

11/04/13

To: Special Master (SM) Willis Hawley

From: Plaintiffs Roy Fisher, et al (Fisher Plaintiffs)

Regarding: The Fisher Plaintiffs' objection to and request for a report and recommendation regarding the University High School (UHS) Admissions Process Revision (APR) as approved by the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) Governing Board (GB).

The Fisher Plaintiffs object to the UHS APR

The Fisher Plaintiffs herewith submit to the SM their objection to and request for a report and recommendation regarding the UHS APR as approved by the TUSD GB. The Fisher Plaintiffs submitted objections to earlier versions of the UHS admissions process proposal on 08/26/13 and 09/06/13. In their 08/26/13 comments, the Fisher Plaintiffs raised two objections:

It is difficult to comment on the efficacy vel non of the proposed use of academic resiliency measures in admissions without knowing how that measure would impact actual admissions. While the measure seems difficult to assess independent of confounding socioeconomic variables, its consideration is not inherently objectionable. Rather than focusing on maintaining a high admissions bar, the Fisher Plaintiffs believe UHS would better direct its efforts at educating a broader spectrum of potentially high-performing students by ensuring that the students it does admit receive the support they will need to succeed at UHS; and

Like [SM] Hawley, the Fisher Plaintiffs question the assumed validity of the CogAT. The Fisher Plaintiffs believe that such testing instruments are culturally biased and serve as a de facto barrier to the representative admission of low SES AA and MA students to UHS.

In their 09/06/13 comments, the Fisher Plaintiffs summarized their top three priorities for the UHS admissions plan as follows:

[The] Fisher Plaintiffs believe UHS would better direct its efforts at educating a broader spectrum of potentially high-performing students by ensuring that the students it does admit receive the support they will need to succeed at UHS;

Whatever admissions criteria used, we should be able to determine (by applying those criteria to past application data) how much they will increase the percentage of AA and MA students admitted to UHS; and

Just admitting AA students won't ensure they will graduate. Additional academic support will be necessary. What will that be?

The Fisher Plaintiffs join the Mendoza Plaintiffs' 10/31/13 objection to the UHS APR

The Fisher Plaintiffs incorporate by reference any outstanding concerns raised in the SM's 09/06/13 memorandum and formally join the Mendoza Plaintiffs in their 10/31/13 objection to the UHS APR where they state that:

With respect to [the motivation] test, the Revision is incomplete. It states that the CAIMI or "other relevant measures" will be employed but does not state the basis on which the decision to use some "other relevant measure" will be made. Neither, in the form approved by the Governing Board, does it state what weight will be given to the results of this motivation test.

[...]

The USP expressly states that the District "shall administer the appropriate UHS admission test(s) for all 7th grade students." [...]. The Revision does not confirm that this will occur. The District should be required to commit to this testing.

[...]

In comments on earlier versions of the UHS admissions process both the Mendoza Plaintiffs and the Special Master questioned the weights assigned to CogAT scores and grades in the admissions process and suggested that an evaluation be undertaken to determine the correlations, if any, between (1) CogAT scores and the grades achieved by UHS students in their classes and (2) the GPAs of entering students and the grades they achieve in their UHS classes for the purpose of determining how strong each of these factors is as a predictor of success at UHS and/or whether the weights assigned to these factors should be modified [...]. Such requirement, with results broken out by the race, ethnicity and ELL status of the students, should be expressly included in the Review section of the Revision.

[...]

Absent [from the APR] is an acknowledgement of the specific outreach and recruitment efforts mandated by the USP in Sec. V, A, 5, b, c, and d. The District should be required to confirm that these mandated recruitment efforts are in place.

[...]

[The] Mendoza Plaintiffs [...] object to any conclusions about the demographics of UHS and/or Tucson that the District purports to base on a comparison with of [the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy] IMSA.