Statement on Diversity Requirement
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For quite a few years Gary Orfield and I co-taught an undergraduate class entitled “Equal Rights, Unequal Education: An American Dilemma.” This course received students from all majors. In the last few years we enrolled up to about 130 students and we always had a wait list. The class dealt with diversity and inequality in education, from kinder through higher education. Once students heard about the class, more wanted to take it than we could reasonably accept. I think this speaks to the desire of students for this kind of course.

Every year, students would line up at the end of the course to receive hugs or handshakes and share a few departing words, and many would have tears streaming down their faces. They wanted to know, “Why was I never taught this before now?” “How did I go all the way through school then college without knowing about these things?” Some students are truly angry, some feel vindicated and validated that they were not alone in their experience of inequality or difference, some just felt so glad that they could now explain things that seemed inexplicable before. Almost all would say they felt better equipped to live and work in a diverse society.

The diversity requirement is so absolutely necessary to help our students understand the world into which they are emerging and to be able to interact successfully with people from different communities, with very different group histories. It is an embarrassment that UCLA—at the center of the most diverse region in the nation—does not have such a requirement! And that some would seek to over-rule the expressed desire for such a course by the faculty and students of the College of Letters and Sciences is simply shameful.