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**Focus on excellence in education, not race or gender**

The education system in this country is obsessed with diversity.

One place to find diversity is in global mathematics and science rankings: The United States is 36th in math and 28th in science (after Estonia, Slovenia and Vietnam in both categories), according to the official Program for International Student Assessment report. Meanwhile, an Iranian-born, raised and educated mathematician (currently teaching at Stanford University), who was born two years before the 1979 Iranian Revolution took place, recently became the first ever female winner of the celebrated Fields Medal (the mathematics equivalent of the Nobel Prize) since its inception in 1936.

Many American universities, in their process of interviewing prospective professors, have mandatory questions regarding how that individual would handle diversity in the classroom. Having been involved in such processes as an interviewer, I have found these questions to be often baffling, if not confusing, to the candidates.

Perhaps if we shifted our attention from the race, gender and sexual orientation of our students, and focused instead on the pursuit of excellence, the joy of learning and the awakening of curiosity, regardless of the race, gender, and sexual orientation of our students, we'll have a less embarrassing place in the emerging global order.

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