

Estimating the Number of Missing Wolverines Since Proposition 2

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The tables below provide estimates for the number of African-American Latino/a, Native American and mixed race undergraduate students who were either not admitted to, or chose not to enroll at, the University of Michigan as result of changes in university admissions policies following the 2006 passage of Proposition 2, the statewide referendum outlawing race-based affirmative action. The tables do so by comparing the number of African-American, Latino/a, Native American freshman (including those who identified as bring of two or more races) who enrolled in the university between 2007 and 2016 with the number who would have enrolled in those years if the university had been able to maintain the percentage of underrepresented minority (URM) students who were enrolled at the time Prop 2 passed in November 2006. One might call these un-enrolled students of color the missing Wolverines. According to these estimates, 1,102 more URM students would have enrolled at the University over the past decade had it not been for Prop. 2, including 860 African-Americans, 133 Latino/as, and 56 Native Americans.

There is, of course, no way to be sure exactly how many more URM students would have enrolled at UofM had Prop 2 not passed. In order to arrive at an estimate of the number of missing students of color, one has to make a number of assumptions, assumptions that are explained in detail below. This “what if” exercise is thus a classic example of the strengths and weaknesses of what historians call counter-factual history. But if we cannot be sure just how many URM students were denied the opportunity to attend UofM by the changes in university admission policies that resulted from Prop. 2, we can certainly agree that the university’s student body was fundamentally changed by the affirmative action ban. And one way to explore the impact of the change in admissions policy is to imagine how undergraduate enrollment might have been different if the university had maintained its use of affirmative action in admissions, a policy that after all was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 2003 Grutter v. Bollinger decision.

Table I. Estimates of the Number of Underrepresented Minority (African-American, Native American and Latino/a) Undergraduate Students who didn't enroll at UofM because of Prop. 2

	Total Number of New Freshmen	URM New Freshmen	URM New Freshmen if 12.3% of New Freshmen	Estimate of Missing URM New Freshmen
2007	5992	651	737	86
2008	5783	604	711	107
2009	6079	535	748	213
2010	6496	660	799	139
2011	6251	633	769	136
2012	6171	593	759	166
2013	6225	631	766	135
2014	6505	623	800	177
2015	6071	746	747	1
2016	6689	881	823	-58
Totals	62,262	6,472 (10.4%)	7,659	1,102

Table II. Estimates of the Number of Underrepresented African-American Undergraduates who didn't enroll at UofM because of Prop. 2

	Total Number of New Freshmen	Black New Freshmen	Estimate of Black New Freshmen including 2 or more race URMs	Black New Freshmen if 6.7% of New Freshmen	Estimate of Missing Black New Freshmen
2007	5992	334	334	401	67
2008	5783	374	374	388	14
2009	6079	290	290	407	117
2010	6496	283	338	435	98
2011	6251	276	324	419	95
2012	6171	271	317	413	96
2013	6225	246	302	417	115
2014	6505	240	295	436	141
2015	6071	298	354	407	53
2016	6689	293	384	448	64
Totals	62,262	2,905 (4.7%)	3,312 (5.3%)	4,172	860

Table III. Estimates of the Number of Underrepresented Latino/a Undergraduates who didn't enroll at UofM because of Prop. 2

	Total Number of New Freshmen	Latino/a New Freshmen	Latino/a New Freshmen if 4.7% of New Freshmen	Estimate of Missing Latino/a New Freshmen
2007	5992	267	282	15
2008	5783	199	272	73
2009	6079	224	286	62
2010	6496	275	305	30
2011	6251	267	294	27
2012	6171	228	290	62
2013	6225	282	293	11
2014	6505	280	306	26
2015	6071	344	285	-59
2016	6689	428	314	-114
Totals	62,262	2,794 (4.5%)	2,927	133

Table IV. Estimates of the Number of Underrepresented Native Americans Undergraduates who didn't enroll at UofM because of Prop. 2

	Total Number of New Freshmen	Native American New Freshmen	Estimate of Native American New Freshmen including 2 or more race URM	Native American New Freshmen if 0.9% of New Freshmen	Estimate of Missing Native American New Freshmen
2007	5992	50	50	54	4
2008	5783	31	31	52	21
2009	6079	21	21	55	34
2010	6496	11	55	58	3
2011	6251	10	48	56	8
2012	6171	18	54	56	2
2013	6225	10	55	56	1
2014	6505	11	55	59	4
2015	6071	10	55	55	0
2016	6689	9	81	60	-21
Totals	62,262	181 (.2%)	505 (.8%)	561	56

Assumption #1: The tables of “missing Wolverines” are based on two assumptions. The first is that without the passage of Prop. 2, the university would have maintained the 2006 URM undergraduate student enrollment rate of 12.3%, including the African-American enrollment rate of 6.7%, the Latino/a enrollment rate of 4.7%, and the Native American enrollment rate of 0.9%. (It’s worth noting, that URM undergraduate enrollment at Michigan actually peaked at 13.9% in 1996.) Using the university’s new freshmen enrollment data, the tables compare the actual number of URM freshmen who enrolled in the university between 2007 and 2016 with what the number would have been had the university been able to maintain the 2006 enrollment rates.

Assumption #2. The second assumption has to do with the number of mixed race students who can be included in the URM category. Beginning in 2010, the university changed the way it reported enrollment by race and ethnicity based on new U.S. Census guidelines. For the first time, the university reported the number of students who listed themselves as being members of two or more racial/ethnic categories.¹ As a result, it became a bit more difficult to track changes in the number of URM students enrolled in the university. Some number of students who previously would have been listed as either African-American or Native American² were now listed in the category Two or More URM Races.³ Thus, In order to be as accurate as possible in the estimate of missing African-American and Native Americans undergraduates, the tables needed to account for the students in the Two or More Race URM category who listed themselves as African-American and/or Native American. A review of the university’s undergraduate enrollment data between 2010 and 2016 finds that that between 58% and 61% of the students in the Two or More Race URM category listed themselves as in part African-American and between 44% and 51% listed themselves as in part Native American. In order to arrive at an estimate of missing black Wolverines since the passage of Prop 2, the tables thus assume therefore that 60% of the new freshmen who were listed in the category Two or More Races URM between 2010 and 2016 were in part African-American and 48% were in part Native American. That the sum of these percentages is more than 100% reflects the fact that some mixed race students identify as both African-American and Native American.

¹ For the first time that year, the University also reported the number of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students enrolled. Those students are included in the URM category in the tables but are not listed separately since there is no pre-2010 comparison group. As a result, the total number of URM students in Table I is somewhat larger than the sum of African-American, Latino/a, and Native American students in the other three tables.

² In order to avoid the double counting of Latino/as (who by U.S. Census definition can be of any race), the university lists students who identify as Hispanic only as Hispanic no matter which other racial categories they check.

³ The university also reports a separate Two or More Race non-URM category made up of mixed race students who list their race as Asian and white.