Statement of Higher Education Presidential Associations on Affirmative Action Cases before the United States Supreme Court

January 24, 2003

"The higher education community welcomes the United States Supreme Court's grant of certiorari in Grutter v. Bollinger and Gratz v. Bollinger, cases addressing race-conscious admissions at the University of Michigan. A decision by the Court promises to bring legal clarity to admission practices.

As leaders of the major higher education associations, we speak with one voice in supporting the University of Michigan—and all colleges and universities—in emphasizing the importance of educating Americans of all backgrounds. We believe there is a national imperative to ensure that Americans who represent the diversity of races, ethnic groups, religious beliefs, and economic circumstances participate in higher education at all levels, including graduate and professional schools. We encourage a reaffirmation of the landmark 1978 Bakke ruling, which approved consideration of race and ethnicity among many other factors to achieve diversity in higher education admissions decisions.

We believe that our nation is best served when the professions, indeed all economic groups, amply represent the full spectrum of American society. We shudder at the prospect of a de facto caste system, where social and economic status are identified by race, religion, or any other group characteristic.

We believe that the education of virtually all students is enhanced in campus settings where the diversity of our society is represented. For many students, higher education represents the first and best chance to learn from diverse peers. In an increasingly interdependent global economy and society, America will suffer if its citizens are not prepared to live and work in multicultural settings.

We believe as well that the future of our democratic society is dependent on educational and economic opportunities available to and enjoyed by all. Higher education has succeeded in bringing together Americans of all backgrounds in pursuit of both higher learning and the commonweal. We should not now undermine or abandon these achievements."

On behalf of:

- Robert C. Andringa, President, Council for Christian Colleges & Universities
- George R. Bogg, President and CEO, American Association of Community Colleges
- Rev. Charles L. Currie, S.J., President, Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
- Constantine W. Curris, President, American Association of State Colleges and Universities
- Judith S. Eaton, President, Council for Higher Education Accreditation
- Richard Ekman, President, Council of Independent Colleges
- Antonio R. Flores, President, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
- William H. Gray, III, President and CEO, United Negro College Fund
- Nils Hasselmo, President, Association of American Universities
- Monika K. Hellwig, President, Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
- Frederick S. Humphries, President, National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
- C. Peter Magrath, President, National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges
- Carol G. Schneider, President, Association of American Colleges and Universities
- Jadwiga S. Sebrechts, President, Women's College Coalition
- David Ward, President, American Council on Education
- David L. Warren, President, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities