

# Socioeconomics less of a factor in grad schools

## Admissions processes still, by law, consider race and ethnicity

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Few graduate schools consider socioeconomic status when admitting students, according to a recent study.

Though the graduate admissions process evaluates applicants based on race and ethnicity by federal mandate, relatively few departments inquire about applicants' socioeconomic information, according to the study conducted by Kenneth Oldfield, an emeritus professor of public administration at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

Monica Ingram, UT School of Law assistant dean, said the mandate of the School of Law requires that the socioeconomic background of its applicants be considered.

"It is not an overwhelming factor," Ingram said, adding that none of the methods for attaining departmental diversity can be observed in isolation, as they are all important.

According to the study, only 12 percent of graduate programs nationwide request information regarding the level of education achieved by applicants' parents, and only 8 percent ask for the occupations of parents. The School of Law inquires about parents' education but not their occupations. The study found parental education and parental occupation to be the two most common methods for discerning socioeconomic status.

Questioning socioeconomic status in the application process is difficult, said Brian Gatten, an English graduate student and former president of the Graduate Student Assembly, the representative body of UT graduate students.

The perception among applicants is that information on socioeconomic background may be used against them, as a graduate department may have to allocate more funds for a poorer student, Gatten said.

"I don't believe that is actually the case, but the perception would be a little daunting," Gatten said. "I can't think of a good way to really get at that without eliminating people from the application process."

Ultimately, applicants are selected based on intellectual capability and potential, Ingram said.

"The greatest factor for any applicant is going to be competitiveness," she said