

Appendix for "Who used affirmative action before SFFA?"

For this analysis, we combined newly collected college-level data from the Common Data Set (CDS) with the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Set (IPEDS) and selectivity ratings from *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*. In this appendix, we describe the data and analysis in more detail.

IPEDS Data

We use the institutional characteristics and fall enrollment files of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Dataset (IPEDS), accessed through the [Urban Economics Education Data Portal](#). We use data from the 2019-20 school year, prior to the COVID disruption.

Using institutional characteristics reported in IPEDS, we distinguish between public two-year, for-profit, and four-year institutions. We separately classify schools as either public or private institutions. Additionally, we use the enrollment file to calculate full-time, first-time enrollment for each institution by the following race/ethnicity categories: non-Hispanic Native American/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic Asian/Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic/Latino, Non-Hispanic white, and non-Hispanic two or more races. We exclude "nonresident alien" and unknown race enrollment from our analysis.

Barron's Data

We use Barron's ratings data from [Barron's Profiles of American Colleges 2019](#). Barron's selectivity index classifies U.S. four-year institutions based on admissions rate and enrolled students' academic credentials. There are six main Barron's selectivity categories, as well as an additional category that includes specialized schools such as health sciences and music schools. Barron's includes a "plus" distinction for the most competitive schools within some of the selectivity categories, but we ignore this distinction for the purposes of our analysis. We exclude students attending specialized schools from our analysis and group schools with an open admissions policy and other schools unrated by Barron's with schools in Barron's least selective category.

Data on Consideration of Race or Ethnicity in Admissions

We construct the variable on the consideration of race/ethnicity in admissions based on our collection of Common Dataset (CDS) responses posted on colleges' websites. To collect the CDS data, we created a list of all four-year institutions with institution size of at least 1,000 using the 2019 IPEDS data, plus smaller institutions with Barron's classifications of "Competitive Plus"

or higher.¹ We conducted a Google search for "college name Common Dataset 2021" and retrieved the CDS for the 2021-22 academic year when possible. If the 2021 file was not available, we retrieved the CDS for earlier or later years.² We retrieved CDS data for 728 institutions, 711 of which had valid data on whether they considered race or ethnicity in admissions. Appendix Table 1 shows the coverage of the data we collected.

Appendix Table 1: Coverage of Collected Data

Variable	Number of institutions	% of institutions	% of full-time first-year enrollment
Found CDS	728	27.2%	70.0%
Public institution in ban state	155	5.8%	17.1%
Non-missing race/ethnicity consideration data	793	29.7%	73.5%

The CDS survey, a joint venture of the College Board, US News, and Peterson's, asks a wide range of questions about academic offerings, student enrollment and persistence, the admissions process, student life, faculty, expenses, and financial aid. In the "Freshman Admissions" section of the survey, colleges are asked to indicate how important several factors are in admissions. The response options are "Very Important," "Important," "Considered," and "Not Considered." We code institutions as practicing affirmative action if they said they chose an option other than "Not Considered" for "racial and ethnic status" (only a handful of institutions indicated race/ethnicity was "Important" or "Very Important"). We also code public colleges in states that have a ban on the consideration of race/ethnicity in admissions as "Not Considered."

Finally, we code colleges for whom we could not find a CDS or (less commonly) where they did not report on their consideration of race/ethnicity in admissions into "Maybe considered" and "Probably didn't consider" based on their Barron's selectivity rating. Among less selective colleges that reported on their use of AA, a very small share say they consider race, and these colleges are less likely to need to use AA to achieve racial diversity. We assign non-reporting colleges in the bottom three selectivity categories to "Probably didn't consider," and those above the bottom three categories to "Maybe considered." This cutoff is necessarily somewhat arbitrary, but we think it provides a reasonable ballpark estimate of the prevalence of affirmative action overall.

¹ We searched for a random subset of smaller institutions that had lower Barron's selectivity ratings and found very few posted CDS's. Since these institutions do not enroll many students, how they are classified will not influence the results much but there are many such institutions, so we did not search further.

² We used a combination of automated and manual searches to find and download the CDS files. In some cases, the CDS was not a PDF or other format that could be downloaded; in those cases, we entered the relevant data directly from the website.