Admission Preferences for Minority Students, Athletes, and Legacies at Elite Universities*

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*Objective.* This study examines how preferences for different types of applicants exercised by admission offices at elite universities influence the number and composition of admitted students. *Methods.* Logistic regression analysis is used to link information on the admission decision for 124,374 applications to applicants’ SAT scores, race, athletic ability, and legacy status, among other variables. *Results.* Elite universities give added weight in admission decisions to applicants who have SAT scores above 1500, are African American, or are recruited athletes. A smaller, but still important, preference is shown to Hispanic students and to children of alumni. The athlete admission “advantage” has been growing, while the underrepresented minority advantage has declined. *Conclusions.* Elite colleges and universities extend preferences to many types of students, yet affirmative action—the only preference given to underrepresented minority applicants—is the one surrounded by the most controversy.

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