

Fellowships & Scholarships: Creating Inclusive Eligibility Requirements for Undocumented Students

August 2022

Dear Presidents' Alliance Members and Partners,

On behalf of the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education, we write to you today with some suggestions and resources for institutions seeking to support undocumented students. With Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) facing a precarious future in the courts and the legislative prospects for Dream legislation uncertain, we encourage campuses to ensure that eligibility for institutional and external scholarships and programs are inclusive of undocumented students to the extent possible.

Why is this important?

Since DACA's implementation in 2012, colleges and universities have greatly improved access and support for undocumented students.¹ However, at a number of institutions, program entry or scholarship eligibility may be coupled with a student's DACA status. Further, there are many campus-based and external scholarships and fellowships that still exclude all undocumented students because of citizenship or lawful permanent residence requirements. Undocumented students who are in college today, and the vast majority who are entering college, are not covered by [DACA nor are they DACA eligible](#). Fellowships or funding opportunities that remain restricted to U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents or that have been established with DACA beneficiaries in mind must now be revised to create inclusive scholarship/fellowship eligibility requirements to adequately support undocumented students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Below are two steps your institution can consider taking:

- Institutions can audit their existing internal and external scholarships to ascertain their eligibility criteria and determine if they can be extended to undocumented students, and if possible, without regard to DACA status.
 - *If institutions identify external fellowships for U.S. domestic students that are not open to undocumented students, they should consider advocating for those funders to expand their eligibility criteria.*
- To the extent possible and applicable, public and private institutions should work to remove DACA status as required eligibility criteria for funding or program access on their own campuses.
 - *For example, institutions could use date and length of residency in the United States, attendance and graduation from a U.S. high school or adult school as proxy requirements for eligibility.*

¹ To view more information about DACA go to <https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/policy/daca-what-you-need-to-know/>

Disclaimer: There are various types of funding available to undocumented students. Please note that you should review these suggestions within the context of your specific state laws, and that state and federal laws and funding opportunities may change. *The information and guidance provided in this letter does not, and is not intended to, constitute legal advice;* instead, they are for general informational purposes only.

Below you can find some examples of definitions and eligibility criteria to consider adapting:

- The Department of Education’s [Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System \(IPEDS\)](#) new guidance recommends that institutions of higher education include undocumented students as eligible noncitizens when reporting race and ethnicity: “Eligible noncitizens includes all students who completed high school or a GED equivalency within the United States (including DACA and undocumented students) and who were not on an F-1 non-immigrant student visa at the time of high school graduation.” This eligibility criteria could be used for programs and scholarships as well.
- [Claremont Colleges: Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship](#) “Status as a U.S. citizen, be permanent residents, DACAmented, or undocumented.”
- [PD Soros Fellowship for New Americans](#) “If none of the other categories apply to you and you were born abroad, you must have graduated from both high school and college in the US (this includes current and past DACA recipients).”
- [Jack Kent Cooke Transfer Scholarship](#) “U.S. citizenship is not required. Candidates, however, must have attended an accredited two-year institution in the United States.”
- [TheDream.US](#) revised eligibility for its scholarships so that its scholarships are open to undocumented students without DACA, who have arrived in the U.S. before they turned 16. “Have DACA; TPS; or came to the country before November 1, 2016, and otherwise meet the DACA criteria”
- [UCI Dream Project Fellowship](#) “We strongly encourage undocumented students without a work authorization permit to apply for this fellowship”

We recognize that incorporating eligibility for undocumented students in fellowship or scholarship programs may raise questions on campus (regarding taxes, employment, etc). We provide some resources below:

- [Higher Education Guide to Funding Opportunities for Undocumented Students](#). This resource provides guidelines and suggestions for higher education institutions (*including information regarding taxes and employment*) who wish to establish and implement funding and experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate and graduate undocumented students.
- [FAQ on Experiential and Funding Opportunities for Undocumented Students](#). The purpose of this document is to provide campuses and their legal counsel with information on developing nonemployment-based, funded experiential opportunities for undocumented students.
- [Beyond DACA: An Updated Checklist for Campuses to Support Undocumented Campus Members](#). The purpose of this updated checklist is to ensure that campuses have the tools they need to respond to future developments, keep their resources up to date beyond DACA, and explicitly recognize that many undocumented students are not DACA students. This checklist is intended to help support DACA, former DACA, DACA-eligible, and undocumented students, scholars, faculty, and staff.

We are happy to work with you to explore ways to change, amend, and update existing criteria to provide equal opportunity to all students regardless of immigration status.

Sincerely,
Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration