

# **Achieving Comprehensive Diversity & Inclusion at MIT**

**April 14, 2021**

**For MIT Leadership and  
The Corporation**

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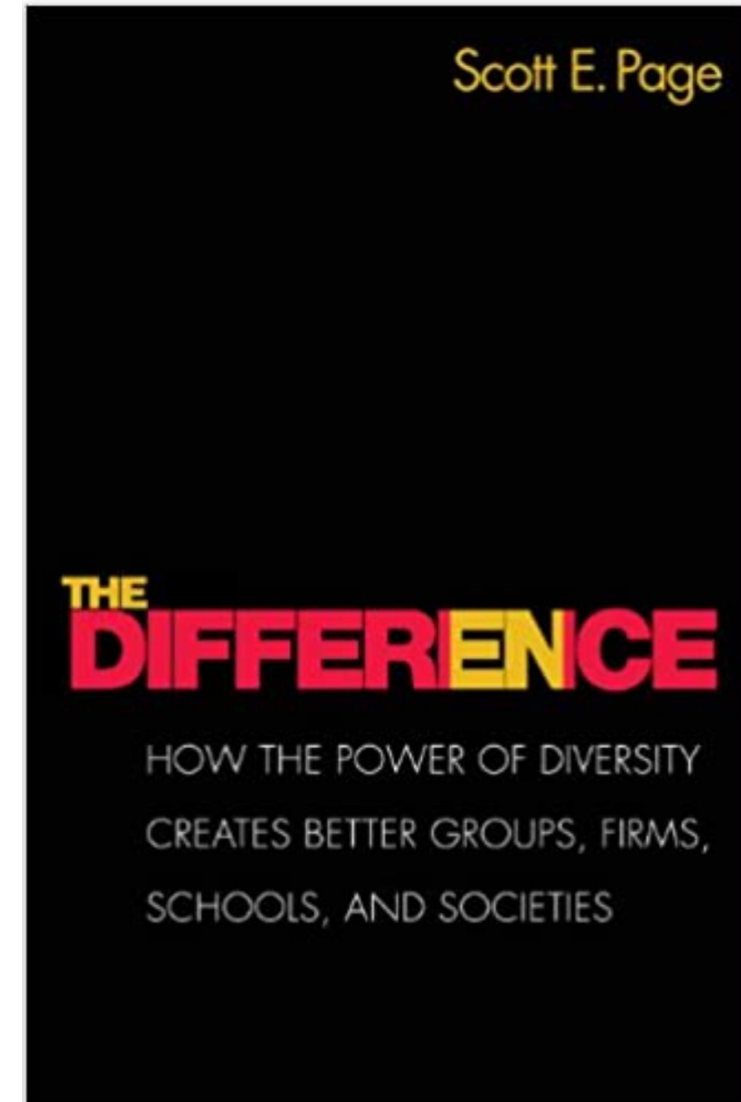
**DEI**  
**@MIT**

# ***Comprehensive Diversity***

Type	Examples
Physical/ Identity	Race, gender, age, ethnicity, geography, language, disability, sexual orientation
Cognitive/ Intellectual	Abstract vs. concrete thinking; risk aversion vs. risk taking; long- vs. short-term time horizons; relationship vs. transactional orientations in dealing with others; collaborative vs. independent work styles; introversion/extroversion; ability to delay immediate gratification; intelligence
Related Attributes	Household income; zip code, veteran status; first-generation college attendance; civic associations joined; hobbies; sports; and musical, sartorial, and tonsorial preferences...

# Why *Comprehensive* Diversity?

- So as not to *overlook* important variables
- Overweighting *some* variables *reduces* diversity in *other* important variables
- Cognitive/intellectual diversity makes boards, committees, and work groups better decision-makers
  - Physical/identity, only to the extent that it indicates cognitive/intellectual



# Why Physical/Identity Diversity Hijacks Our Attention

**Thinking Fast – immediate, knee-jerk reactions**

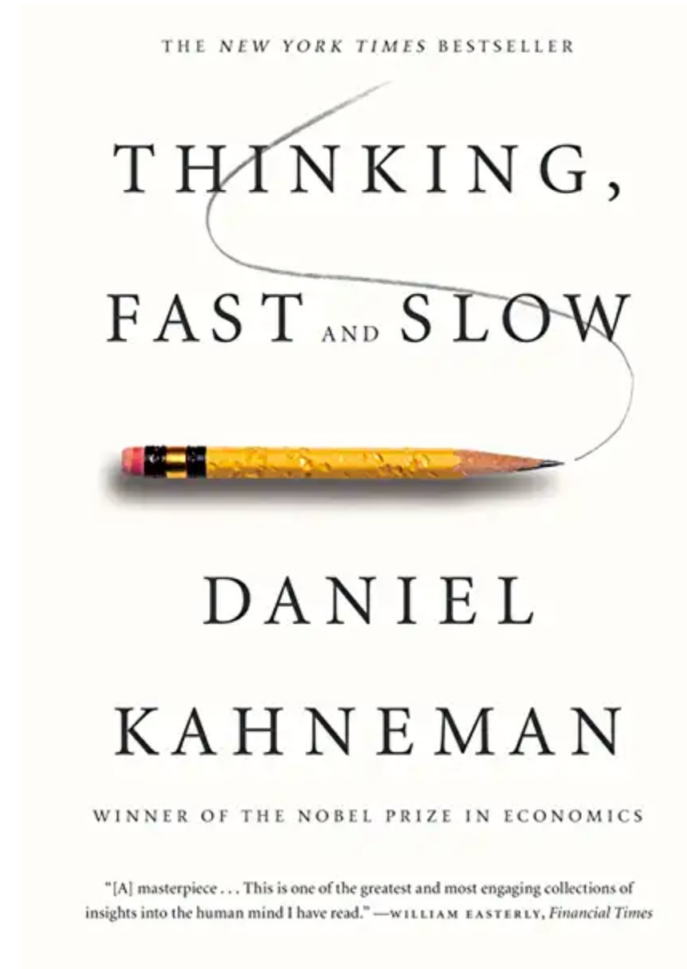
- Drives racial and gender discrimination

**Thinking Slowly/deliberately takes *effort***

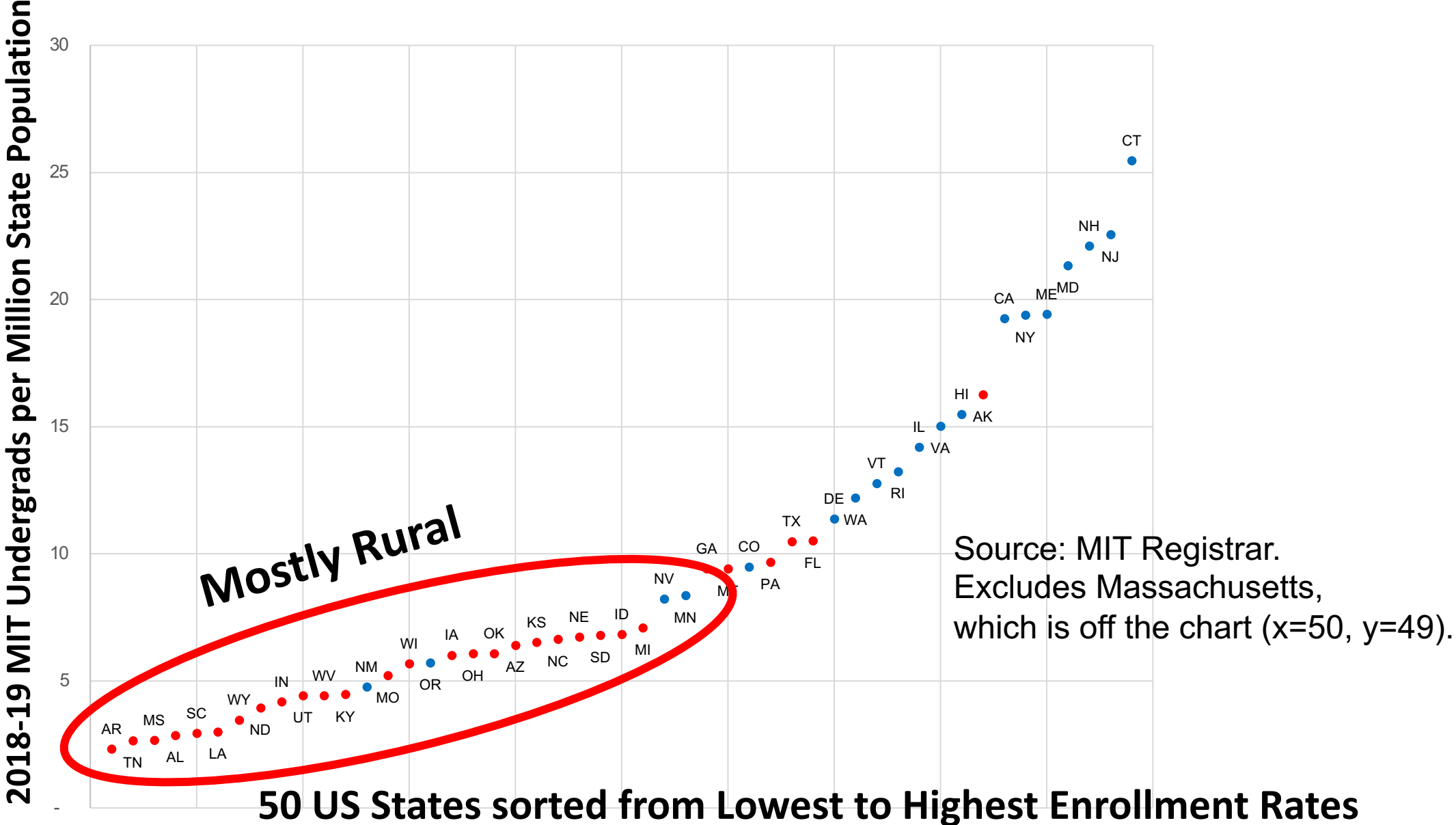
- To see people's value and talent beyond the visible and superficial

**We are MIT: We excel/take pride in “thinking slowly”**

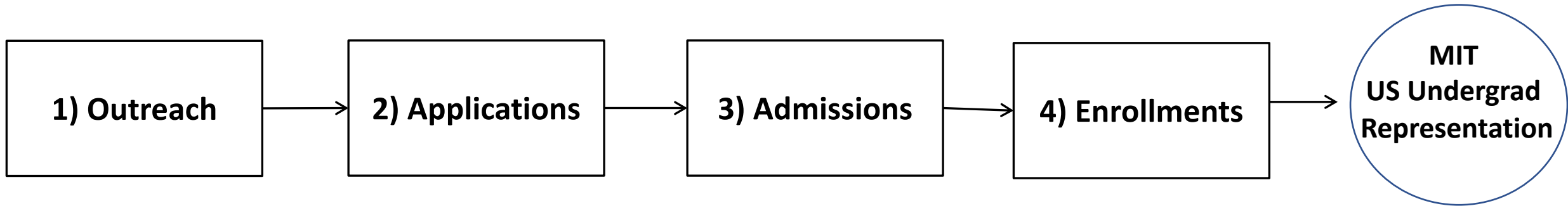
- *We don't* ignore important dimensions not immediately visible



Adjusted for State Populations, 2018 MIT US Undergrad Enrollment  
for the Bottom 25 US States was 33% the Enrollment for the Top 25 US States

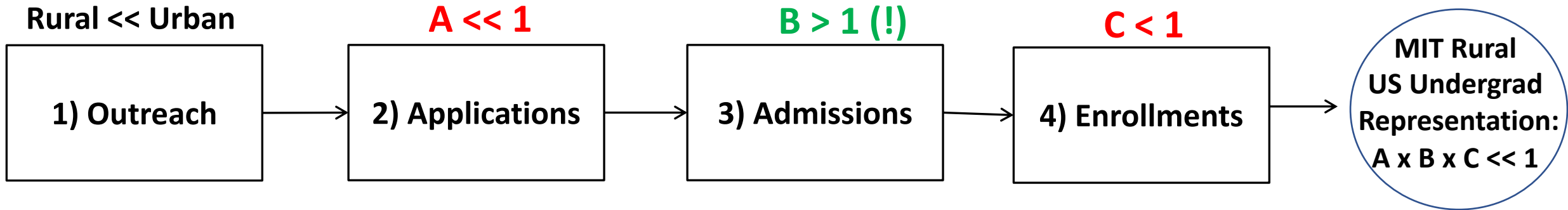


# MIT US Undergrad Admissions Pipeline



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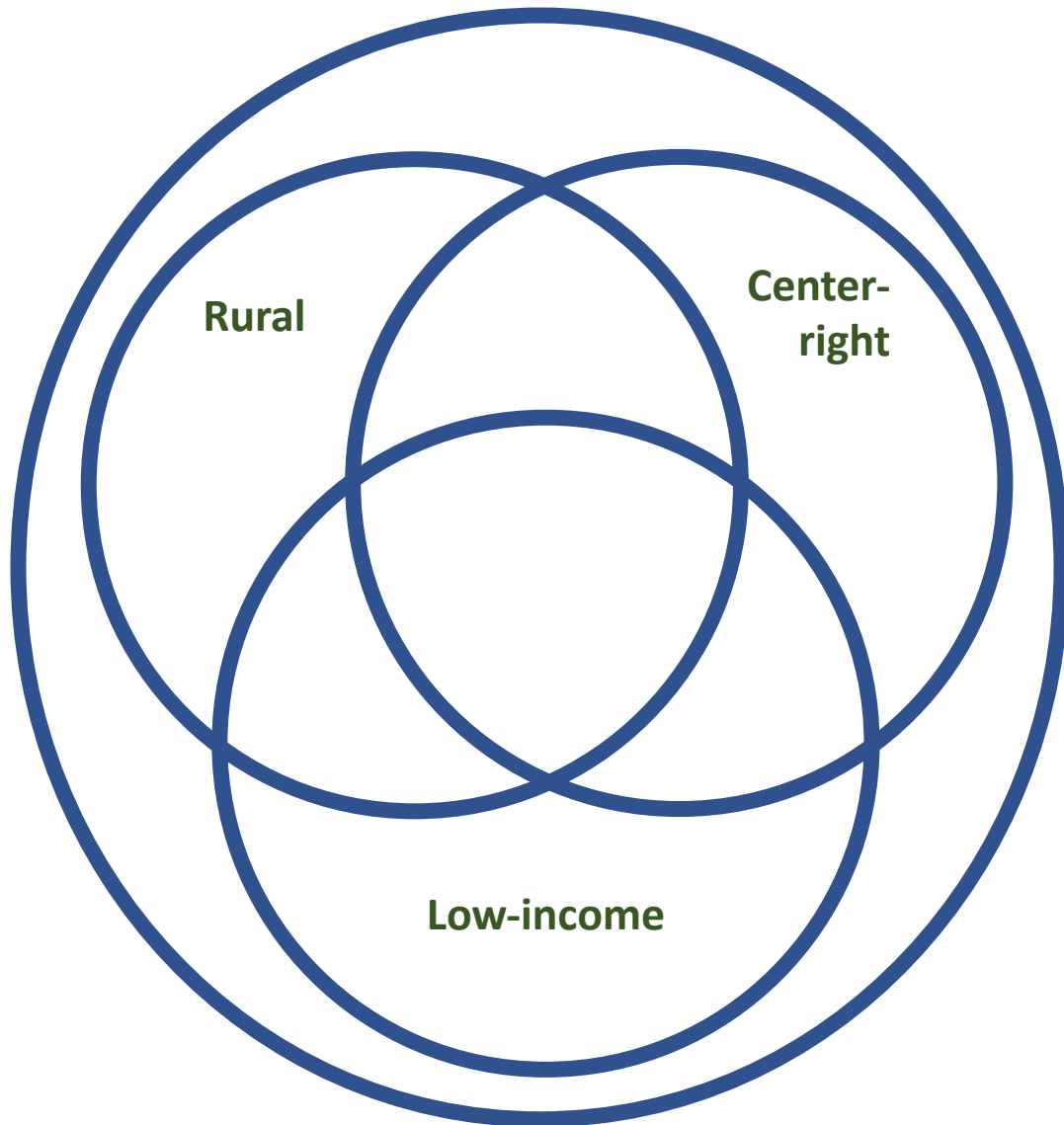
For Rural States



Notes:

- A = Percent of red-region population applying to MIT / Percent of total US population applying to MIT
- B = Percent of red-region applicants admitted to MIT / Percent of total US applicants admitted to MIT
- C = Percent of red-region admits enrolled at MIT / Percent of total US admits enrolled at MIT.

# **Not Different Just Geographically, But *Culturally, Economically, Intellectually, and Politically***

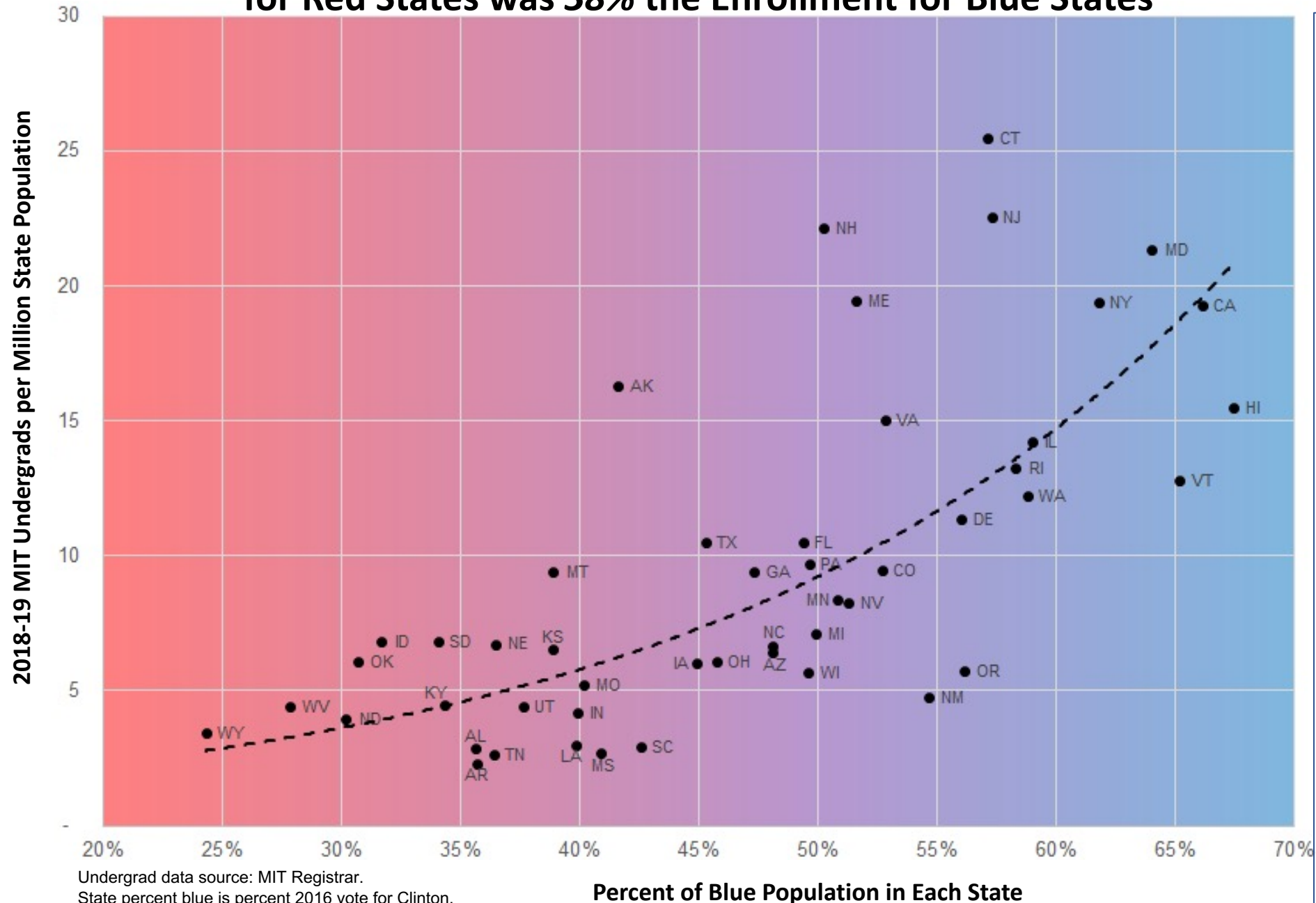


- Place higher value on:
  - Individual rewards/responsibility
  - Local civic ties
  - Frugality
  - Work ethic
  - Nuclear families
- More fiscally/socially conservative
- More respectful of authority
- Lower income overall
- Mostly red states

**The “Other Half” of the US**



# Adjusted for State Populations, 2018 MIT US Undergrad Enrollment for Red States was 38% the Enrollment for Blue States



## The “Other Half”:

- *No* on-campus constituency or advocacy
- *More* under-represented than racial minorities
- Routinely stereotyped on campus

**“They don’t share our values.”**

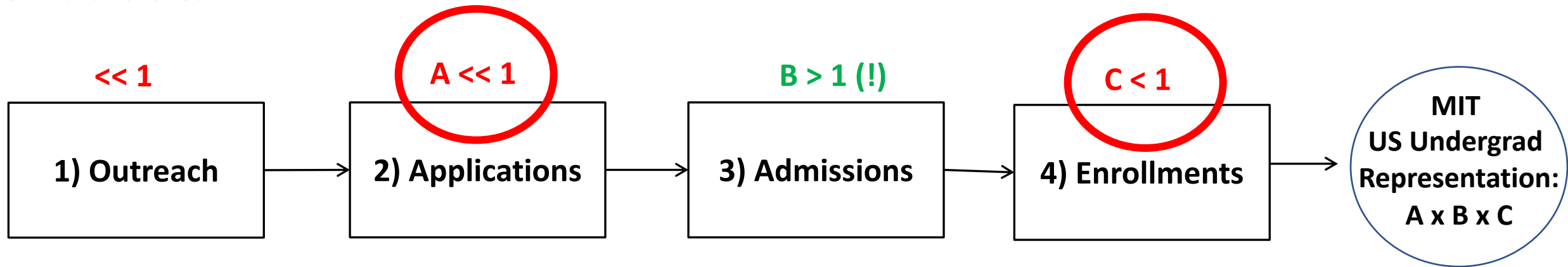
**“Poor, white, and uneducated.”**

**Provost Marty Schmidt:**

**“Being Republican may be the hardest thing to be on campus.”**

# MIT US Undergrad Admissions Pipeline

For Rural States:



Notes:

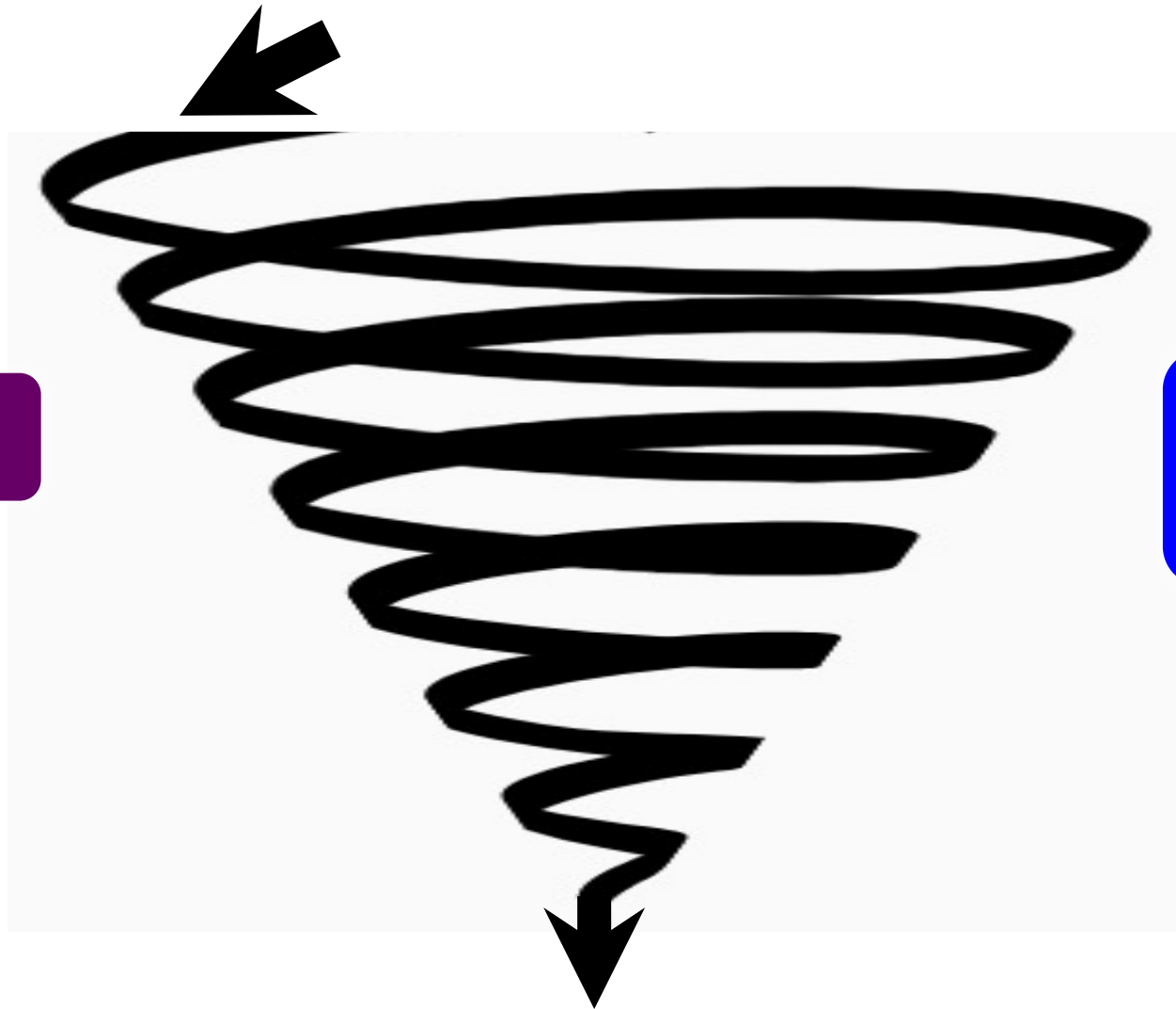
- 1.0 = MIT total US undergrad population normalized by US population.
- $A$  = Percent of red-region population applying to MIT / Percent of total US population applying to MIT
- $B$  = Percent of red-region applicants admitted to MIT / Percent of total US applicants admitted to MIT
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# The “Other Half” @ MIT:

## *A Negative Feedback Loop*

**Stereotyping**

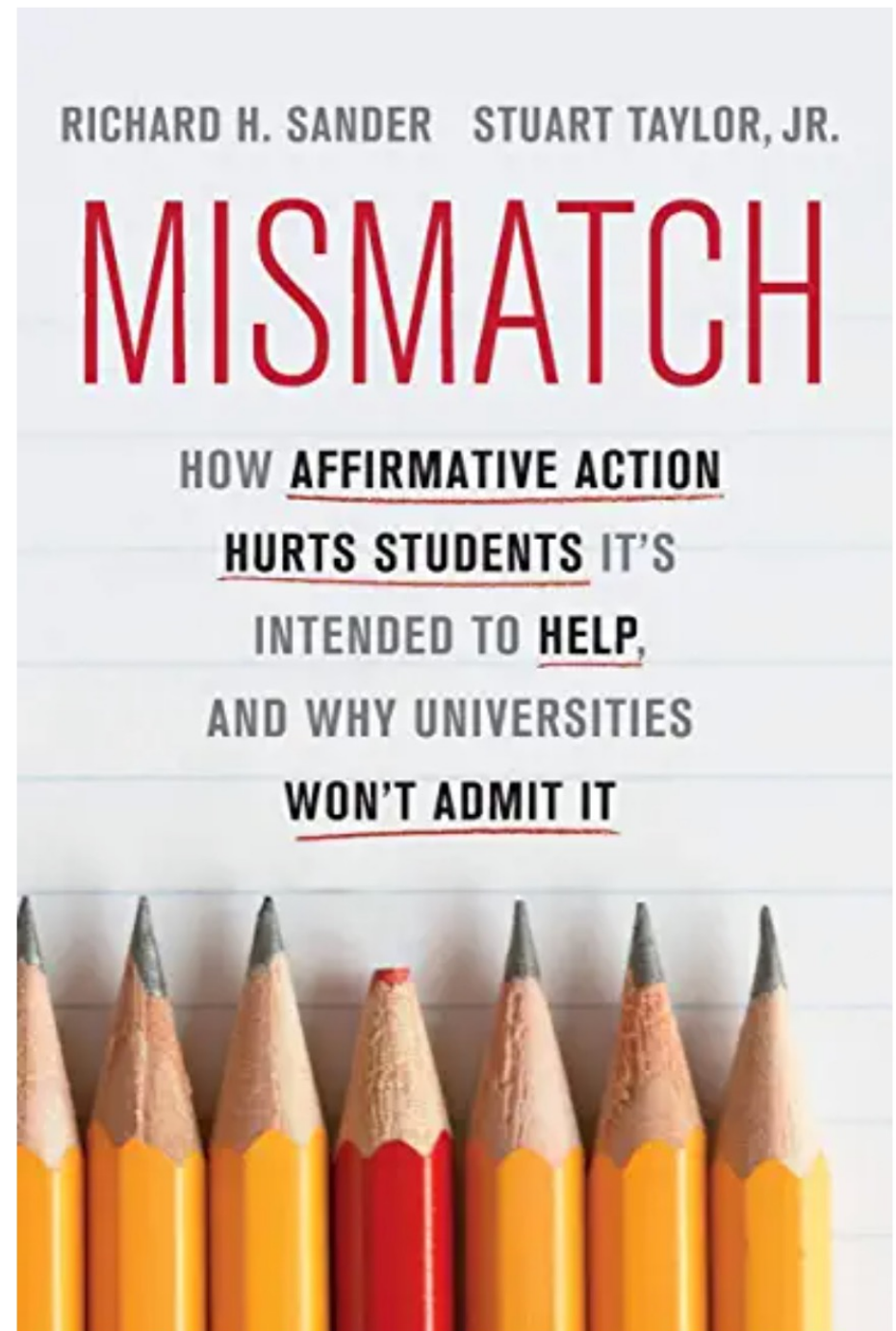
**Under-  
representation**



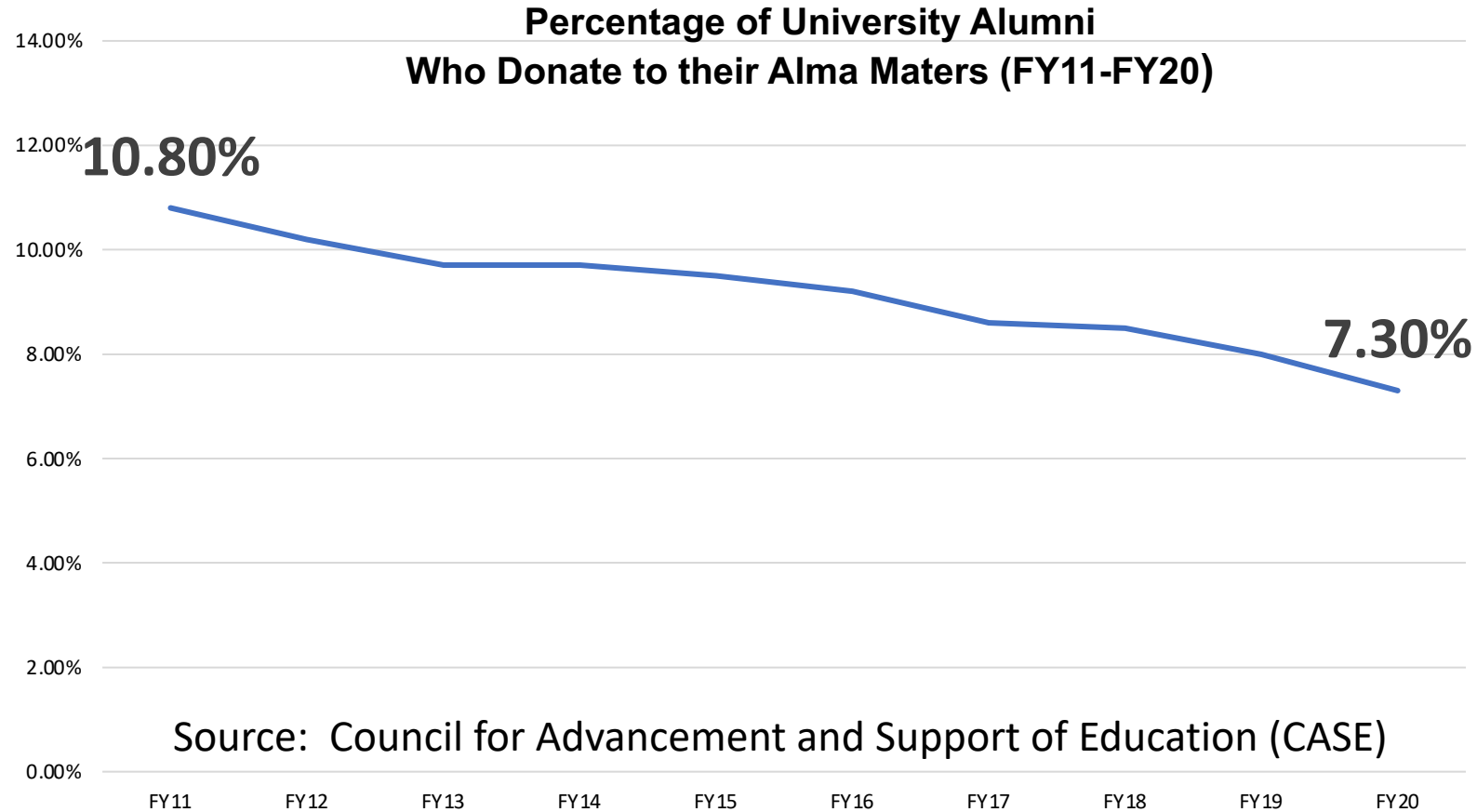
**Should we Lower  
Academic Standards  
to Enroll The Other Half?**

# Should we Lower Academic Standards to Enroll The Other Half?

***Mismatch***: Underqualified students who are admitted to elite universities experiencing worse life outcomes than those who were not admitted in the first place.



# Inclusion & Belonging Apply To Alumni, Too



***Hypothesis to test: Some part of the decline is due to universities becoming more ideological and thus estranging alumni***

# Recommendations – 1 of 3

- **Consider a broad set of diversity variables**, including both physical/identity and cognitive/intellectual, for which greater diversity could make MIT a stronger, better, and more equitable place, before selecting those that we will prioritize in our admissions, hiring, and promotion.
- **Serve the entire nation**, not just selected communities, regions, and states.
- **Leverage AI** to overcome biases and promote diversity in admissions.
- **Expand our DEI efforts** to address shortfalls where on-campus constituencies and advocacy are lacking.
- **Assess our admissions pipeline** – outreach, applications, acceptances, and enrollments – to understand where and why shortfalls are occurring and address them.



# Recommendations - 2 of 3

- **Leverage outreach, applications, and enrollments** (Stages 1, 2, and 4 of the admissions pipeline) to achieve diversity along a broad range of dimensions. **Resist the temptation to compromise academic standards** to admit (Stage 3 of the pipeline) Other-Half candidates or those of any other segment, thereby putting candidates' well-being, and MIT's long-term standing and effectiveness, at risk.
- **Consider both achievement and distance advanced** in evaluating *all* candidates..
- **Seek out and include** voices of Other-Half members of the MIT community, even if they are few in number and/or deeply closeted.
- **Refuse to stereotype** the Other Half either in person or online. More than any other institutions, universities can model open discussion and tolerance to avert this outcome.
- **Recognize our vast common ground** with the Other Half and expand on it.

# Recommendations - 3 of 3

- **Launch an Institute-wide Task Force on US & Global Polarization** to study forces driving and recommend solutions. It should address, in part, how higher education can help mitigate or reverse growing polarization.
- **Call for sensitivity and civility.** Encourage, praise, and celebrate civil engagement and robust debate based on mutual respect.
- **Closely review all large-scale alumni communications** for content which is unduly ideological. Lead instead with MIT's universal, inspiring, unifying achievements in the sciences, engineering, and technology.
- **Join or support Heterodox Academy**, a nonpartisan collaborative enhancing the quality of research and education by promoting open inquiry and viewpoint diversity.
- **Summon courage** to do what is right, not merely popular.