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Though originally designed to support educational and job opportunities for minorities who may not have been able to obtain certain careers or access to higher education, affirmative action is oftentimes also seen as a form of discrimination. This is because the program often lets under-privileged, under-qualified individuals be accepted rather than a more qualified applicant who does not fit a minority status.

Affirmative action is good in many ways. It promotes diversity and in doing so, promotes many people of different perspectives and experiences to thrive together. It could also help stop stereotypes as it forces different individuals who may not encounter each other in “real life” to interact. On the other hand, affirmative action could also be seen as something that reinforces stereotypes. After all, simply saying that women and minorities are “inferior” promotes superiority attitudes which detract from the goal of equality. Furthermore, the idea of having diversity just for the sake of having it does little good for the school or business. If many applicants are accepted based on a need to fulfill a quota, it would be harmful to qualified applicants. On the other side, affirmative action offers the possibility to help balance socioeconomic differences as more minorities can obtain opportunities to rise in life. Similarly, affirmative action could also help break the glass ceiling. Wage gaps, gender gaps, minority gaps, etc. can be reduced when people are given similar opportunities despite gender, race, etc. Moreover, the program allows many people to chase their dreams and pursue careers or education that they otherwise would not have had the opportunity to go after. But even as minorities pursue their goals, affirmative action lessens the achievements that they obtain. For example, minorities who get their position with the help of affirmative action must work harder for the same respect that an average worker would as they carry with them the stigma of being “helped” into their positions.

Affirmative action is riddled with pros and cons. In some circumstances affirmative action is rather positive and a great promotional tool for diversity. However, diversity should not be pursued at the expense of others. This program, like many others, is highly debated and rather controversial. In the end, no matter what, people should seek to pursue whatever opportunities they can and strive to fulfill their goals.