and science grade point averages, scores on the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT), letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities, and other biographical data. The ratings were added together to arrive at each candidate's "benchmark score."

On the application form, candidates could indicate that they were members of a "minority group," which the medical school designated as "Blacks," "Chicanos," "American Indians," or "Asians." Candidates could also choose to be considered "economically and/or educationally disadvantaged." The applications of those who did so were sent to the special admissions committee, where applications were screened to determine whether the candidate met the criteria established for disadvantaged and minority groups. These applicants did not have to meet the 2.5 grade point average cut off used in the regular program, nor were the candidates in the special admissions program compared to the candidates in the regular admissions program. Of the 100 spots in the medical school, 16 spaces were set aside for this program.

From 1971 to 1974 the special program resulted in the admission of 21 black students, 30 Mexican Americans, and 12 Asians, for a total of 63 minority students.* During the same period, the regular admissions program admitted 1 black student, 6 Mexican Americans, and 37 Asians, for a total of 44 minority students. No disadvantaged white candidates received admission through the special program.

Allan Bakke was a white male who applied to and was rejected from the regular admissions program in 1973 and 1974. During those same years, minority applicants with lower grade point averages, MCAT scores, and benchmark scores were admitted to the medical school under the special program.

After his second rejection, Bakke filed suit in the Superior Court of Yolo County, California. He sought to compel the University of California at Davis to admit him to the medical school. He also alleged that the special admissions program violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 because it excluded him on the basis of race.

The university argued that their system of admission preferences served several important purposes. It helped counter the effects of discrimination in society. Since historically, minors were discriminated against in medical school admissions and in the medical profession, their special admission program could help reverse that. The university also said that the special program increased the number of physicians who practice in underserved communities. Finally, the

