

Race, Class, and the Fisher Ruling

Implications of a New Study of Class-Based Affirmative Action

Monday, July 22, 2013

1:00 EST

An Inside Higher Ed Webinar



Fisher v. University of Texas

▶ Affirmed the holding in Grutter v. Bollinger, 539 U.S. 306 that the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body are a compelling state interest that can justify consideration of race as one factor in a holistic admissions review.

▶ **BUT...**

Fisher v. University of Texas

- ▶ “Narrow tailoring also requires that the reviewing court verify that it is “necessary” for a university to use race to achieve the educational benefits of diversity. This involves a careful judicial inquiry into whether a university could achieve sufficient diversity without using racial classifications.... The reviewing court must ultimately be satisfied that no workable race-neutral alternatives would produce the educational benefits of diversity.”

Legal Uncertainty

- ▶ Mixed messages
 - ▶ Race can still be considered
 - ▶ But if challenged in litigation, policy may be hard to justify under Fisher's slightly confusing standard
- ▶ Activist litigation

Class-Based Affirmative Action in College Admissions



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► What is your mission?



Class-Based Affirmative Action in College Admissions

- ▶ What is your mission?
- ▶ How does your admissions process support your mission?



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- ▶ How does your admissions process support your mission?
 - ▶ What applicant traits do you value?

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 - ▶ How do you measure those traits?

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 - ▶ How do you measure those traits?
- ▶ What are your intended outcomes?

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- ▶ What is your mission?
- ▶ How does your admissions process support your mission?
 - ▶ What applicant traits do you value?
 - ▶ How do you measure those traits?
- ▶ What are your intended outcomes?
 - ▶ To what extent did you achieve them?

Class-Based Affirmative Action in College Admissions



Class-Based Affirmative Action in College Admissions

- ▶ The Disadvantage Index
 - ▶ Quantify the obstacles an applicant has faced



Class-Based Affirmative Action in College Admissions

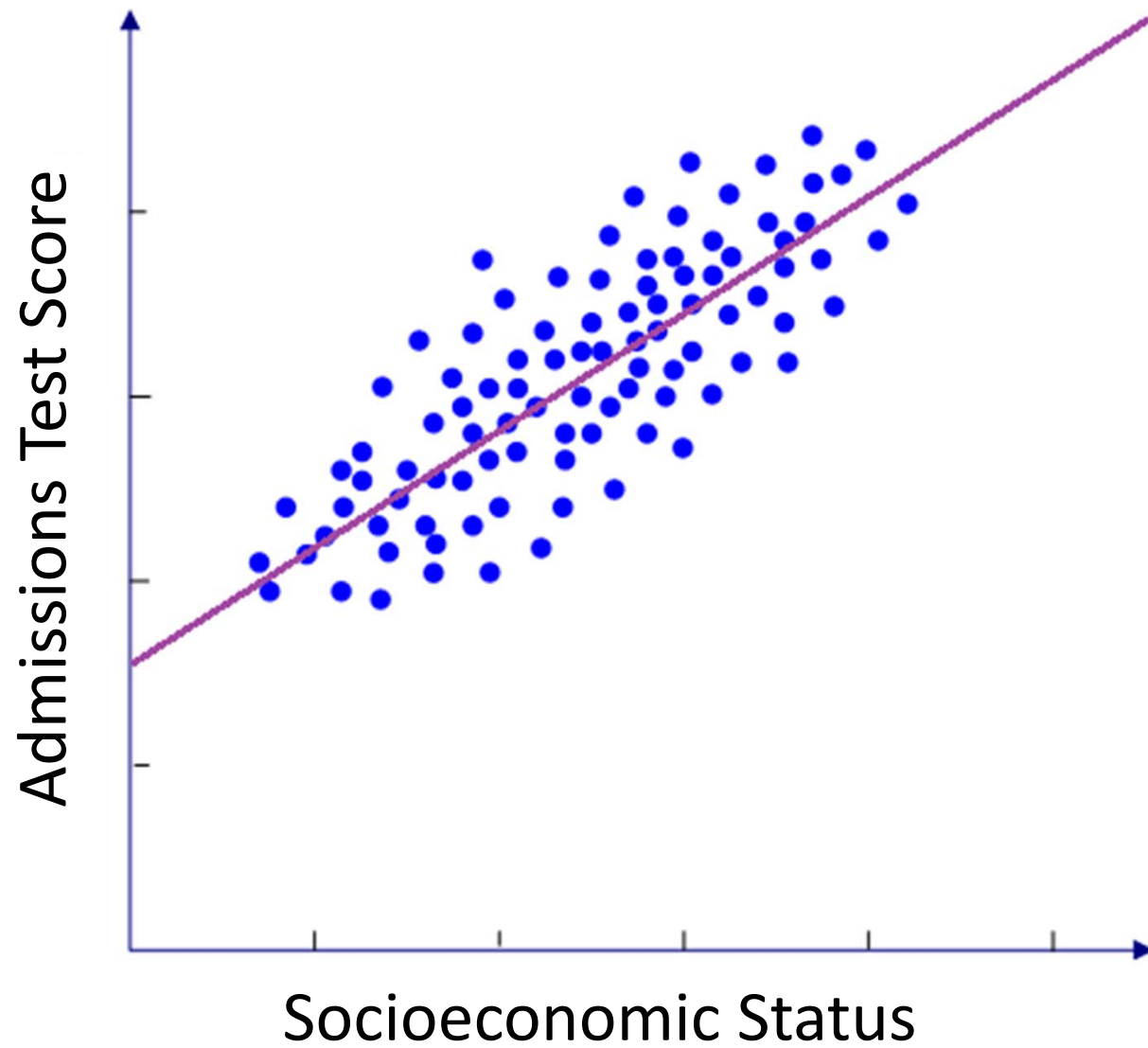
▶ The Disadvantage Index

- ▶ Quantify the obstacles an applicant has faced

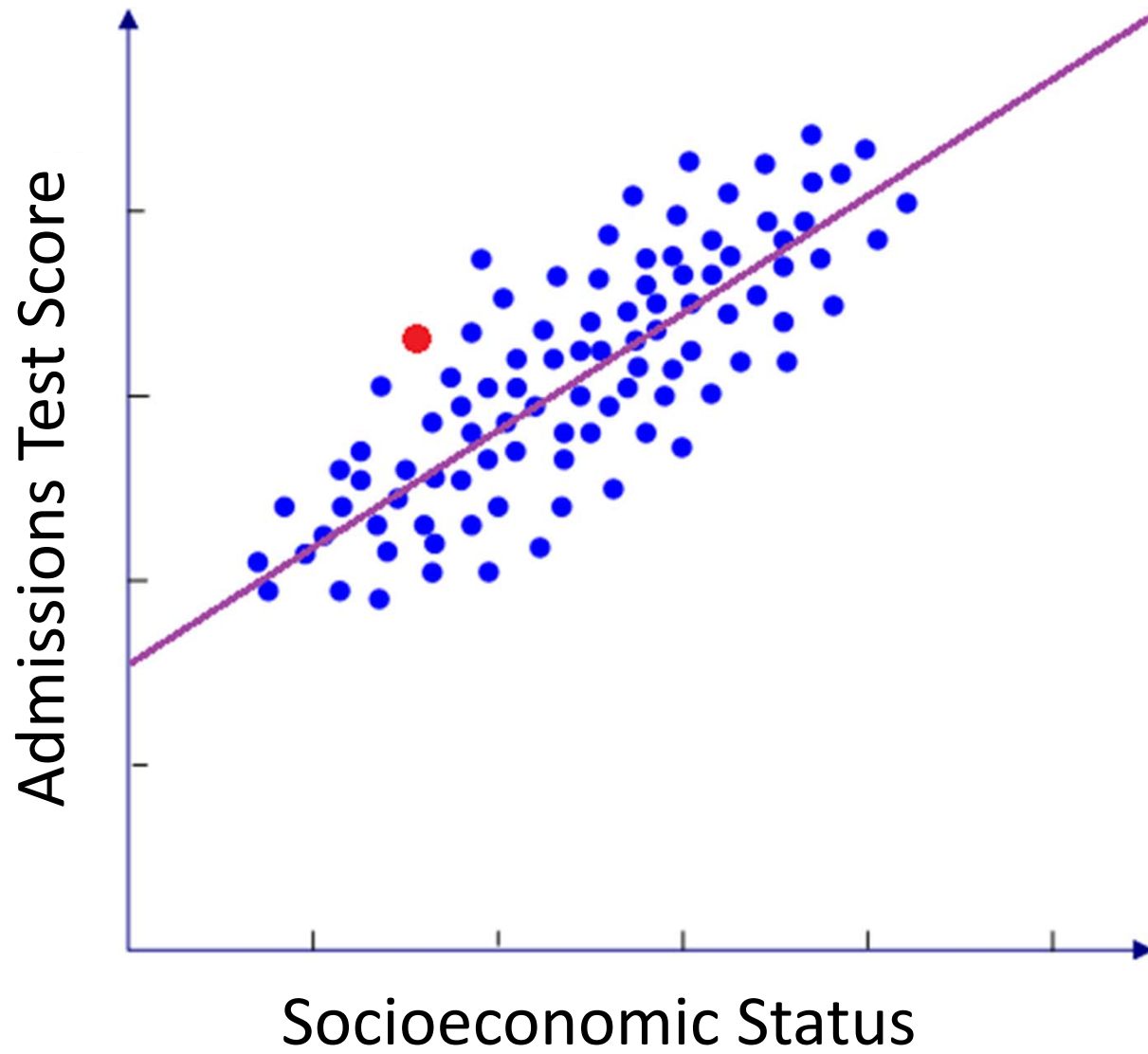
▶ The Overachievement Index

- ▶ Quantify the extent to which an applicant has overcome obstacles

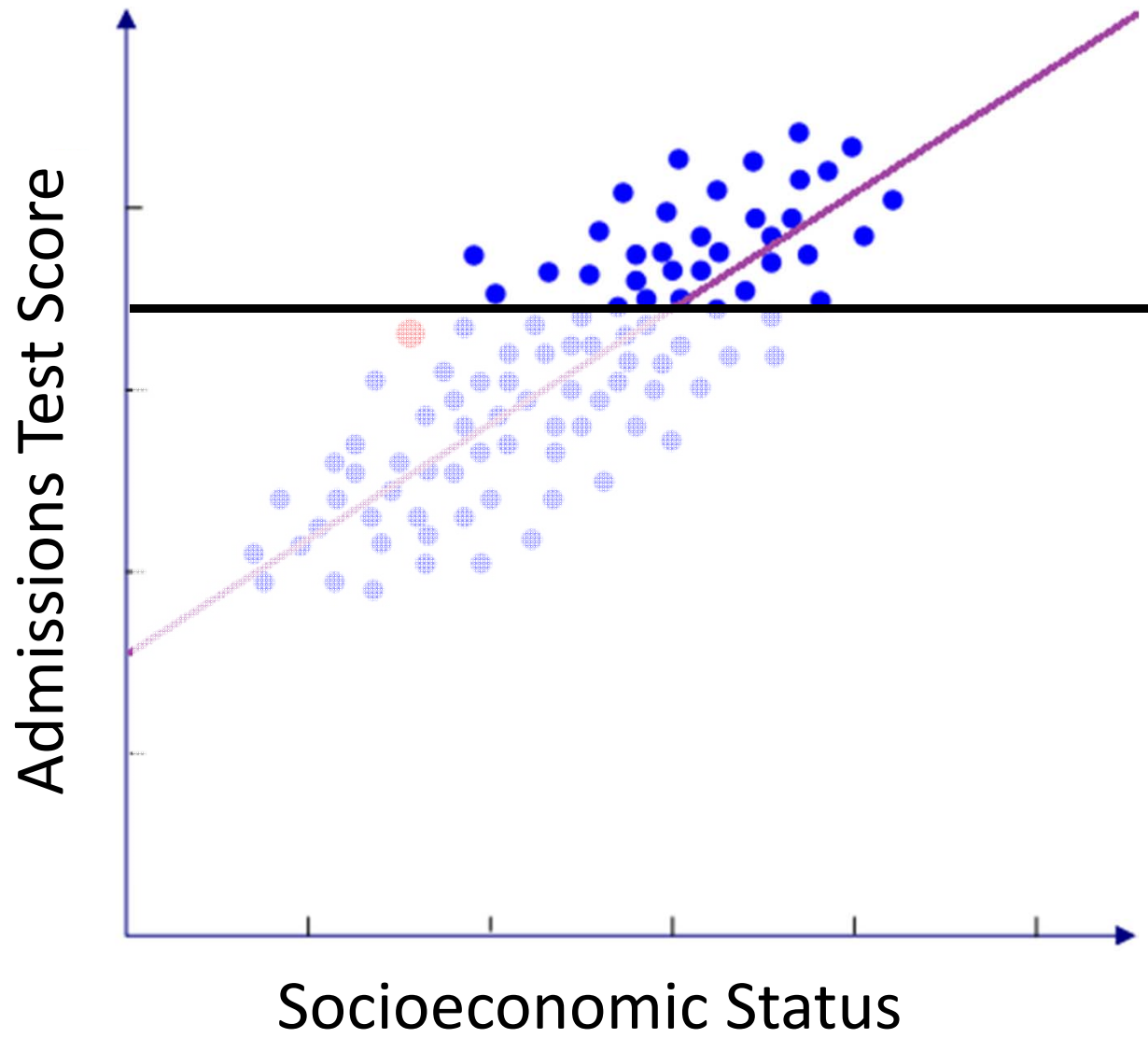
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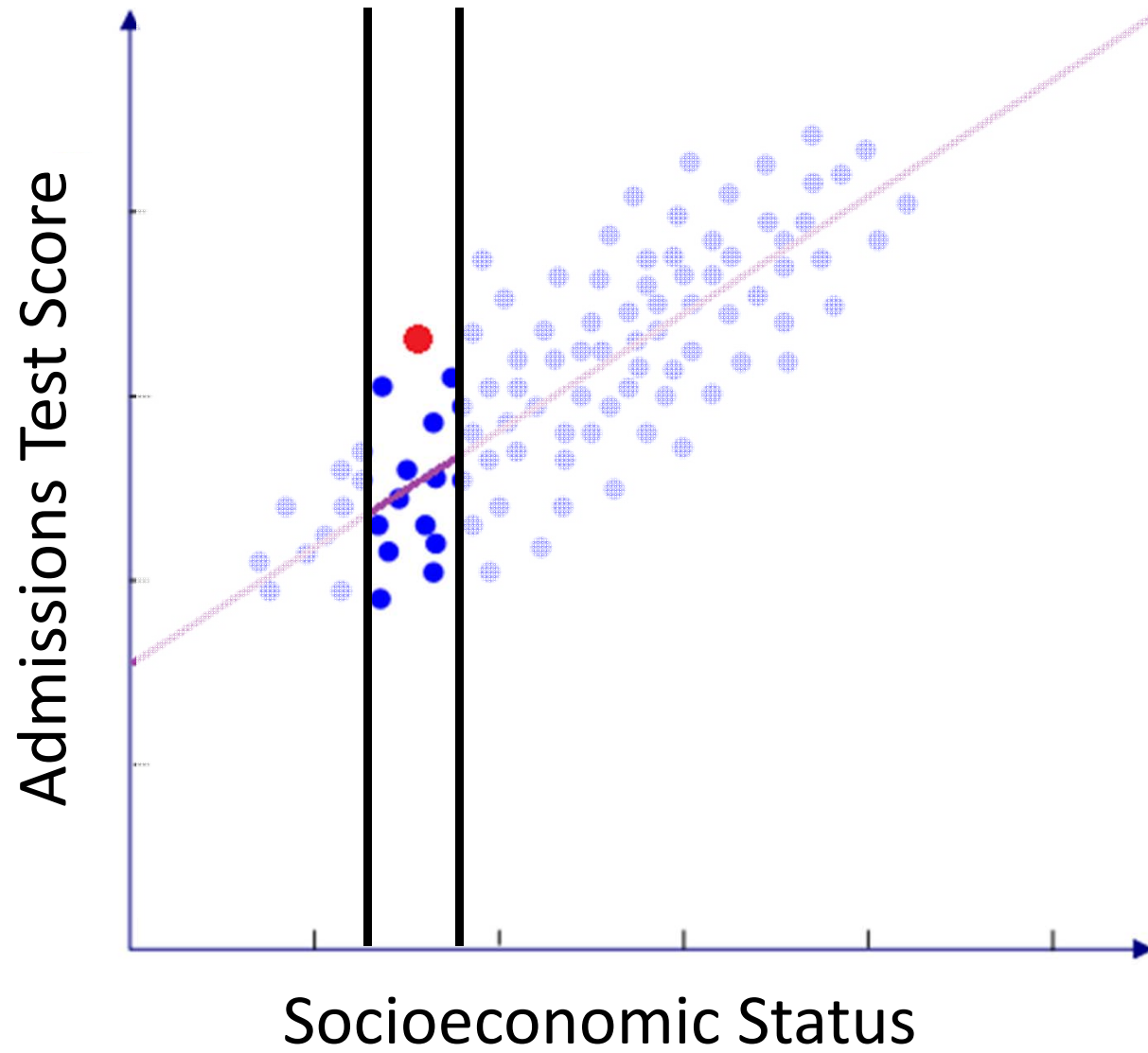
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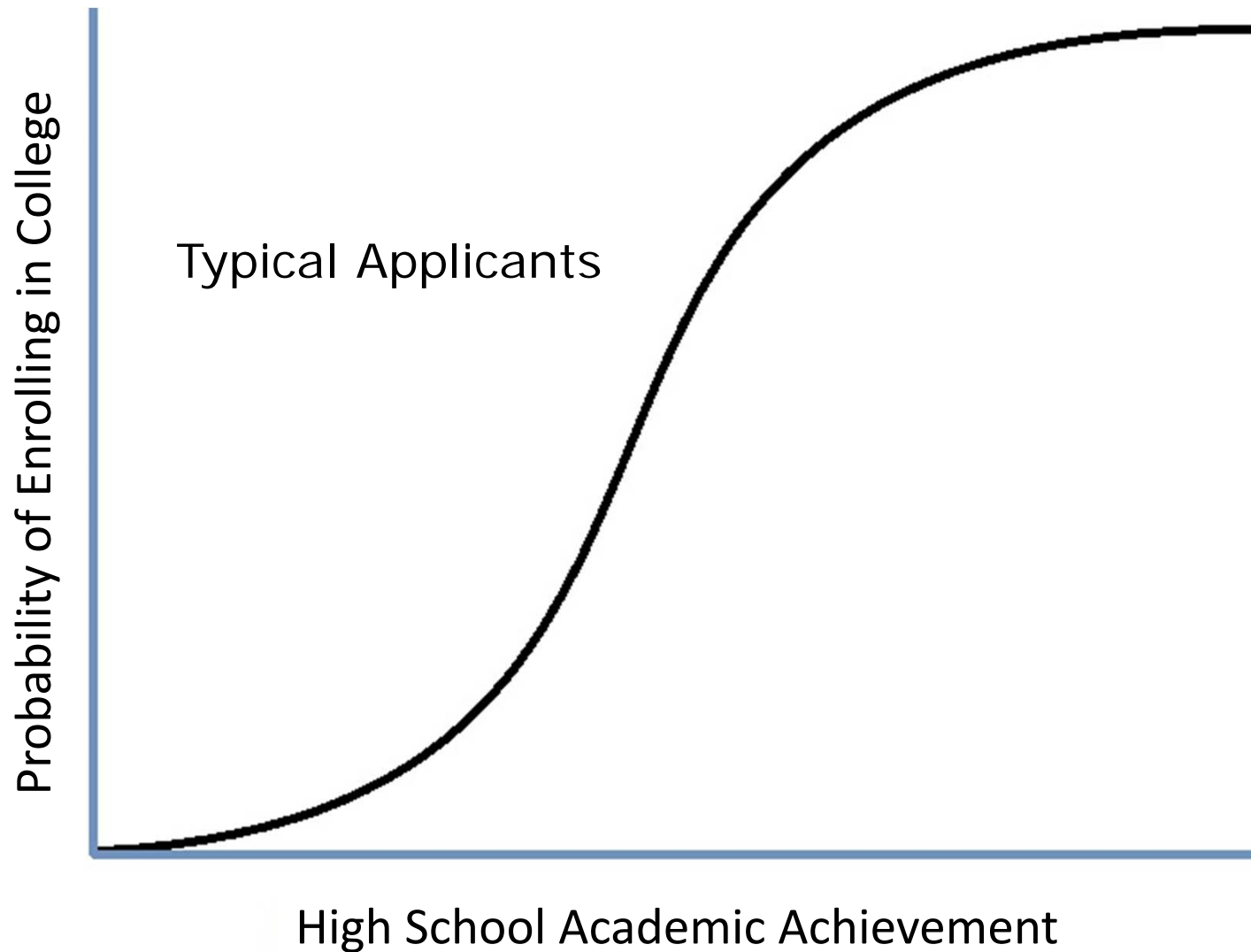
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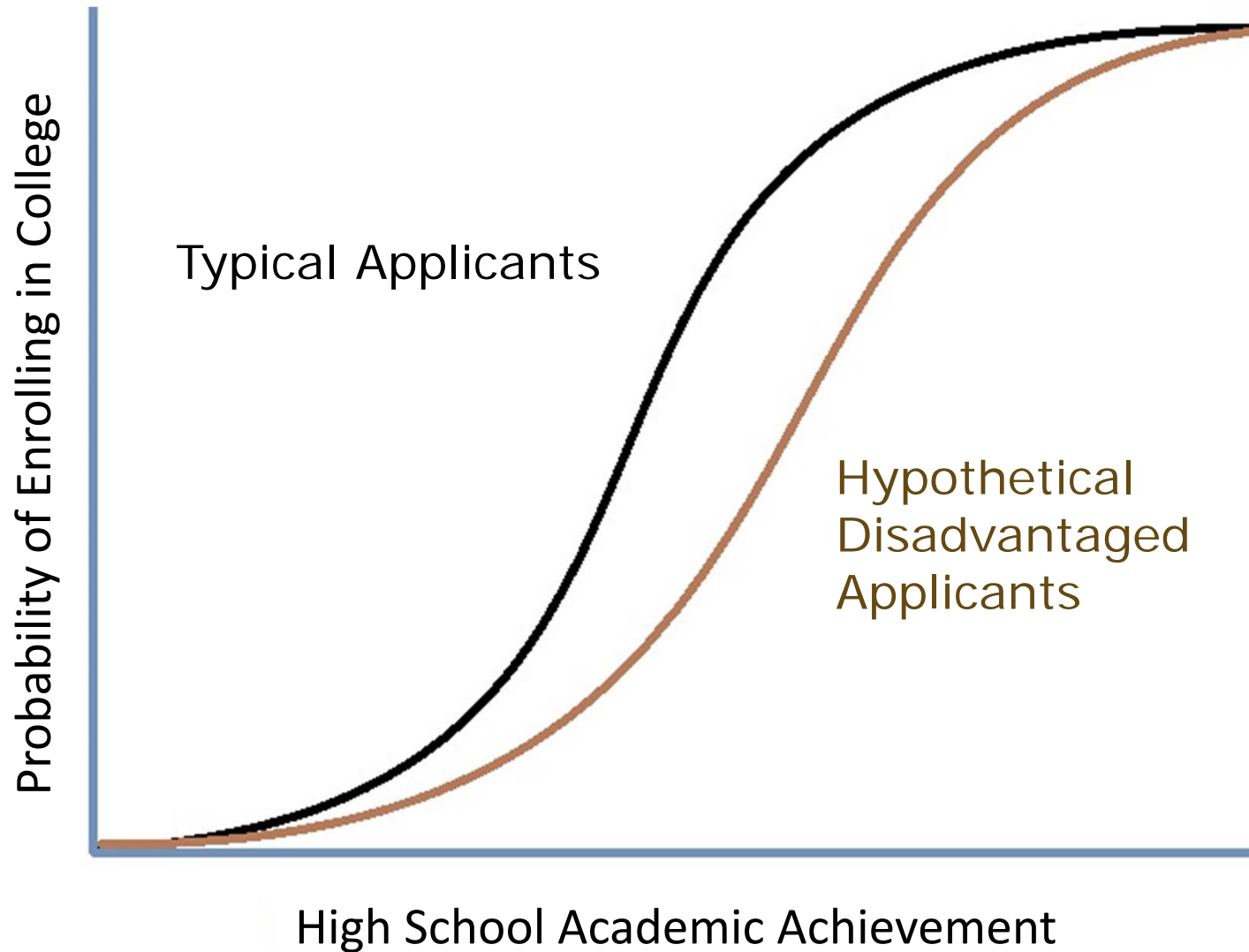
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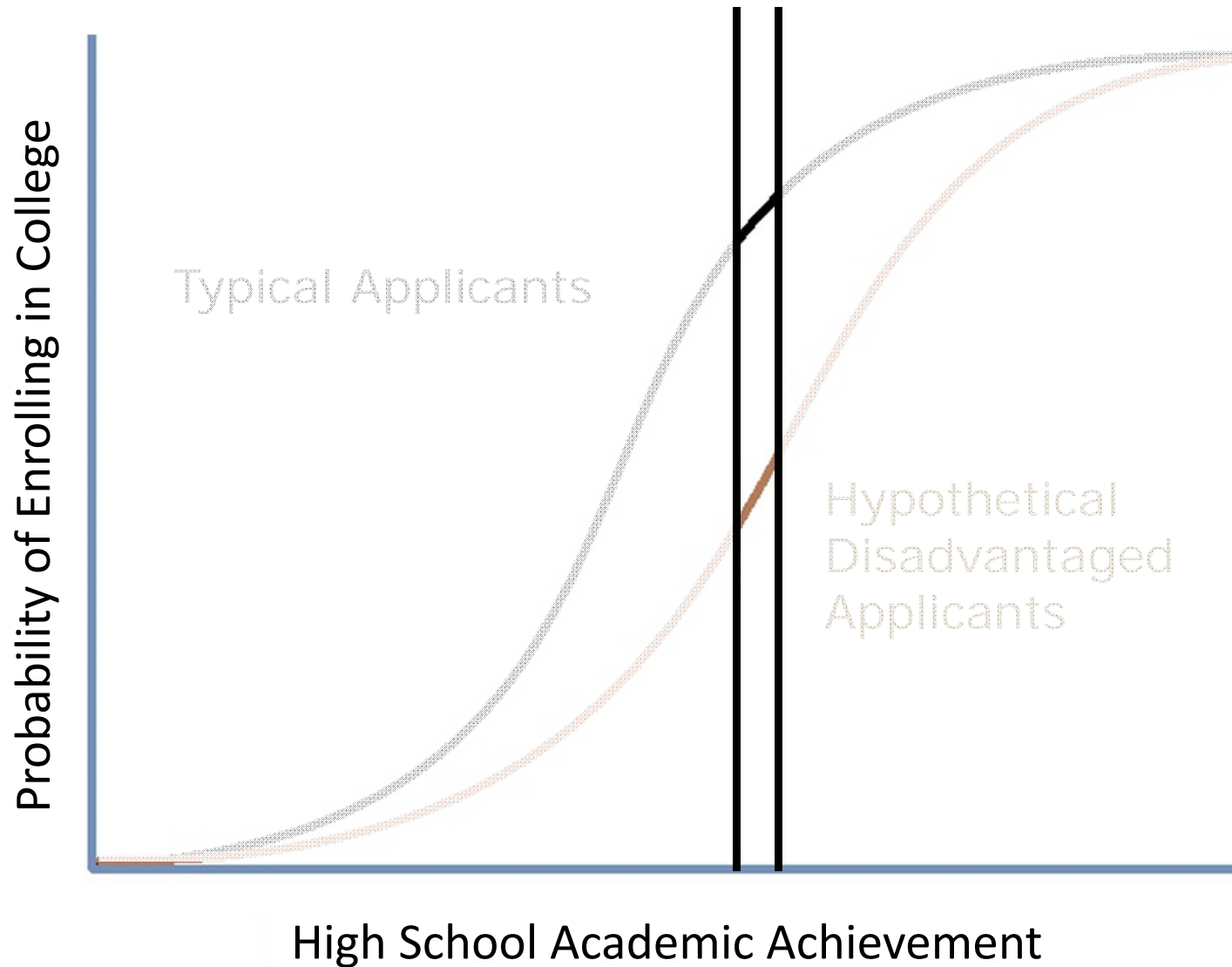
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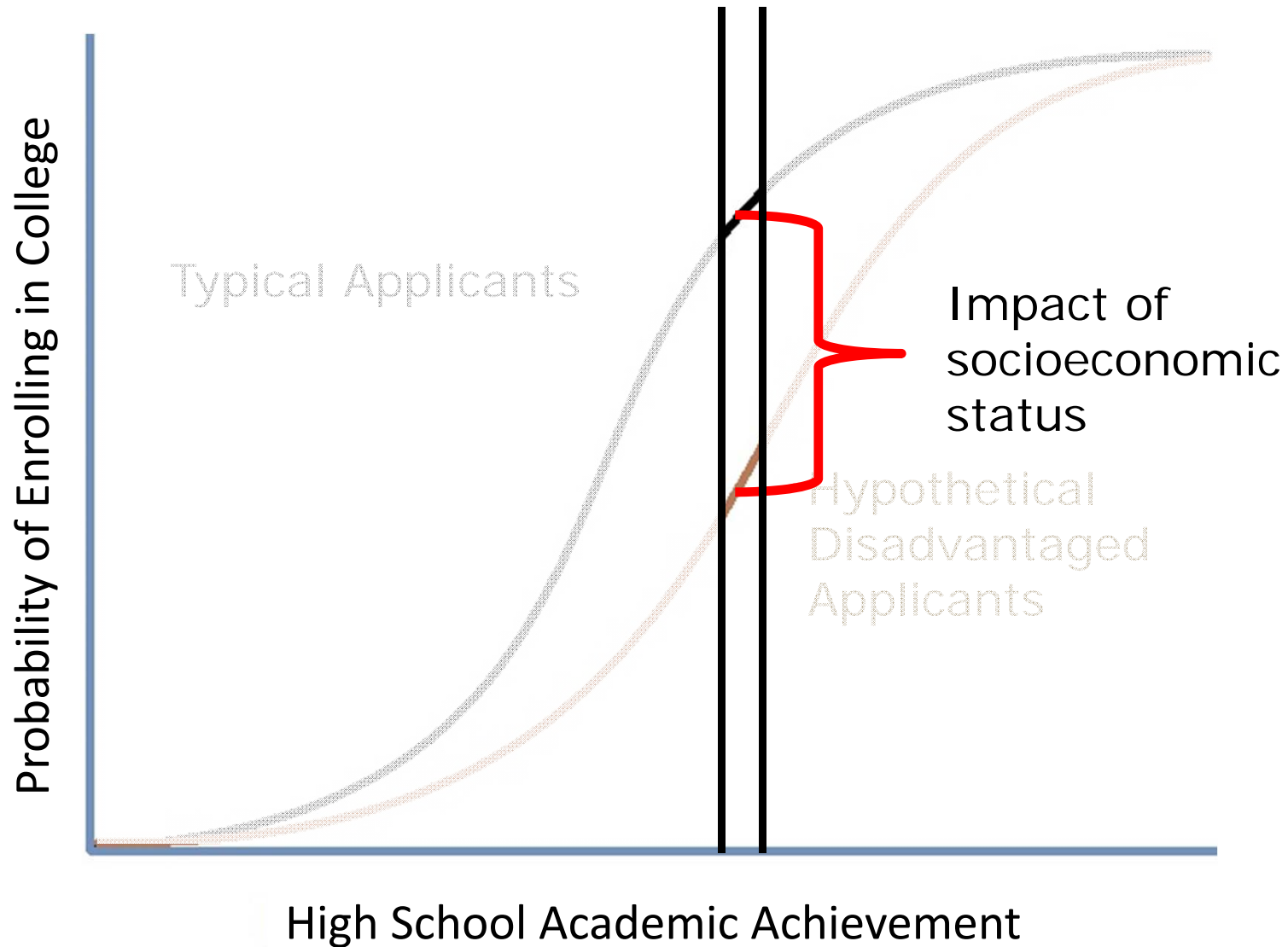
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▶ Socioeconomic Factors

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Applicant-Level

- ▶ Family income
- ▶ Parents' education level
- ▶ Single parent
- ▶ Native English speaker
- ▶ Dependents

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School-Level

- ▶ Percentage of students receiving FRL
- ▶ Rural location
- ▶ Student-to-teacher ratio
- ▶ Size of the 12th grade class

▶ Replacing Race with Class

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Applicant Type	Acceptance Rate			
	N	Class-based	Race-based	Difference
Low SES	121	81%	72%	9%**
Severely Low SES	35	83%	63%	20%*
URM	48	64%	56%	8%

**p < 0.05; **p < 0.01, via test of correlated proportions (McNemar, 1947)*

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Applicant Type	Class-Plus-Race		Race-Based		Difference
	N	Acceptance Rate	N	Acceptance Rate	
Low SES	212	58%	195	49%	9%*
Severely Low SES	54	57%	55	44%	13%
URM	118	62%	118	45%	17%**
Low SES <i>and</i> URM	47	59%	43	27%	32%**

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$, via Fisher's exact test (Fisher, 1934)

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▶ Can Class-Based Admits
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Group	N	% Graduating in 4 Years	% Graduating in 6 Years	Undergraduate GPA
Class-Based Admits	2,704	28.3%	52.9%	2.50
Baseline	18,422	39.8%	66.0%	2.83

► Can Class-Based Admits Succeed in College?

Group	N	% Graduating in 4 Years	% Graduating in 6 Years	Undergraduate GPA
Class-Based Admits (Overachievers)	601	44.8%	70.0%	2.94
Baseline	18,422	39.8%	66.0%	2.83

Thank You!

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