

Brazilian University Gives Blacks Extra Points on Entrance Exam

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A system of social inclusion in higher education, different from the quota system proposed and adopted by federal universities, was used for the first time this year by the University of Campinas (Unicamp) in the state of São Paulo, Brazil, and led to a 22% increase in the number of public high school graduates in the entering class.

Unicamp's Affirmative Action and Social Inclusion Program (Paais) provides for an adjustment in students' final scores on the university entrance exam, as well as favoring black, mulatto, and indigenous students.

The Unicamp program adds 30 points to the final score of all public high school graduates and 10 points to the scores of those who identify themselves as black, mulatto, or Indian. Thus, individuals who qualify in both categories receive 40 extra points.

According to the Unicamp's deputy coordinator for university entrance exams, Renato Pedrosa, the process adopted by the university is meant "chiefly to encourage more qualified public high school students to take the Unicamp entrance exam and involves the racial and ethnic issue to a lesser degree."

In Pedrosa's opinion, the system of adjusting scores has an advantage over the quota system. "The program puts a greater emphasis on attracting candidates without saying that a certain group is ineligible for certain spots. I believe that the quota system is very restrictive in this sense," he explains.

According to the annual report of the Permanent Commission on University Entrance Exams (Comvest), in charge of selection at the Unicamp, 15.7% of this year's entering class identified themselves as black, mulatto, or Indian, a 35% increase in comparison with last year's entering class.

The three groups benefited by the Paais raised their shares of representation in the university's five most sought after courses - Medicine, Biological Sciences, Social Communication and Media Studies, Architecture and Urban Studies, and Pharmacology.

Other Brazilian universities are considering adopting the Unicamp's system of social inclusion.

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