

1998 *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions*
(Click here to view our web site description.)
William G. Bowen
and Derek Bok

In *The Shape of the River*, two former university presidents—William Bowen of Princeton and Derek Bok of Harvard—deployed thirty years of historical and demographic analysis to examine the effects of race-sensitive policies in college and university admissions. Their findings supported the case that policies instituted to encourage the broader inclusion of minority students in selective colleges and universities enriched the educational experience of students of all races and backgrounds. Such policies also promoted the successful incorporation of African American and other minority students into the professions, positions of community and civic leadership, and the American middle class.

The *New York Times* wrote of *The Shape of the River*: “Its findings provide a strong rationale for opposing current efforts to demolish race-sensitive policies in colleges across the country. . . . The evidence collected flatly refutes many of the misimpressions of affirmative-action opponents.” The book was cited prominently by Justice Sandra Day O’Connor in the 2003 Supreme Court case upholding affirmative action, *Grutter v. Bollinger*. Hailed by supporters of race-sensitive admissions policies in colleges and universities, and even by some earlier critics of such policies, *The Shape of the River* went an impressive distance toward resolving the long and heated debates on the role of higher education in dealing with the challenge of race in American society.

