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In the name of 'equity,' companies are now ignoring educational achievement

David Christopher Kaufman

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Today, at least [two-thirds of higher education institutions](#), including Harvard and Stanford, don't require the SAT for admission. The American Bar Association recently announced it will [drop the LSAT](#) as an admissions requirement for law school. And now, [some are calling](#) for the prestigious MCAT to be scrapped as the gold standard for medical school admissions — all in the name of racial equity.

Now, the latest standard on the chopping block are colleges themselves, as a recent job posting for a director position demonstrates.

A [LinkedIn posting](#) by HR&A Advisors, the TriBeCa-based real estate consultancy, asked applicants for the \$121,668- to \$138,432-a-year position to remove “all undergraduate and graduate school name references” from their résumés and only cite the degree itself. A quick spin through a few other HR&A job postings confirmed that this policy extends company-wide as part of their “ongoing work to build a hiring system that is free from bias and based on candidate merit and performance.”



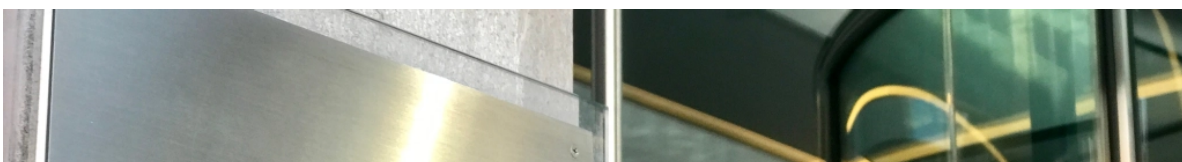


Erasing education histories from resumes follows moves by schools like Harvard to do away with long-standing admission requirements such as standardized testing.

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At a time when equity and inclusion policies have become corporate must-haves, efforts to ignore educational bona fides for new hires are hardly surprising. After all, as colleges and [even the military](#) (which no longer requires a high school diploma) drop the most basic entry requirements, why shouldn't the private sector follow suit?

There's no doubt that access to fancy schools and pricy education has historically shut out racial and economic minorities from many employment arenas — particularly at the highest ends of the earning spectrum. But obscuring education histories won't solve these inequities. It simply creates new ones.





The American Bar Association is also phasing out standardized testing and no longer requires LSAT scores for entry into law school.

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For one thing, education still matters to companies like HR&A. If it didn't, they would ask candidates to *entirely* remove schooling from their CVs, not just school names.

Secondly, education also matters to job applicants. Many have worked hard and taken out loans to acquire college degrees that, they think, *mean something* to the HR&As of the world. Many have also devoted hours to the college sports teams, academic societies and other extracurricular activities that are both resume-building and deeply rewarding.





The military, too, has abolished traditional entry requirements such as a high school diploma for prospective recruits.

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While removing education histories from CVs may appear to level the playing field, it actually creates new forms of inequities while suggesting that academic achievement does not matter to minorities.

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I myself attended universities (Brandeis, NYU) that were far above my family's affordability level precisely because I knew they were investments in my long-term earning potential as well as a way to

keep me on the straight and narrow in high school. Sure, as with many Americans — particularly African-Americans like myself — I took on student debt. But the quest for academic success not only helped me avoid (most) teenage troubles, it also helped me secure a career with good pay and a strong sense of self-worth and satisfaction.

Policies like HR&As are not just punitive, they're downright lazy. Telling young people —particularly the young people-of-color this “school-blind hiring” purports to benefit—that academic prestige doesn't matter literally reinforces the worst stereotypes of minority cultures. It says academic prestige doesn't matter *to them*.



Higher education is not just about academics, but extracurricular activities such as college sports teams, which can both improve a job candidate's competitiveness and self-esteem.

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Furthermore, for HR folks and recruiters, ignoring educational bona

fides — while appearing benevolent—is a missed opportunity to truly learn, as they say in woke-speak, about the “lived experiences” of the diverse workforce they are so desperate to attract.

Many black students (like my own grandparents, for instance) have attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). These are not just places of learning, but integral components of their graduates' identities. HBCUs mean something: they matter. And yet, these well-intentioned initiatives, led mostly by white liberals, completely erase that meaning.



Ignoring education histories also denies the importance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities such as Howard University in Washington, DC in their graduates' identities and lives.

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This is why school-blind hiring feels so frustrating — and phony. In

this period of quiet-quitting and mass resignations, it offers already unmotivated workers one less task to tick off while burnishing their anti-bias credentials for literally doing nothing.

Of course, this doesn't mean that graduates of schools less costly or "lower ranking" than my own should be denied a chance at the American Dream. Rather, hiring teams need to work harder to figure out how to get them there without erasing the educational achievements of others.

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