Case Study #1

Case

A non-DACA undergraduate student plans to pursue a Ph.D. program in Sociology in a state that has no known policies on access to in-state tuition or state financial aid for undocumented students. This student does not have research experience and did not receive any support from their undergraduate institution to apply for graduate school. They applied to two Ph.D. programs and two Research Master’s Degree programs. Both of the Ph.D. programs rejected them and only one of the Master’s programs from a private university accepted them. However, they are not receiving any state or institutional aid.

Brainstorm

The student reaches out to their career advisor to try to understand what her options are. The student ultimately wants to pursue a Ph.D. but after being rejected from the two Ph.D. programs and with no research experience they are unsure if obtaining a Ph.D. is realistic anymore. They are unsure if they should...

1. Go into debt for a Research Master’s Degree program to gain research experience so they can re-apply for a Ph.D. program.

2. Take a gap year and do something else (but what?) that might help them become a more competitive candidate before re-applying to a Ph.D. program.
Discussion Questions for Case Study #1

1. Describe the conditions the student is navigating.
2. Identify some of the challenges they are facing in how to move forward.

Reactive Strategies

1. What could the student do right now?
2. What could their current institution do right now to support them?
3. What could a prospective graduate program do right now to support them?

Proactive Strategies: If we had a “time machine”...

1. What could have the student done in advance to be more prepared to navigate this situation?
2. What could “you” and/or their current institution have done in advance to be more prepared to better support students confronting situations like this?
3. What could graduate programs have done in advance to be more prepared to better support students confronting situations like this?
Case Study #2

Case
A non-DACA student who was admitted to a graduate program in a large public research university in North Carolina is offered a paid research opportunity in the engineering department. The professor leading the project is excited about the prospect of serving as the student’s advisor and bringing them onto their research team however, this project is funded by the Department of Defense. This is the first time the faculty member has worked with an undocumented student. The faculty member wants this student to take advantage of this experience but they are nervous due to university and state restrictions.

State Context
North Carolina prohibits undocumented residents, including DACA recipients, from accessing in-state tuition and state financial aid. Requiring undocumented students to pay out-of-state tuition after the North Carolina Attorney General’s office issued an advisory letter stating that under federal and state law undocumented students are not eligible for in-state tuition. Additionally, The University of North Carolina System Policy 700.1.4 [G] establishes that the state’s undocumented students may not receive state financial aid in the form of a grant or a loan.

Brainstorm
The student reaches out to the Presidents’ Alliance for more information on paid research opportunities for an undocumented graduate student without DACA status. As practitioners who work with undocumented students, what advice would you offer:

- The student?
- The faculty member?
- Student support practitioners at the graduate institution?