

The TAA (Teaching Assistant's Association) Diversity Committee is here today to oppose any ban on affirmative action. We feel that it is important that the University of Wisconsin remains an open and inclusive institution. As graduate workers who teach undergraduates at all levels and in different settings, we understand that a diverse classroom environment is crucial for productive learning. Students benefit when they are exposed to different points of view and diversity in the classroom helps foster and generate these different points of view.

Anti-Affirmative Action legislation has adversely affected the student population in other states. For example, the percentage of women faculty throughout the University of California systems dropped 22% and the African-American population in UCLA's Law School dropped from 10.3% in 1996 to 1.4% in 2000. After California's Proposition 209 was initiated in 1998, minority freshman enrollment dropped 61%. White enrollment in the UC system was not significantly affected by the ban; there is not a symbiotic relationship between white enrollment and Affirmative Action. Any ban on Affirmative Action in Wisconsin would more than likely have similar negative effects on the UW system's graduate, undergraduate, and faculty population. In the 2004-05 school year, roughly 10.4% of the UW-Madison student population were minorities. The university cannot afford to have this number drop any more because it sends the message that this university is not interested in attracting diverse students.

The UW has traditionally been an institution interested in opening spaces for those who generally have limited access to public education. Affirmative Action opens these spaces without limiting spaces for white applicants. In order to keep UW students competitive in a rapidly changing world, it is vital that the state of Wisconsin continues to value diversity.