



## **SAID Statement on the US Supreme Court Ruling on the Consideration of Race in College Admissions**

July 3, 2023

The Society of American Indian Dentists (SAID) has a vision for the future that includes increasing the number of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) dentists to provide healing for our communities and strive for oral health equity. Much of the work that is put forth from our organization is focused on student success and fostering an environment where our students have equitable opportunities. Forging a healthier tomorrow for all of us is achieved by increasing educational opportunities for our youth and next generation.

Our organization was founded by the first American Indian dentist, George Blue Spruce, Jr., DDS, MPH and his colleagues in 1990. In discussing the importance of supporting AI/AN youth on a career path to dentistry, he said, "I looked behind me, and I saw very few American Indians going through to become doctored health professionals. And so, I thought that I would think very seriously about an organization that would help promote that effort." Although SAID has been working towards the inclusion of AI/ANs in dentistry for over thirty years, there has been very little improvement in the representation of AI/AN people in the profession of dentistry. As underrepresented minority students our AI/AN youth face formidable barriers including poverty, underfunded and under resourced primary and secondary schools, historical trauma, poorer oral and overall health, etc. It is no wonder, then, that AI/AN students are less likely to enroll in institutions of higher education than their white peers.

The recent ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court on the consideration of race in college admissions is disheartening. While the decision feels like an additional barrier to the tireless work that we have put in, we remain dedicated to our students and future providers. The time is now to amplify our voices on the gross under-representation of AI/AN and students of color into higher education and to not let the decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court hold us back. We will be knocking on doors of leaders within higher education and will create more community-led solutions. Let us continue our work and create paths forward to assist our students in reaching their full potential.