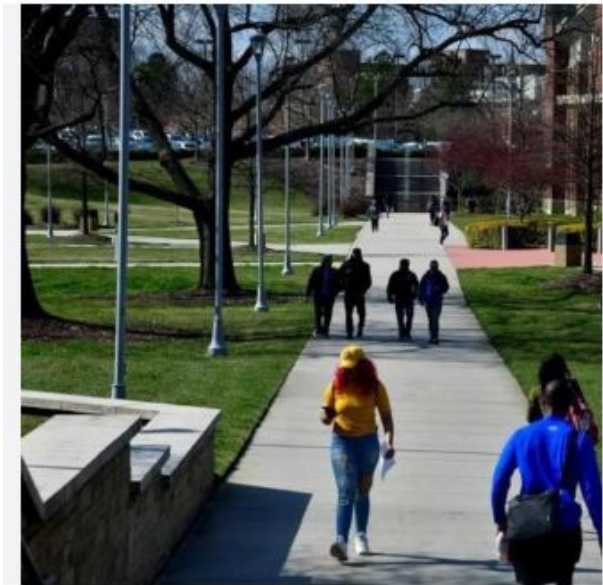


Increase in Minority Law School Applicants Defies Expectations



Uncertainty surrounding college admissions hasn't deterred minority law school applicants this year. According to the Law School Admission Council, the number of Hispanic applicants has risen by 8.9% compared to the same time last year. Black applicants have increased by 6.7%, and Asian applicants by 6.1%. In contrast, white applicants saw the smallest year-over-year increase at 3.1%.

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Impact of the Supreme Court Decision

Some legal educators were concerned that the U.S. Supreme Court's June 2023 decision, which struck down the consideration of race in college admissions, might dissuade diverse would-be lawyers from applying. However, the data suggests otherwise. This year's increase in minority applicants continues the trend toward greater diversity in law school classes. Over the past three years, law schools have enrolled their most diverse first-year classes on record. In 2023, 40% of all 1Ls (first-year law students) were students of color, including Hispanic, Black, Asian, Native American, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander.

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Factors Contributing to the Increase

The rise in minority applicants may be attributed to enhanced recruitment and outreach efforts by law schools to encourage prospective applicants of color, according to Aaron Taylor, executive director of the AccessLex Center for Legal Education. Taylor emphasized that the real measure will be the admission and enrollment numbers.

Additionally, the Supreme Court's decision may have motivated more minority applicants to apply in response to the conservative majority's stance, said Mike Spivey, founder of law school admissions firm Spivey Consulting.

Overall Applicant Numbers

Overall, the number of people applying for a seat in one of the 197 law schools accredited by the American Bar Association this fall is up 5.3% over the same time last year. This figure is unlikely to change significantly as the admissions cycle nears its end, with 97% of all applicants having submitted their materials at this time last year.

Comparison with Previous Years

The more than 5% increase in applicants indicates strong interest in law school, although it is far below the 13% surge in 2021 when the COVID-19 pandemic led more college graduates to wait out the weak job market. This gain was nearly erased in 2022 when applicants dropped by 12%.

Adjustments in Admissions Processes

In compliance with the Supreme Court's decision, which prohibits considering an applicant's race but allows discussion of race and background in essays and personal statements, many law schools have added new essay requirements or personal statement prompts. This added to the workload of admissions officers, and more students were placed on the waitlist this fall and winter than usual, resulting in a relatively slow cycle for decisions, according to Spivey.

By adapting to these changes and continuing efforts to promote diversity, law schools aim to maintain and even enhance the representation of minority groups within their programs.

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

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