

nding a fury of speculation, President Bush announced his intention to file an amicus brief opposing the University of Michigan's point system that is designed to increase minority representation at the school. In the same statement, he reiterated his unequivocal commitment to diversity among America's institutions of higher learning and equal access to a quality K-12 education for all Americans.

Soon, the U.S. Supreme Court will decide to what extent and by what means universities may consider race or ethnicity in the admissions process. It has been argued that an admissions system that rewards students solely on the basis of race or ethnicity is arbitrarily unfair and may ultimately lead to more harm than good. Others counter that the current system is needed to address inequities that have existed for more than two hundred years. Regardless, the fact remains that Hispanics continue to have the lowest high school graduation rates and college attendance rates, and Hispanics, African Americans and Native Americans remain woefully under-represented in our nation's college campuses.



In politics, we often find that while we may share a common vision, we are often divided on the means to achieve it; sometimes to the detriment of those we serve. It takes a great deal of hard work to bring together opposing forces and political parties, to find the middle ground, and achieve a shared vision. It requires a great leader. We have witnessed this president lead in times of crisis. I trust he will have the strength of doing so once again. President Bush's reaffirmation that diversity is an important goal is a critical first step in a much-needed dialogue among the many relevant parties — teachers, parents, students, policy makers, college admissions committees, university presidents, community leaders and the private sector — on how to achieve diversity on college campuses and remain within the law.

If the Supreme Court finds the University of Michigan admissions process to be unconstitutional, and we fail to develop and execute a plan of action that provides for a comprehensive, coordinated approach to increase minority enrollment, thousands of Hispanic, Native American and African American students may fail to enter college, a loss that will be borne by all Americans and will have a devastating impact on our socio-economic system.

Predictably, no one understands this better than business. One of the nation's largest employers, General Motors, filed an amicus brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in support of the University of Michigan, and was joined by sixty Fortune 500 companies in filing in support in a lower court proceeding. These companies know that the future of their businesses and the nation's economy will depend in large measure on the success of minority students in obtaining college, graduate and professional degrees. Companies, government agencies and, indeed, the nation depend on universities to produce a diverse pool of talented graduates who understand and will thrive in today's changing demographic reality.

Our challenge is greater than defining a fair college admissions process. It is one of ensuring respect, inclusion, tolerance, and diversity so that the words "all men are created equal" have de facto and juridical validity. Let's not wait until after the anticipated June U.S. Supreme Court decision to begin seizing the opportunity before us.

Anna Escobedo Cabral

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President and CEO

President's Message

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The *Corporate Observer* is a service of the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility (HACR). HACR's mission is to ensure the inclusion of Hispanics in Corporate America at a level commensurate with our economic contributions.

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