

Supreme Court Affirmative Action Ruling Sparks Revamp of Law School Admission Essays



In response to the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to ban race-conscious admissions at colleges and universities, many law schools are adapting their application essays to gain a more comprehensive understanding of applicants' backgrounds and motivations without violating the new legal ruling. The altered approach aims to maintain fairness and inclusivity in the admission process.

Law school admission consultant Mike Spivey noted that the application process is poised to become more thorough and personalized, albeit potentially more time-consuming for applicants seeking admission to multiple schools due to varying essay prompts and requirements. Spivey is closely monitoring and compiling the new essay prompts on his blog, highlighting their distinctions from previous years.

While the majority of U.S. law schools are set to open applications on September 1 for the fall 2024 admissions cycle, some institutions, including Duke Law School and the University of Texas School of Law, have already revealed modified essay questions. Instead of open-ended diversity or personal background statements, these schools are presenting specific essay prompts to applicants.

See also: [Michigan Law School Applications Prohibit Use of ChatGPT on Essays](#)

For instance, Harvard Law School has transitioned from requesting a personal statement and an optional diversity statement to requiring both a "statement of purpose" explaining the applicant's motivation to pursue a legal career and a "statement of perspective" detailing how their experiences, backgrounds, or interests have molded them.

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Yale Law School, meanwhile, has offered four distinct essay prompts to choose from this year, covering topics ranging from significant personal communities to transformative discussions. This shift replaces the previous optional diversity statement. While the school declined to comment on the changes, it is evident that the revised approach intends to encourage introspection regarding the applicant's motivations for legal education and their potential contributions to the legal profession and the school's community.

The Supreme Court's ruling on June 29, which effectively banned affirmative action policies aimed at increasing the enrollment of underrepresented minority students, clarified that essays and personal statements discussing an applicant's race or background remain acceptable. The Law School Admission Council's Vice President for Law School Engagement, Gisele Joachim, emphasized this point, and the U.S. Department of Education reaffirmed it on August 14, indicating that applicants are free to explore how their racial experiences have impacted their lives.

In response, the University of Michigan Law School has revamped its supplemental essay prompts to encompass nine options designed to elicit a comprehensive view of applicants. These options encourage candidates to explain how their experiences and viewpoints could enrich the school's intellectual atmosphere and contribute to diversifying the legal profession. Additionally, applicants can choose to detail the hypothetical individual they would most like to dine with, living or deceased, and the topics they would discuss.

Sarah Zearfoss, Senior Assistant Dean at Michigan Law, expressed optimism about the expansion of contextual information in applications, viewing it as a positive development for informed decision-making in the admissions process. As law schools adapt to the new legal landscape, their evolving essay prompts seek to foster fairness, inclusivity, and a deeper understanding of applicants' perspectives and motivations.

Don't be a silent ninja! Let us know your thoughts in the comment section below.