

K-12 ADVISING GUIDE

Supporting Undocumented Students with the College Process

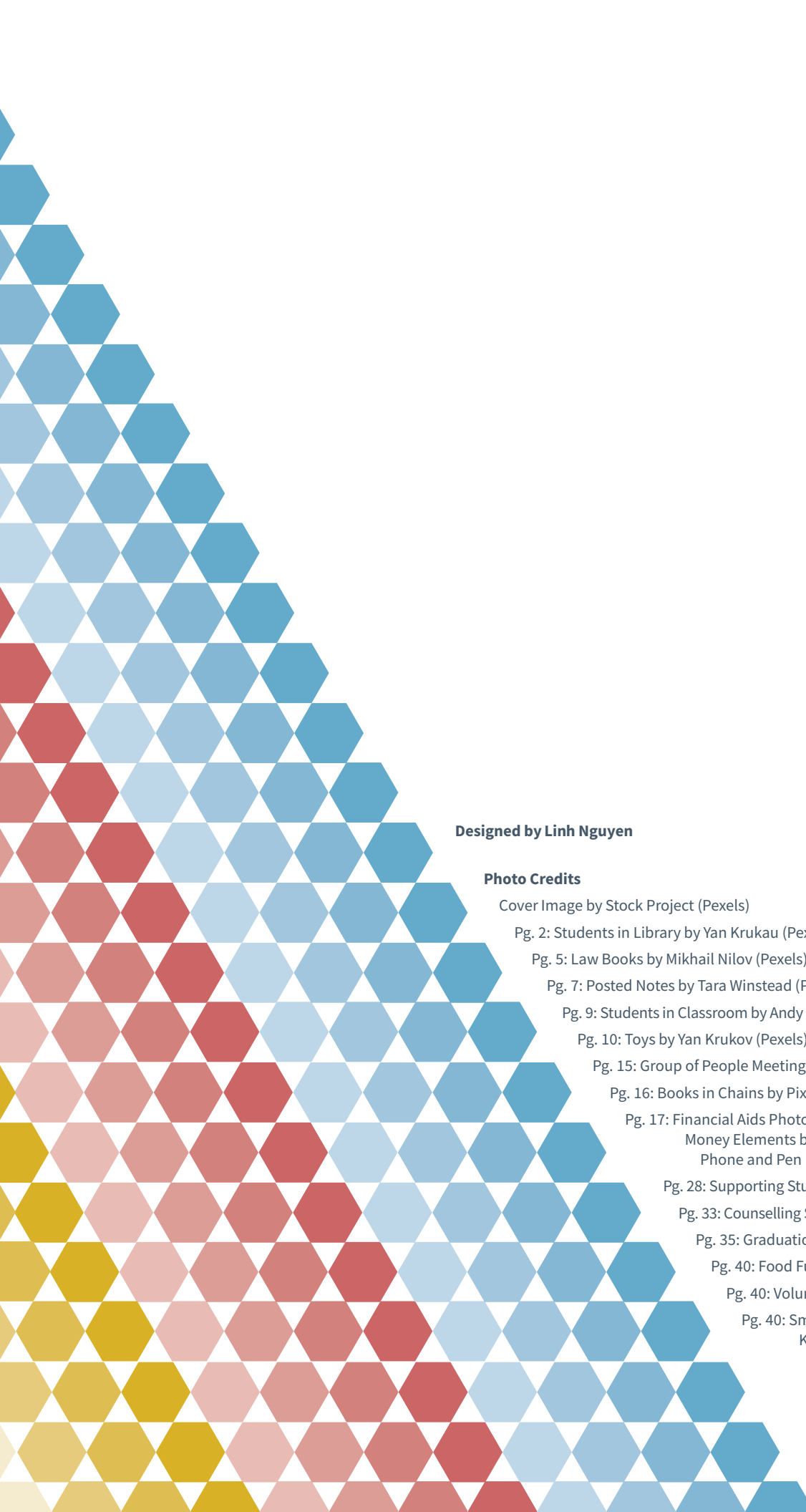
THE PRESIDENTS' ALLIANCE
on Higher Education and Immigration
in Partnership with Teach for America and
The National College Attainment Network
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INTRODUCTION

Background

Undocumented high school students face arduous challenges in pursuing post-secondary education. Navigating complex legal landscapes, financial barriers, and cultural sensitivities, they often encounter obstacles that affect their academic aspirations. As of 2023, more than 100,000 undocumented students have graduated high school each year, and over 600,000 are enrolled in K-12 U.S. schools.¹ Yet, undocumented students face unique challenges in accessing higher education due to their immigration status.



There are an estimated 408,000 undocumented students pursuing college degrees across the United States.² These students enrich the cultural diversity of campuses and make significant economic contributions to society. They demonstrate perseverance and resilience in the face of immense adversity, making them prime candidates for focused support. Undocumented students require substantial support to navigate

and succeed in the education system, ensuring their full participation and contribution to society. As such, providing comprehensive assistance and resources tailored to their needs is imperative.

In response to these challenges, The Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration (the Alliance), the National College Attainment Network (NCAN), and Teach For America have

spent the past year creating a comprehensive advising guide for high school counselors, teachers, and administrators supporting undocumented students. This guide aims to equip educators with tools and strategies to effectively advocate for and assist undocumented students. Teachers and counselors at the K-12 level are crucial in the college transition process; therefore, we also invited educators across the U.S. to contribute their expertise.

Purpose and Scope of the Guide

Drawing on the collective expertise of the K-12 strategy group, this guide is positioned to serve as a tool box for anyone working with undocumented students at the K-12 level. Throughout this guide, we address critical subject areas such as college access and financial aid, cultural competency, legal considerations, and practical counseling strategies. All students, regardless of their immigration status, have immense potential and dreams. With the proper support, undocumented students can achieve their potential.

Why Undocumented Students

Since the DREAM Act was first introduced in Congress in 2001, undocumented students have fully contributed to their local communities and the U.S. economy at large. Opportunities like the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program have provided temporary relief to hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants. However, the current ongoing legal challenges to the DACA program—and the eligibility criteria that leave out most undocumented students currently attending high schools across the country—requires educators to be equipped with the tools, knowledge, and resources to support all undocumented students as they navigate hurdles in their educational and professional trajectories. Though the current policy landscape presents many challenges, schools can meet the moment by ensuring educators have access to the tools needed to bring higher education and economic mobility within reach for their undocumented students. This guide aims to provide high school counselors, classroom educators, college access organizations, and others who work with undocumented students with the context and resources necessary to support this group of students.

UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

Legal and Policy Context for Undocumented Students

Undocumented students face legal and policy-related challenges that significantly limit their opportunities for higher education and career advancement. These challenges exist across federal, state, and institutional levels, creating a complex landscape for students to navigate. High school counselors and educators are often uniquely positioned to provide essential support because they are often primary points of contact over several years. For counselors to be effective in their support, it is critical they understand the intricacies of policies that affect undocumented students.

Setting the Context

Plyler v. Doe (1982). In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in ***Plyler v. Doe* that undocumented students have access to a free public K-12 education, regardless of immigration status. However, that right did not extend to higher education.**³ In *Plyer*, the Court held that states were prohibited from denying access to a public K-12 based on immigration status, reasoning that to withhold education from

“severely disadvantage[d] children who are the victims of a combination of circumstances”

would be a violation of the equal protection clause.⁴ The Court explained that

“[i]f the State is to deny a discrete group of innocent children the free public education that it offers to other children residing within its borders, that denial must be justified by a showing that it furthers some substantial state interest.”⁵

Education, playing a fundamental role “in maintaining the fabric of society,” democracy, and preparing “individuals to be self-reliant and self-sufficient,” was itself such a substantial state interest that the denial of an education would render those students incapable of “succeeding” in life.⁶ The Plyler ruling affirmed the importance of education for all students, established families’ rights to enroll their children in public school, and made it clear that it is unlawful for school personnel to erect barriers to public schools for any child, no matter their immigration or citizenship status. The ruling did not address public or private higher education.

Laws Impacting Students in Higher Education

Title IV

Congress passed Title IV in 1965. Title IV requires that applicants for federal financial aid for post-secondary education be U.S. citizens or permanent residents, denying undocumented students access to federal financial aid. While certain exceptions exist, they are incredibly narrow. For example, students holding an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) from U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) showing one of the following categories: refugee, asylum granted, conditional resident alien, Cuban-Haitian Entrant, Parolee, or conditional entrant, may be an eligible non-citizen. A list of eligible non-citizens can be found on the Federal Student Aid website.⁷ Generally, undocumented students do not have the ability to access federal financial aid for college.

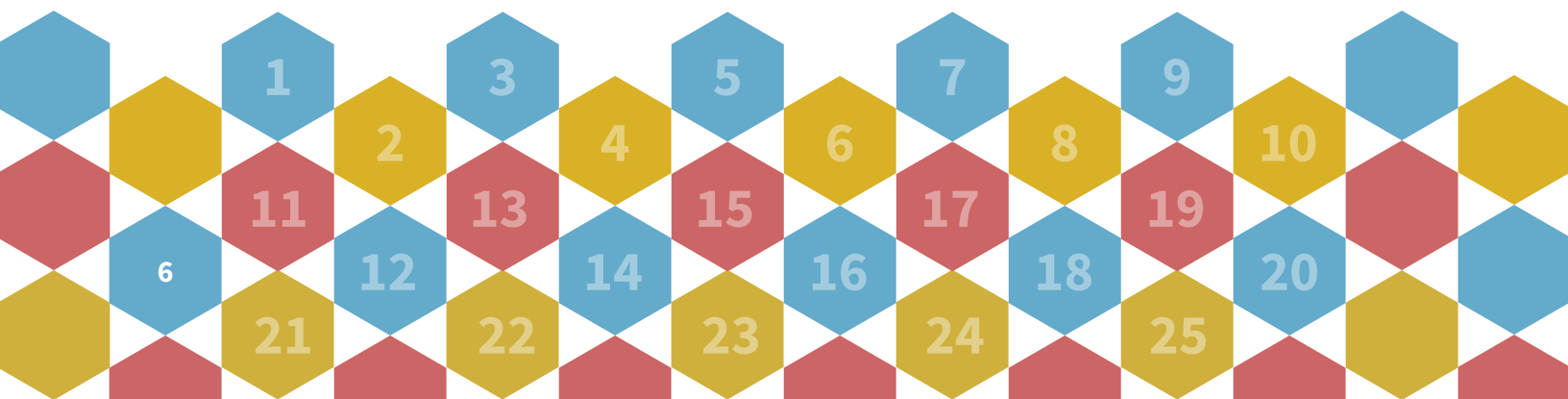


The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 requires states to take affirmative steps if they want to provide state and local benefits like state financial aid and eligibility for in-state tuition to undocumented students. This means that a state would have to pass legislation if they want to provide these types of benefits. By default, without legislation specifically enumerating inclusion of such access, undocumented students are excluded from state-based aid and residential tuition rates.

25 **States and the District of Columbia** offer in-state tuition to undocumented students, nine states block access to in-state tuition for undocumented students, and an additional five states only provide access to in-state tuition for DACA recipients. This means that in these states, undocumented students are permitted to pay the same tuition as their “in-state” classmates at their state’s public institutions of higher education. In other states, undocumented students may be charged out-of-state or international tuition rates.

Because Title IV prohibits undocumented students from accessing federal financial aid, it creates an affordability barrier for undocumented students, especially in states that preclude them from accessing in-state tuition rates. States can choose to pass legislation to offer state financial aid to their undocumented students, but this does not guarantee comprehensive access. For example, in New Jersey undocumented students may receive in-state tuition but are denied state financial aid as the state requires “a person to be a United States citizen or an eligible noncitizen to be awarded student financial aid” under § 18A:71B-2 of the State’s statutes.⁸ In contrast, Washington state, under § 28B.96.005, has given undocumented students access to both in-state tuition and the state’s financial aid program.⁹ For help determining whether your state provides access to in-state tuition and state financial aid, please visit the ***Higher Ed Immigration Portal***.¹⁰



The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996 created another barrier for undocumented students. Under this law, undocumented students cannot receive postsecondary benefits solely based on where they live. As a result, much of the legislation that has passed permitting undocumented students to receive in-state tuition is based on eligibility requirements that are not based on residency. For example, many of these policies include eligibility requirements such as: the student attended a public high school in the state for x amount of year(s), graduated from high school or received the equivalent, and has lived in the state for x amount of months prior to enrollment in the higher education institution.

Some states have enacted additional restrictions barring access to benefits key to postsecondary

success. Many states deny undocumented individuals access to driver's licenses, professional licensure, and more. In the state of Alabama, § 31-13-33 prohibits landlords from legally entering into a rental agreement with an unlawful individual, creating housing instability in the state and further limiting students' ability to pursue a postsecondary education away from home.¹¹

FERPA

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)¹², institutions may not disclose personally identifiable information (PII) contained in education records without the parent or eligible student's written consent, except under certain conditions.¹³ FERPA's privacy protections apply to undocumented students in the same way as other domestic students.¹⁴ FERPA is critical in ensuring that students can attend classes without fear of reprisals or targeting by immigration officials.



The DREAM Act

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors, or “DREAM” Act, was first introduced in 2001. This bill was envisioned as a way to provide “current, former, and future undocumented high-school graduates” a pathway to U.S. citizenship.¹⁵ The bill had broad bipartisan support on the Hill with over 200 congressional co-sponsors and general American support.¹⁶ Today, the bill remains a distant hope for many undocumented individuals. Congress came closest to passing the bill over a decade ago, in 2010, when the DREAM Act was short a mere five votes in the Senate to surmount a filibuster after having passed the House of Representatives.¹⁷

The DREAM Act would provide three routes for individuals on the pathway to citizenship. Broadly, they are to work, join the military, or pursue higher education. If an individual decided to pursue the work route, they would have to maintain lawful employment for at least three years. However, the military or education route would only require an individual to maintain that status for a minimum of two years—showing that Congress has previously demonstrated a particular interest in getting more students started on a postsecondary path.

In addition to the DREAM Act, several other legislative proposals aim to provide protections and pathways to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, particularly those who came to the U.S. as children. These proposals reflect varying approaches to addressing the status of undocumented immigrants, balancing humanitarian concerns with political considerations.

American Dream and Promise Act

The American Dream and Promise Act, passed by the House of Representatives in 2019 and reintroduced in 2021, aims to provide a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers as well as individuals with Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED). This bipartisan bill would grant conditional permanent resident status for 10 years to eligible individuals and allow them to apply for legal permanent residence if they meet certain criteria, such as completing higher education, military service, or employment requirements.

The Solution for Undocumented Children through Careers, Employment, Education, and Defending our Nation, or SUCCEED Act, introduced in 2017 by Republican senators, offers a more conservative approach. It provides a pathway to legal status for undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as children, but with stricter requirements and a longer timeline compared to the Dream Act. Applicants must have arrived before the age of 16, have maintained continuous presence in the U.S., and must meet education, employment, or military service requirements. The path to citizenship under the SUCCEED Act is

more prolonged and includes additional verification steps to ensure compliance.

The Presidents' Alliance has generated a group of policy proposals related to PRWORA and IIRIRA, which if enacted, would allow undocumented students access to a postsecondary education.¹⁸ The recommendations include repealing some of the language that prohibits postsecondary benefits for undocumented students and ensuring that individuals who obtain relief through the Dream Act or similar legislation have access to federal financial aid.



Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or “DACA,” program is an administrative program instituted in 2012 under President Obama’s executive authority. DACA allows undocumented immigrants who meet specific criteria to be given deportation protections and an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), also known as a “work permit.”¹⁹ In effect, DACA gives eligible recipients temporary lawful presence in the United States in addition to providing deportation protections and work authorization through the EAD.

It is critical to note the role an EAD can play in your students’ future. Because DACA provides employment authorization, it allows recipients the ability to pursue employment opportunities and paid internships. Today, DACA is one of the most critical protections allowing undocumented students to access education and professional development. In fact, many states that do not allow for comprehensive access have tied their in-state tuition and financial aid eligibility to an undocumented student’s DACA status. For example, Arkansas allows the state’s DACA recipients who meet certain requirements to pay the in-state tuition rate in all the state’s public colleges and universities, but undocumented students without DACA are not eligible for in-state tuition in Arkansas.

Unfortunately, most upcoming undocumented high school students are ineligible for DACA, as the program’s eligibility requirements exclude

individuals who arrived in the U.S. after 2007.²⁰ “Consequently, if someone arrived in the U.S. at the age of 4 in 2008, they would be of college age but not eligible for DACA.” However, if your student has lived in the United States continuously since June of 2007 and meets the other eligibility criteria, they may be eligible for DACA and other resources.²¹ By 2025, no undocumented high school graduates will be eligible for DACA under current rules.

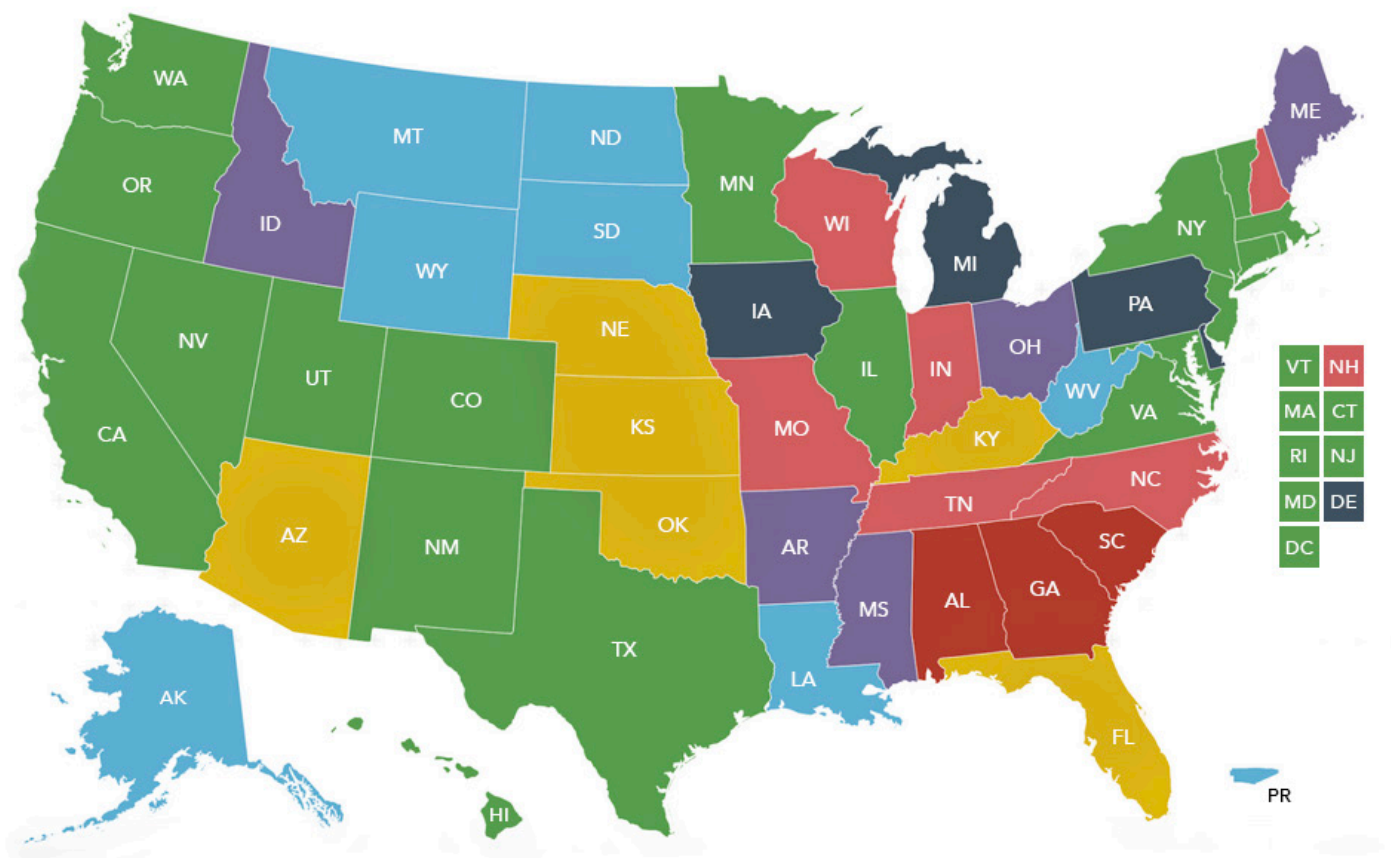
Ongoing litigation challenging the DACA program has impacted eligible individuals’ ability to apply for the program. A federal court order prohibiting adjudication of first-time DACA applications has led to a large and growing backlog of applications from otherwise eligible individuals.



Recent Updates

Current U.S. immigration law provides several pathways for immigrants to live and work in the United States on a temporary or permanent basis. Some employment-based immigrant visa categories confer permanent residence. A few temporary, nonimmigrant visas, such as an H-1B, can provide a pathway to permanent residence in the future. Securing temporary employment-based visas usually requires leaving the United States for a consular interview. When some individuals depart the U.S., they may trigger certain inadmissibility bars that prevent them from re-entering. To

address these inadmissibilities and re-enter the U.S., a person must obtain a so-called D-3 waiver. On June 18, 2024, the Biden administration announced plans to streamline access to D-3 waivers for Dreamers and DACA recipients seeking employment-based visas, making the process more accessible. On July 15, 2024, the U.S. Department of State released updated policy guidance to consular officers related to the announcement. To learn more about employment-based immigration pathways and the D-3 waiver, please visit the Legal Pathways that Work Resource Hub²².



Tuition and Financial Aid Equity for Undocumented Students

The U.S. is home to more than 408,000 undocumented students, including DACA recipients, in higher education. Each state implements its own policies in terms of providing access to in-state tuition and state financial aid to the state's undocumented residents.

The Portal analysts in-state tuition and state financial aid policies across all 50 states and D.C. to measure and compare the inclusivity and effectiveness of the policies. Policies that provide tuition and state financial aid equity generally expand access to higher education and help fuel the state's economy.

Comprehensive Access	Accessible	Limited	Limited To DACA	No State Policy	Restrictive	Prohibitive Enrollment
California Colorado Connecticut District of Columbia Hawaii Illinois Maryland Massachusetts Minnesota Nevada New Jersey New Mexico New York Oregon Rhode Island Texas Utah Vermont Virginia Washington	Arizona Florida Kansas Kentucky Nebraska Oklahoma	Delaware Iowa Michigan Pennsylvania	Arkansas Idaho Maine Mississippi Ohio	Alaska Louisiana Montana North Dakota Puerto Rico South Dakota West Virginia Wyoming	Indiana Missouri New Hampshire North Carolina Tennessee Wisconsin	Alabama Georgia South Carolina
19 States + D.C.	6 States	4 States	5 States	7 States + P.R.	6 States	3 States

State Laws – Variations in State Law Policies

State policies regulating undocumented students' eligibility for in-state tuition and state financial aid vary widely across the United States. As previously mentioned, the President's Alliance maintains the Higher Ed Immigration Portal with up-to-date information on state policies impacting education equity for undocumented students.²³ The

following sections outline how various state laws or institutional policies are classified on the Higher Ed Immigration Portal. Understanding these classifications can help you determine what opportunities are available to students in your geographic area.

Policy Classifications

These classifications were developed by the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration.

STATE CLASS DEFINITIONS	
COMPREHENSIVE ACCESS:	Policies allow individuals to obtain occupational licensure in all professions regardless of their immigration status, provided that they meet all other requirements.
NO STATE POLICY:	No policies identified that actively expand access to occupational licensure for individuals who do not have legal immigration status.
ACCESSIBLE:	Policies allow undocumented individuals to obtain occupational licensure in one or more professions regardless of their immigration status, provided that they meet all other requirements.
LIMITED:	Policies allow individuals with work authorization, such as DACA recipients, to obtain occupational licensure in one or more professions that require licensure.
RESTRICTIVE:	Policies actively prohibit individuals without legal status from accessing occupational licensure in most of all of the professions that require licensure.

Comprehensive Access

A policy is classified as “comprehensive access,” when a state’s “policies provide statewide access to in-state tuition and some state financial aid or scholarships for the state’s resident DACA recipients and undocumented students.” Eighteen states and the District of Columbia are currently classified under “comprehensive access.”

California illustrates the types of policies that might be implemented in a comprehensive access state. In 2001, Assembly Bill 540 allowed undocumented students in California access to in-state tuition. This bill was expanded by Assembly Bill 2000 in 2014 and Senate Bill 68²⁴ in 2017. Under this legislation, any student who attended a California secondary school or community college for at least three years or graduated from a California secondary school would qualify for in-state tuition. Additionally, the California Dream Act as implemented by Assembly Bill 131²⁵ and 130²⁶ as signed into law in 2011, allows undocumented students access to state-based financial aid.

Accessible

A state is classified as “accessible,” when “policies provide statewide access to in-state tuition for the state’s undocumented students, including DACA recipients.” These states do not necessarily provide access to state financial aid. Six states are currently classified as “accessible.”

Florida illustrates the types of policies that might be implemented in an accessible state. In 2014, House Bill 851 was signed,²⁷ allowing undocumented students who: (1) attended a secondary school in Florida for three years before graduation, and (2) enrolled into a postsecondary institution within 24 months of their high school graduation to enroll in, and pay state tuition for, a state public institution. While these policies allow undocumented individuals to enroll in a state secondary institution, it does not give them access to state financial aid.

Limited

A policy is classified as “limited,” when a state’s “policies provide the state’s DACA recipients with access to in-state tuition in at least some public institutions,” often with caveats that impact accessibility. Four states are currently classified under “limited.”

Pennsylvania illustrates the types of policies that might be implemented in a limited state. While the Pennsylvania legislature has been silent on this issue, some of the states’ public institutions, including the Pennsylvania State University, extended in-state tuition to some undocumented students via an administrative memorandum holding that an undocumented student can receive in-state tuition, if they are “domiciled” in Pennsylvania and if their presence is not primarily for an educational purpose.²⁸ To access these benefits, a student must show they attended a Pennsylvania secondary school for four years or obtained a Pennsylvania GED. In limiting benefits to DACA recipients and generally limiting access to in-state tuition, these policies create barriers for a large number of undocumented students. While these barriers are not insurmountable, they do pose an undue burden for undocumented students who are incapable of meeting all the criteria.

Limited to DACA

A policy is classified as “limited to DACA,” when state “policies provide the state’s DACA recipients with access to in-state tuition in at least some public institutions.” Five states are currently classified under “limited to DACA.”

Arkansas illustrates the types of policies that might be implemented in a limited to DACA state. The Arkansas legislature implemented § 6-60-215 of the Arkansas Code, limiting a state-supported postsecondary institution from classifying undocumented students as eligible for in-state tuition

unless their parents have an EAD, or they are a DACA recipient.²⁹ However, even if a student meets these criteria, they must also show they have resided in the state for three years before their application to an Arkansas postsecondary institution, and that they have received a high school diploma from a state secondary institution. Only under such narrowly defined circumstances can a DACA recipient or the child of an EAD holder obtain access to a postsecondary institution. Many “limited to DACA” states have similar policies.



Prohibitive Enrollment

A policy is classified as “prohibitive enrollment,” when a state’s “policies actively bar[s] enrollment in all or certain public institutions for the state’s undocumented students but may still allow DACA recipients to enroll.” Seven states are currently classified under “prohibitive enrollment.”

Wisconsin illustrates the types of policies that might be implemented in a prohibitive enrollment state. Wisconsin Assembly Bill 40 eliminated a nonresident tuition exemption that allowed undocumented students who had “graduated from a Wisconsin high school” and was continuously present in Wisconsin for at least three years following the first day of attending a Wisconsin high school to obtain in-state tuition.³⁰ As such, under Wisconsin law, undocumented students are ineligible to obtain in-state tuition. However, these kinds of policies do no more than present a financial barrier to accessing a postsecondary institution. In stark contrast, Georgia, a restrictive state, actively bars undocumented students from enrolling in their postsecondary institutions.

Restrictive

A policy is classified as “restrictive,” when a state’s “policies actively bar access to in-state tuition or state financial aid for the state’s undocumented students, including DACA recipients.” Three states are currently classified under “restrictive.”³¹

Georgia illustrates the types of policies that might be implemented in restrictive states. The Georgia legislature implemented § 20-3-519 of the Georgia Code,³² which prevents noncitizen students from being classified as eligible for in-state tuition. Note that this does not apply to students allowed in-state tuition under Title IV, e.g., permanent residents, refugees, asylees, etc. However, the Georgia Board of Regents has taken extra administrative steps to prevent students’ access to a postsecondary education. In their Policy Manual, they have implemented Policy 4.1.6,³³ which states that unless all academically qualified applicants with proper immigration status are accepted into a Georgia State University, undocumented students are barred from admission. In the past 14 years, no undocumented students have been allowed to enroll in a public Georgia postsecondary university. The state policies in this category vary, but they all effectively bar undocumented students from attending public institutions in that state. **To learn more about regional resources for undocumented students, see regional resources on page 30.**



COLLEGE ACCESS AND FINANCIAL AID



Overview of the College Application Process

The college application journey for undocumented students presents distinctive challenges that demand careful attention from counselors and educators. Here's a clear breakdown of key steps in the process and how to provide optimal support:

PLEASE NOTE: Targeting outreach to undocumented students by email or even through hosting events can be a privacy risk for students, and is not a best practice. Counselors should seek to elevate their resources for undocumented stu-

dents in postsecondary support information to ALL students, so as not to single out undocumented or DACA students. If students have disclosed their status already, outreach can be done specifically, but any information relating to a specific student's status or undocu-friendly resources should not be shared via email. In person communication is always safest and best, especially in states that do not have undocu-friendly or sanctuary state/city policies in place.

Targeted College Selection

Advocate for students to focus on undocu-friendly schools that actively support undocumented students with substantial financial aid.

Institutions partnering with organizations like TheDream.US often have designated liaisons or points of contact to assist undocumented students. These schools not only offer financial support but also create an inclusive and supportive environment.

Utilize the Private Institution Tool on the Portal

Counselors can use the Private Institution Tool on the Portal to help students narrow down their college options. This tool provides detailed information about various private institutions, including their support for undocumented students, available financial aid, and other resources based on their institutional policies. By using this tool, counselors can guide students in selecting colleges that best meet their needs and offer the necessary support for their academic success.

Explain the pros and cons of public versus private college options: Students may be hesitant to consider private colleges, particularly after seeing the high cost of attendance. It is crucial to explain that many private colleges offer more financial aid to undocumented students than they would receive from a public institution – which may have more restrictive financial aid eligibility. Because of the grant money available, private institutions are often more affordable than public institutions, especially in states where undocumented students are not eligible for state aid.

Early Awareness and Preparation

Encourage students to start preparing early for their educational journey – if possible, prior to their senior year of high school. Because undocumented students may have a more complicated application process, early exposure is necessary to ensure that students are prepared for success and aware of the resources available to make their process manageable. "Here Are Some Strategies."

Scholarship Research

Motivate students to begin researching scholarships early. Many organizations provide scholarships specifically for undocumented students. Notable examples include:

- TheDream.US
- United We Dream
- Immigrants Rising
- MALDEF
- Scholarships A-Z
- My Undocumented Life

Additionally, numerous colleges and universities offer donor-funded institutional scholarships. For example:

- UC Merced
- University of Illinois, Springfield
- Northern Michigan University

Navigating State Residency Requirements

State-Specific Steps

In states like Texas, guide students in fulfilling requirements like submitting an affidavit to qualify for in-state tuition rates, and verifying state residency. Counselors and educators can assist students in understanding specific steps required to confirm eligibility for in-state tuition at public schools, as in New York. The Higher Ed Immigration Portal provides detailed information on each state regarding undocumented students, visit [here](#).

Understanding Financial Aid Revisions

Keep students informed about recent revisions to aid forms like the CADAA (California) and TASFA (Texas) that may impact their application process.

Application Guidance

Support for Families

Educate families about required information and dispel myths around college funding to help them prepare in advance. Sometimes, families are hesitant to share their personal and financial information because they are not sure what applies to them. Families may also be concerned about privacy issues. Remind families that grants are scholarships that do not need to be paid back.


Language Assistance

Connect English learners and new arrivals with transitional language programs, like those offered by **City Colleges of Chicago**.

Financial Aid Clarification

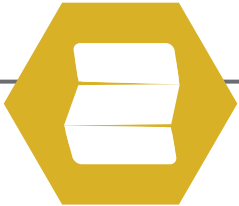
Emphasize the **variation in financial aid policies across institutions** and guide students to check each college's requirements for financial aid options.

Strategic Application Moves




Avoiding Debt

Advise students to apply to affordable schools and private institutions with generous financial aid packages to minimize student debt. You can visit the **Private Institutions Tool** to learn more. See more on this in the loan section below.




Recommendation Letters And Volunteer Work

Guide students in obtaining strong letters of recommendations and fulfilling volunteer requirements, if needed.



Application Fee Waivers

Inform students about fee waivers based on financial status, such as those offered by the **National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)**, applicable at select colleges. More information about fee waivers can be found on the **College Board's** website.



Points Of Contact In Universities

Connect students with individuals within universities who can provide ongoing support. These individuals may work in specific program areas, like Dream Centers, or may be scattered across offices and positions.

The Financial Aid Context

Understanding the financial aid landscape is paramount for undocumented students aiming to access, persist through, and thrive in higher education. This landscape is multifaceted, intricate, and continuously evolving, encompassing various types of financial assistance tailored to the needs of undocumented individuals. Here's a breakdown:

GRANTS

Grants represent a cornerstone of state-based financial aid initiatives, offering vital need-based support without the burden of repayment. By offsetting expenses, grants empower students to pursue their academic aspirations with confidence and determination.

Here is a list of grants that undocumented students can access: Please note that this is not a comprehensive list. For states that offer state financial aid to undocumented students, students and counselors should check out the state pages³⁴ on the Higher Ed Immigration Portal.

California Dream Act Grants

Cal Grant: Available to undocumented students who meet the requirements of the California Dream Act. These grants can cover tuition, fees, and living expenses.

Chafee Grant: Provides financial aid to current or former foster youth, including undocumented students who meet eligibility criteria.

Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA)

Offers various state grants to undocumented students attending public colleges and universities in Texas. These include the TEXAS Grant, Texas Educational Opportunity Grant (TEOG), the Tuition Equalization Grant (TEG), and the Texas Public Education Grant (TPEG).

Minnesota State Grant Program

Provides grants to undocumented students who meet the state residency requirements and are attending eligible Minnesota colleges and universities.

Washington State Need Grant (WSNG)

Offers financial aid to low-income students, including undocumented students who meet the residency requirements under the Washington State Dream Act.

New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)

Provides grants to undocumented students who meet the requirements of the New York State Dream Act. TAP grants can cover tuition costs at eligible New York colleges and universities.

New Jersey Alternative Financial Aid Application

Allows undocumented students to apply for state financial aid programs, including the Tuition Aid Grant (TAG) and the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) program.

Oregon Opportunity Grant

Available to undocumented students who meet the residency requirements under the Oregon Student Access Commission (OSAC) guidelines. This grant helps cover tuition and fees at Oregon colleges and universities.

SCHOLARSHIPS

In addition to grants, scholarships are resources for undocumented students seeking financial aid. Available at national, state, regional, and institutional levels, scholarships provide targeted support for undocumented individuals. Unlike loans, scholarships do not entail repayment, making them invaluable tools in financing higher education endeavors. Check out Immigrants Rising's National List of Scholarships and Fellowships.

Here's a list of scholarships open to undocumented students: Please note that this is not a comprehensive list.

TheDream.US

The National Scholarship

Eligibility: Undocumented students who came to the U.S. before November 1, 2018, graduated from a U.S. high school, have unmet financial need, and intend to attend a partner college.

Details: The National Scholarship is for highly motivated undocumented students who are eligible to receive in-state tuition in their home state (not applicable if attending a private institution) but still have significant, unmet financial need.

The Opportunity Scholarship

Eligibility: The Opportunity Scholarship for undocumented students who live in states where they effectively have no access to college – either because they face paying out-of-state tuition or because their state will simply not admit them into its universities.

Details: Covers tuition, fees, on-campus housing, and meals at one of our Partner Colleges out of state up to a maximum of \$80,000 for a bachelor's degree.

Hispanic Scholarship Fund (HSF)

Eligibility: Hispanic heritage students, including undocumented students with DACA.

Details: Provides various scholarships to high school seniors, undergraduate, and graduate students.

Golden Door Scholars

Eligibility: Undocumented students with DACA or TPS status.

Details: Awards scholarships to high-achieving undocumented students and provides support throughout their college journey.

Jack Kent Cooke Foundation College Scholarship Program

Eligibility: High-achieving high school seniors with financial need, including undocumented students.

Details: Offers substantial awards to cover college tuition, living expenses, books, and other fees.

QuestBridge National College Match

Eligibility: High-achieving, low-income students, including undocumented students.

Details: Matches students with full scholarships to top colleges.

Generation Google Scholarship

Eligibility: Students from underrepresented groups in tech, including undocumented students.

Details: Provides scholarships for students pursuing computer science degrees.

LOANS

Undocumented and DACA students are not eligible for federal loans. Other loan programs may be available to students, but many undocumented students and their families approach them with caution due to concerns about repayment capacity and legal status uncertainties. Nonetheless, undocu-friendly loan programs, such as the **California DREAM Loan Program** and **College Access Loan (CAL)**, offer alternatives for those seeking financial assistance beyond grants and scholarships. Additionally, the Dreamer Loan Program from Social Finance provides another viable option for undocumented students.

Undocumented Students' Access to Loans

Access to Loans from Private Banks

General Availability: Traditional private banks often require borrowers to have a Social Security Number (SSN) and established credit history, which many undocumented students lack.

DACA Recipients: Some private lenders, like Social Finance, offer loan programs specifically for DACA recipients, recognizing their work authorization and temporary legal status.

Key Considerations

Repayment Capacity: Undocumented students and their families should carefully consider their ability to repay loans, especially given the uncertainties surrounding their legal status.

Eligibility: Students need to ensure they meet the specific eligibility criteria for these loan programs, such as residency requirements for state programs or DACA status for private loans.

Alternatives: Grants and scholarships should be prioritized as they do not require repayment and can significantly reduce the need for loans.

State-Specific Programs

States like Colorado and Texas have established their own financial aid programs.

By learning from the models set by states like California, New York, New Jersey, Washington, Illinois, and Maryland, other states can develop and implement their own financial aid programs to support undocumented students. This approach not only helps in reducing financial barriers but also fosters a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. For examples, see the **Colorado Application for State Financial Aid (CASFA)** and **TASFA**.

Some states offer statewide scholarship opportunities specifically for undocumented students, supplementing state financial aid programs and further enhancing access to higher education.

For example, in Tennessee, there's the **Equal Chance for Education scholarship**, which provides support to undocumented students statewide. For state and regional specific scholarships, please visit section IV and see the Regional Resources section. For a comprehensive overview of state-level financial aid programs, the **Higher Ed Immigration Portal** offers insights and resources.

Institutional Funding

Institutional funding plays a pivotal role in facilitating access to higher education for undocumented students, particularly in states where state-based aid is limited or unavailable. **Private institutions** that provide their own funding opportunities contribute significantly to enhancing access and affordability for undocumented students, ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder their pursuit of higher education.

Public Institutions

State and Institutional Aid

Public universities in states with more supportive policies, such as California, Colorado, and New York, offer state-funded financial aid programs like the California Dream Act and the Colorado Application for State Financial Aid (CASFA). These states also have public universities that offer institutional scholarships and grants to undocumented students.

Undocumented students face challenges beyond affordability. Building a comprehensive support network and leveraging both state-specific and national resources can help undocumented students overcome barriers and realize their higher education aspirations. See below for some ways to stay informed.



Utilize Comprehensive Resources

Utilize comprehensive resources like the **Higher Ed Immigration Portal** to stay informed about state-specific financial aid programs, scholarships, and resources available to undocumented students. The Portal provides up-to-date information and valuable insights into navigating the financial aid process.

Stay Connected with Support Networks

Encourage students to connect with support networks and organizations that specialize in providing assistance to undocumented students. These networks can offer guidance, support, and advocacy resources to help students navigate financial aid challenges and access available resources. **Educators and counselors should stay connected with these networks to stay informed about the latest developments and to keep tabs on resources available to support their students.**

Undocumented Student Community of Practice

This serves as a hub where practitioners who work with undocumented students can find other practitioners' contact information by areas of expertise.

My Undocumented Life

An online platform that provides up-to-date information and resources to undocumented students, their families, and allies (including educators, counselors, and administrators). They post scholarship opportunities that are open to undocumented students, strategies for navigating the educational system while undocumented, information on how to apply for DACA, upcoming immigration-related events, news on immigration policies, and much more.

UndocuBlack Network

An advocacy and support organization dedicated to advancing the rights and well-being of Black undocumented immigrants in the United States.

Undocumented Professionals

A network that connects undocumented professionals across various fields, providing resources, mentorship, and support for career advancement.

Undocumented Student-Led Network

A coalition of student organizations led by undocumented students, focused on advocating for immigrant rights and providing mutual support and resources for educational success.

Undocu GC Network

A network that supports undocumented individuals in graduate and professional programs, offering resources and advocacy to navigate higher education and career challenges.

Immigration Advocates Network

A collaborative network of legal advocates and organizations dedicated to providing legal resources, education, and advocacy to support immigrant communities.

Empower Student Advocacy

Encourage students to advocate for themselves and their peers by participating in student organizations, advocacy groups, and community events focused on supporting undocumented students. Empowering students to advocate for policy changes, raise awareness about financial aid issues, and mobilize support can help drive positive change and improve access to resources for undocumented students.

FAFSA Completion for Mixed Status Families

IMPORTANT: As the new FSA ID creation process for contributors without SSNs is updated and technical issues are resolved, this process may look slightly different than as described below. In order to stay up to date on completing the ID verification and FSA ID creation process, we recommend checking trusted sources frequently – particularly throughout the fall semester. For the latest updates³⁵, please see the FAFSA Resources for Mixed Status Families page on the Higher Ed Immigration Portal.

In mixed-status families where the student is a citizen or eligible non-citizen (i.e. Permanent Residents, asylum-seekers, etc), and their parents are undocumented, the student is eligible to complete the FAFSA and obtain federal aid.

With the redesigned FAFSA form, undocumented parents are able to create an FSA ID in order to file the FAFSA for their student. In order to verify the identity of contributors who do not have social security numbers (SSNs), so that they may create an FSA ID, FSA uses information from TransUnion. Contributors without a social security number will be asked to answer several questions to confirm their identity. In the event that this information does not match the information in the TransUnion system, the contributor will be notified that FSA was unable to verify their information, and they will be asked to complete identity verification manually. To complete the manual identity verification process, individuals

will need to submit a separate attestation and validation of identity form along with relevant forms of current and unexpired identification. Once identification has been verified and the ID has been created, contributors will be able to log in and complete their section of the FAFSA for their student. For a more detailed walk through of the FSA ID creation process and updates for mixed-status families, see this one-pager from the Presidents' Alliance, NCAN, and Immigrants Rising.

Each contributor to the FAFSA (i.e. student, parents, etc) must provide consent to allow FAFSA to directly link their information with the Internal Revenue Services ("IRS") and to receive federal aid. Without this consent, the student will not be able to receive federal aid. If you have an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number ("ITIN"), be sure to input that number in the relevant question. Do not enter an ITIN when asked for a SSN. See more on this in the Common Mistakes section below.

Common Concerns and Mistakes

- **FAFSA does NOT send student and parent information to immigration/ICE.**

The privacy of data collected through FAFSA is protected by federal law, which prohibits the use of FAFSA data for anything other than calculating federal and state financial aid.

- **An ITIN is not needed to obtain an FSA ID.**

Contributors should not list an ITIN in place of a SSN, if they do not have a SSN. While the paper FAFSA form does provide a place for applicants and parents to enter an ITIN, if they have one, it is not required to complete the form.

- **All student and parent information must match EXACTLY (i.e. multiple last names with or without hyphenation, street address written in full or abbreviated, capitalization).**

It is critical that students enter accurate parent information when inviting contributors, and that it exactly matches what appears in their FSA ID. Mismatches could lead to delays in processing.

- **The parent who contributes the most financially to the student is required to provide their financial information on the FAFSA.**

For the 2025-2026 cycle, 2023 tax data will be used.

- **The paper FAFSA form is still an option for parents who would prefer not to obtain an FSA ID.**

However, they will still have to provide consent for FSA to access their federal tax information from the IRS and to verify their identity. Individuals who do not file taxes will have this verified by the IRS.

- **Everyone who wants to enter information into an online FAFSA form will need to create an FSA ID.**

- **The form is role-based.**

Students will only be able to see questions related to student information, while parents and spouses will only be able to see questions relating to their role. All parties must complete the questions related to their role in order for a student to complete the FAFSA.

How Counselors Can Support Students from Mixed-Status Families

- Encourage eligible students to set up their FSA ID and complete the FAFSA as soon as possible and to reach out to a trusted counselor or advisor if they have questions.
- Brief school communities, including parents, on changes to this year's process.
- Connect with undocumented and mixed status families to address any concerns they may have about the financial aid process. Please note that this data should be protected and should only be used for financial aid purposes.
- Check back frequently for updates from FSA regarding the process for undocumented parents and guardians.

Tips Related to the Trust-Building Process:

- Listen openly and do not make assumptions or interrogate for more information.
- Do not ask students or families to disclose their status.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Be informed of resources and be aware of not giving legal advice.



Navigating the CSS Profile

Accommodation and Differences

The CSS Profile application process differs from the FAFSA in its approach to financial aid assessment. While the FAFSA is primarily used for federal aid eligibility, the CSS Profile is utilized by some colleges and universities to determine eligibility for institutional aid. Undocumented students without DACA may face similar challenges in accessing both applications due to their immigration status. However, the CSS Profile may offer more flexibility in documenting financial circumstances, as it allows applicants to explain unique family situations in greater detail.

Critical Distinctions between FAFSA and CSS

Counselors should communicate several critical distinctions between the CSS Profile and FAFSA to undocumented students and their families. Unlike the FAFSA, the CSS Profile may require additional financial documentation and information, such as home equity or business ownership details. Additionally, while FAFSA is free to complete, the CSS Profile requires a fee for each college or university to which it is sent, which may pose a financial barrier for some students. Students may qualify for fee waivers. For eligibility requirements, see [here](#).

Specific Advice for Success

Counselors can provide specific advice to help undocumented students navigate the CSS Pro-

file successfully. This may include guidance on gathering and organizing financial documents, explaining any special circumstances in the application, and seeking fee waivers if necessary. Encouraging students to start the application process early and seek assistance from school counselors or financial aid offices can also be beneficial.

Supporting Documentation Preparation

Counselors can assist students in obtaining tax records, bank statements, and other financial documents required by the application. Counselors can also help students articulate any unique family circumstances or challenges they may face in completing the CSS Profile accurately.

Non-Custodial Parent Waiver

Students who have a parent outside of the country that they are not in contact with can file a non-custodial parent waiver. These students need their tax return year, W-2, investments, business information, parents' ITIN numbers, property investments, medical/dental bills, private school payments, etc., for the application.

By understanding the nuances of the CSS Profile and providing targeted support, counselors can assist undocumented students in accessing vital financial aid resources for their higher education journey.

Advising Undocumented Students

Motivating and uplifting undocumented students to go to college is a vital and worthwhile pathway that eventually pays off. To learn more about uplifting narratives of undocumented students/professionals to show students that others have done it in the past, see story banks from **Immigrants Rising**, the **Higher Ed Portal**, and **UndocuProfessionals**.

To effectively support undocumented students, counselors and educators need to employ specific strategies that address the unique challenges these students face. Here are five key strategies:

1 Create Safe Spaces in the Office and Classrooms

Creating safe spaces is crucial for students to feel comfortable disclosing their status. Office spaces and classrooms should be designed to foster a sense of security and inclusion.

Here are a few ways to achieve this:

- **Office Spaces and Classrooms**

Decorate with symbols like butterflies and signs that explicitly suggest the space is safe for undocumented students. Safe spaces can be created by displaying supportive materials such as posters and flyers that signal inclusivity. This visual reassurance can significantly impact students' willingness to seek help and support.

- **Data Protection Policies**

Develop and implement policies to protect the privacy of data related to un-

documented students. Limit access to sensitive information and ensure it is securely stored. Proactively communicate these protections to students and families to ensure they are informed.

- **Practical Tips**

Adapt practical tips from resources like Immigrants Rising's Guide on Protecting Student Data to fit your state's requirements.

- **Options for Students to Learn without Disclosing**

Provide anonymous reporting mechanisms for students to share their concerns without fear of exposure. Host regular "know your rights" workshops.

- **Resources**

- Immigrants Rising's Inclusivity Poster
- Immigrants Rising's Guide on Protecting

Student Data

- Immigrants Rising's Stay Informed, Remain Calm, and Know Your Rights

2 Stay Informed on Immigration Policies

Regularly monitor updates from reliable sources. Ensure that you and your team stay informed about changes in policies and laws affecting undocumented students. This includes both state and national levels.

Policy Changes and DACA Updates

Stay abreast of changes to DACA and other policies affecting undocumented students. For the latest updates on pending policies, visit the State Legislative Tracker.

Resources

- Higher Ed Immigration Portal
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- Immigrant Legal Resource Center
- State Legislative Tracker
- Informed Immigrant

Stay Abreast of Financial Aid and Scholarship Opportunities

- Stay familiarized with financial aid options available to undocumented students.
- Compile and regularly update a list of scholarships and financial aid resources.

Key Scholarships:

- TheDream.US
- Golden Door Scholars
- QuestBride College College Prep Scholars Program

Resources:

- Higher Education Immigration Portal
- Scholarships A-Z
- Immigrants Rising List of Scholarships and Fellowships

3 Have a Support Group on Campus

Establish support groups or peer mentoring programs that provide a community for undocumented students. These groups can offer emotional support, share resources, and advocate for the students' needs.

Example: Host monthly meetings and create an online platform for continuous support and resource sharing.

Resources

- CUNY Citizenship Now!

4 Engage with Other Counselors and Educators

Be in community with other educators and counselors.

- Join professional networks and communities of practice focused on supporting undocumented students. Collaborate on developing best practices and advocacy strategies.

Resources:

- NACAC's Guide to Supporting Undocumented Students
- The Education Trust
- InformedImmigrant

By implementing these detailed strategies and utilizing the recommended resources, educators and counselors can provide comprehensive support to undocumented students, helping them navigate their educational and career pathways effectively.

5 Recommended Websites and Organizations

(Please note that this list is not comprehensive.)

These organizations are instrumental in helping educators connect students with the necessary tools and opportunities.

- **Higher Ed Immigration Portal**

Provides information and tools needed to inform immigration policies.

- **The Dream US**

Offers national scholarships for undocumented students looking for an undergraduate education at select partner colleges.

- **Immigrant Legal Resource Center**

Provides legal resources, FAQs, and technical assistance on accessing DACA and other immigration-related issues.

- **Immigration Equality**

Focuses on the LGBTQ+ and HIV+ community of immigrants, providing policy and legal resources.

- **Immigrants Rising**

Offers legal, mental health, entrepreneurship, wellness groups, community, and career support.

- **Golden Door Scholars**

Provides significant college scholarships, career and fellowship support, mentorship, and community-building opportunities for high-achieving undocumented students.

- **National Immigration Law Center**

Defends the rights of low-income immigrants and provides updates on immigration law and DACA-specific issues.

- **MALDEF**

Offers scholarship and leadership resources, policy information, and immigrant rights advocacy.

- **My Undocumented Life**

Provides up-to-date information and resources for undocumented students, families, and allies, including scholarship opportunities and webinars.

- **Informed Immigrant**

Offers a resource library for immigration support, including materials pertaining to legal, healthcare, employment, driver's licenses, and education questions.

- **The Education Trust**

Publishes data tools and reports on policy changes affecting undocumented students.

- **United We Dream**

The largest immigrant youth-led organization in the nation, providing resources, campaigns, and advocacy efforts for undocumented youth.

- **National Immigration Forum**

An advocacy organization working to advance policies that welcome immigrants and promote their full integration into American society.



Key Publications and Reports

Several key publications and reports provide insights into the challenges and opportunities for undocumented students. Please note that this list is not comprehensive.

- **Higher Education Access and Success for Undocumented Students Starts with 9 Key Criteria**

Analyzes 15 states with the highest shares of undocumented college students to identify where policy reforms and additional support are needed.

- **Federal Policies on Immigrant Students**

Summarizes and tracks key federal legislation impacting undocumented students, DACA students, and other immigrant student populations.

- **U.S. State Policies on DACA and Undocumented Students**

Provides information on each state's policies regarding tuition/financial aid, licenses, and university admissions for undocumented and immigrant students.

- **Crushed Dreams and Broken Promises, Supreme Court Edition**

Examines the financial challenges undocumented students face, including the hours they must work to pay for college without going into debt.

- **A Guide to Building On-Campus Undocumented Student Programs**

Offers tangible steps for counselors to start programming for undocumented students, even without dedicated funding or staffing.

- **How Colleges Can Better Support Undocumented Students in the Aftermath of the Affirmative Action Ban**

Provides recommendations on how colleges can remove barriers and better support undocumented students post-affirmative action ban.

- **Supporting Students from Mixed-Status Families**

Best Practices for Educational Institutions: This memo provides guidance for supporting students from mixed-status families, outlining best practices for educational institutions to create inclusive and supportive environments that address the unique challenges these students face.

- **Guide for Undocumented High School and College Students**

This guide is divided into three parts: options for undocumented high school students, resources for applying to college, and resources for undocumented college students. It aims to equip undocumented youth and educators with the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions about their futures.

CAREER PATHWAYS WITH PURPOSE

Thinking about a long-term career can be stressful as a high school student, especially when undocumented. Planning a career as an undocumented student requires additional strategic decision-making and thoughtful consideration of their immigration status as they leverage their skills and interests for career planning. It is very important to consider the implications of state and campus policies for **tuition, financial aid, and professional and vocational licensure**. Students should understand these requirements to help them achieve success and understand their eligibility for licensure in the area of their professional aspirations. This section provides an overview of how to help students identify career pathways and align goals with postsecondary options.

Identifying Career Pathways and Post-Secondary Options

Just like any other student, undocumented students without DACA should begin by assessing their personal interests, strengths, and values as they explore potential career pathways. It is important to encourage these students to research various professions, educational and licensure requirements in their state, and job outlook to support the long-term planning of the students' career interests. Allowing students to explore their own post-graduation pathways can help them align their career goals, immigration status, and aspirations. Oftentimes, entrepreneurship is one of the most viable options they have, but it can be overwhelming to decipher as a recent graduate. Therefore, talking to students about their options early on is of the essence. You can learn more about entrepreneurship pathways at **Immigrants Rising**. Additionally, to learn more about how to assist undocumented students' career pathways see this guide by FWD.us:

Empowering Undocumented Students:

A Guide for Career Services

If students are nervous about their future, invite them to envision themselves in multiple career options and the steps needed to achieve their goals. This exercise will help them plan for a more robust educational journey.



Graduate and Professional Degrees and Programs

Undocumented students with and without DACA are generally eligible to enroll in graduate and professional degree programs. However, it is important to note that, as of August 2024, there are three states (Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina) that do not allow undocumented students to enroll in either some or all of their public institutions. See **Higher Ed Immigration Portal** for more information. If you want to learn more about the most popular career fields and everything students should know about pursuing those fields, see Immigrants Rising’s **Life After College Guide**.

Types of Programs

There are different types of graduate and professional degree programs. For students interested in research or gaining expertise in a specific area of research or scholarship, they should consider research degrees. However, if a student is interested in honing their skills in a specific profession, they should consider pursuing a professional degree. Learn more about research vs professional degrees here. If students are unsure of their career path, consider exploring a degree that allows for a broader application. This will allow flexibility as someone moves throughout their career. It is important to do some research on programs of interest to ensure interests align with career goals.

TYPES OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS

PROGRAM	LENGTH	STRUCTURE	FUNDING	OUTCOMES
MEng + MPS	1-2 yrs	Coursework + Design OR Professional Project	Self (Mostly)	Industry, Gov't, + Entrepreneurship
MS	2 yrs	Coursework, Research, Thesis	Limited Funding + Self	Industry, Gov't, Research + Entrepreneurship
PhD	4-6 yrs	Coursework, Qualify Exam, Research, Publications, Proposal, Defense + Dissertation	Full Funding	Academia, Industry Leadership, R&D, IP Law + Entrepreneurship

Sarah Hernandez, 2024

Considerations for Selecting a Program

When advising students on programs that are best suited for them, it is important to consider the following:

- Different types of programs
- Length of program
- Testing requirements
- Graduate assistantship or clinical hour requirements
- Cost and financial aid available to undocumented students
- If field hours or research is required and if background checks are required
- Location (see state policies on the Higher Ed Immigration Portal)
- Support systems available
- State policies impacting travel back home or to conferences
- State licensure access (if degree requires licensure)

Q&A

Frequently Asked Questions

Below are some common questions undocumented students have or should consider about graduate and professional school:

Should I pursue a graduate degree?

Students may choose to enter the workforce after their first degree. However, some students may choose to continue their education after their associate's or bachelor's degree. Undocumented students often use graduate school as a security blanket since they are not able to enter the workforce traditionally without a social security number. Therefore, continuing their education may feel like the best and only option for them.

Can undocumented students receive funding for graduate or

professional programs?

Yes, depending on the state, field, and institution. Master's programs are less likely to be funded, while Ph.D. programs are oftentimes fully funded. Students can find a compiled list of undocufriendly funding sources that align with their career goals here.

What are test score requirements?

Graduate and professional programs may have testing requirements. Undocumented students may be concerned about the costs associated with standardized tests or the kinds of identification required to register. Knowing the necessary testing requirements ahead of time will help students prepare the right registration materials and give them time to save money for registration fees or petition for a fee waiver. Students may also

need support in finding free or low-cost preparation materials online. Below, you can find a list of the common tests required for graduate and professional programs.

- **GRE** (Graduate Records Examinations)
The common standardized test that many graduate schools may require as part of the admissions process.
- **GMAT** (Graduate Management Admissions Test) commonly required for business school applications, especially Masters of Business Administration (MBA) programs.
- **LSAT** (Law School Admission Test)
Required for almost every law school to gain admission.
- **MCAT** (Medical College Admission Test)
A multiple-choice exam that prospective students are required to take to apply for medical school.
- **DAT** (Dental Admissions Test)
The required exam for dental school.

Does the program require licensure or certifications?

If licensure and certifications are required for the profession of interest, consider if the degree program helps with obtaining the necessary certifications or licensure requirements. The student should also find out if there are any background checks or fingerprinting involved with those certifications.

Identifying Types of Funding Sources for Graduate and Professional Degrees

Funding is one of the biggest concerns and challenges undocumented students face when attending graduate and professional school. Below are some of the types of funding that students can consider when financing their graduate education:

Institutional Funding

The amount of institutional funding available to this population is contingent upon various factors, including but not limited to state and institutional policies, the type of program (a lot of STEM programs are federally funded), the type of degree (Master's are less likely to be funded than Ph.D. programs), and by the department. It is important to advise students to reach out to different individuals in their program to identify which types of funding may be available to them. Individuals who may be able to answer these questions include the department chair, financial aid office, program coordinators, dean, or trusted faculty. If you have connections to the people mentioned above, provide students with an introduction so they have a higher chance of getting a response.

External Funding

One of the first places undocumented graduate students can secure funding is through external sources, such as private scholarships. Private scholarships that are national can be very competitive; therefore, it is important to advise students to diversify their scholarship search and also apply to a mixture of state and locally-funded scholarships. Below is a list of

known scholarships that are open to undocumented graduate students:

Grad Hub

- Immigrants Rising List of Scholarships and Fellowships
- Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans
- Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship & Dissertation Fellowship
- National Academy of Education/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship Program

State Funding

Unlike undergraduate education, graduate and professional students oftentimes do not qualify for state funding. However, some states do offer state-specific assistance, such as in-state tuition or financial aid, and often evaluate availability and need through a financial aid application. For example, in California, undocumented graduate students in California State Universities (CSU) can apply to the CA Dream Act (CADAA) and may receive the State University Grant (SUG) to support their graduate education.

Loans

Similar to undergraduate loans (see page 17), students are often wary of taking on debt due to concerns about repayment capacity and legal status requirements. However, limitations to graduate school funding often lead to loans being one of the only viable student funding sources. Below you can find some loan pro-

viders that are known to fund graduate and professional programs:

- **Sallie Mae Private Loan**
- **Mpower Financing**

Alternative Funding Strategies

Due to the limitations listed above and the costly nature of graduate and professional programs, undocumented students may need to consider unconventional alternatives to fund their program. You may advise students to create a fundraising plan that fits their needs and comfort level. Below are some examples of non-traditional ways to raise funds for school:

- **Fundraisers**
 - Online crowdfunding
 - Food fundraisers
 - Event or services fundraisers (e.g. dancing events, having a volunteer teach a class and charge for it, hosting a poetry or art event and charge the entrance, car washing, etc.)
- **Small Business Partnerships**
(e.g. students can partner with a small business to increase sales and have a certain amount of that sale go to the student)
- **Networking And Emailing**
(e.g. students can reach out to big or small businesses and ask them to donate to their education).
- **Utilize The Student's Skillset**
(e.g. services like babysitting for friends and family, flower arranging, hairstyling, auto maintenance, pet sitting, etc.)

Professional Licensure

Difficult conversations revolving around professional licensure may arise when providing career support to undocumented students. If the student has trusted you with their status, it is important to have some understanding of the state licensure and occupational requirements for certain career options. Policies vary by state, and oftentimes even by its licensing agency or profession. Depending on those policies, students may be able to enter their career of choice; however, if the state has certain requirements involving their immigration status or work authorization, students may need to take such considerations into account. They may need to consider establishing residency in another state where they can pursue their career interests, or pursue another career path altogether. Only seven states—California, Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, and Vermont—have comprehensive

access to professional and occupational licenses for undocumented individuals, with or without DACA.

To learn more about state professional/occupational licensure requirements for immigrants, visit the guide created by TheDream.US and Immigrant Finance.

NOTE: While this information is up to date as of August 2024, it is critical to understand that both Federal and State legislators propose bills that impact undocumented students every year and those bills vary by state. You can learn more about current proposed policies through the **State Legislative Tracker**.³⁶ This tool monitors pending state legislation related to issues impacting your students throughout the U.S. The best way to support your students is by staying up to date because the law is constantly evolving.



FOOD FUNDRAISERS



VOLUNTEER TEACHING

SMALL BUSINESS PARTERSHIPS



CONCLUSION

Why Now?

The strategies and resources provided in this guide should serve as a foundation for counselors and educators in K-12 education. We hope by offering a comprehensive understanding of legal, financial, and academic resources, the guide will equip educators, counselors, and advocates with the tools necessary to navigate the unique challenges faced by undocumented students.

It is imperative for stakeholders to act now in support of undocumented students due to the volatile nature of the socio-political landscape, which presents both challenges and opportunities for change. Programs like DACA remain uncertain, which can create an environment of instability for undocumented students. By leveraging the insights from this guide, stakeholders can effectively advocate for and implement changes that will secure educational and career opportunities for undocumented students, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Regional Resources

Understanding and utilizing regional resources is crucial for providing targeted support to undocumented students. Here are resources for states with significant challenges and those in a more supportive context.

States with Restrictive Access and Prohibitive Enrollment

If you are located in Alabama, Georgia, or South Carolina, it is crucial to understand the immigration landscape. These three states are considered prohibitive and restrictive towards undocumented students. It is important to stay connected to advocacy groups, legal assistance groups, and financial aid programs, as well as other advisors who can help mitigate the challenges that undocumented students face in those states. See below for some state-level resources.

Alabama (Restrictive)

- **Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice**

Advocates for immigrant rights and provides resources and support services in Alabama.

- **¡HICA! Scholarship for Latinx Students**

This scholarship is specifically designed to support Latinx youth in Alabama who wish to pursue higher education. The scholarship is available for students attending two-year or four-year institutions, as well as technical/trade schools.

- **Catholic Social Services of Alabama**

Offers legal assistance, including help with immigration status, DACA applications, and other related legal services. They also provide general support services for immigrant families.

Georgia (Restrictive)

- **Freedom University**

Provides tuition-free education and advocacy resources for undocumented students in Georgia.

- **GALEO (Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials)**

Provides advocacy and support for DACA recipients and undocumented students, including legal assistance and policy advocacy to improve educational access.

- **Goizueta Foundation Scholars Fund at the University of North Georgia**

Provides scholarships for DACA recipients and undocumented students attending the University of North Georgia. This fund supports students pursuing higher education despite financial barriers.

South Carolina (Prohibitive Enrollment)

- **SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center**

Works to fight for low-income South Carolinians to overcome social, economic, and legal injustices. They provide legal services and advocacy for immigrant rights, including undocumented students.

- **South Carolina Need-based Grant and Lottery Tuition Assistance**

These state-funded financial aid programs may be available to students who did not graduate from high school in South Carolina but meet other residency requirements. Students should contact their institution's financial aid office to verify eligibility.

Accessible States

States with accessible policies can provide a template useful to others. States like Arizona, Florida, and Kansas do have certain resources that could be helpful:

Arizona

- **Aliento**

Supports undocumented, DACA, and mixed-status families with leadership development and resources in Arizona.

- **University of Arizona Immigrant Student Resource Center**

Supports immigrant students through resources, training, and scholarship opportunities, ensuring a supportive educational environment.

- **Arizona Community Foundation**

The largest independent provider of college scholarships in Arizona, ACF offers a variety of scholarships that undocumented students can apply for through a single application process.

Florida

- **Florida Immigrant Coalition**

Provides legal services, advocacy, and community organizing support for undocumented immigrants. They work on various issues, including education access and immigration policy reform.

- **TheDream.US Scholarship at FIU**

Provides significant financial support to undocumented students, covering up to \$33,000 for a bachelor's degree. This program helps bridge the gap between the total cost of tuition and any other scholarships or financial aid the student has received.

- **University of South Florida UndocuALLY Program**

Educates the USF community about the history, relevant legislation, and current realities of the undocumented community, fostering a supportive environment. USF also hosts the UndocUnited Student Organization, which supports undocumented and DACA students.

Kansas

- **Kansas/Missouri Dream Alliance (KSMODA)**

An advocacy group that supports undocumented students through community organizing, legal aid, and educational workshops.

- **Kansas Hispanic Education & Development Foundation**

Provides scholarships and support for Hispanic students in Kansas, including undocumented students, promoting higher education and career development.

- **University of Kansas Multicultural Scholars Program**

Offers support, mentoring, and financial aid opportunities for underrepresented students, including undocumented students.

Limited To DACA

Focusing on states like Idaho, Mississippi, and Maine, which have resources limited to DACA recipients, is crucial because these states provide specific, targeted support that can significantly impact the educational and personal success of undocumented students. Here's why each state is important and the resources available:

Idaho

- **Idaho DACA Students Resource Packet**

The College of Western Idaho provides a resource packet specifically designed for undocumented and DACA students, offering guidance on available scholarships and legal assistance.

- **IME-BECAS Scholarship Program**

Funded by the Mexican Consulate, this scholarship supports undocumented/DACA Mexican students and students of Mexican origin attending universities in Idaho, such as the University of Idaho, College of Western Idaho, and Idaho State University.

- **Community Council of Idaho**

This organization offers various support services for immigrant communities, including legal aid and advocacy for DACA recipients.

Mississippi

- **Mississippi Center for Justice**

Offers legal services and advocacy for immigrant rights, including support for DACA recipients.

- **Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning**

Provides information and guidance on accessing higher education for undocumented and DACA students, including potential financial aid options through private scholarships and institutional support.

- **TheDREAM.US**

The Opportunity Scholarship Award covers tuition, fees, on-campus housing, and meals at one of our Partner Colleges located out of state, up to a maximum of \$80,000 for a bachelor's degree.

Maine

- **Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP)**

Offers legal aid and advocacy services to immigrants, including DACA recipients, helping them navigate immigration laws and access necessary support.

- **University of Southern Maine**

Offers support services for undocumented and DACA students, including academic advising, financial aid guidance, and community engagement opportunities.

- **Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC)**

A network of organizations and individuals working to improve the legal, social, and economic conditions experienced by Maine's immigrants.

States with Comprehensive Access

Then, there are states like California, Colorado, and New York that are considered undocu-friendly. Think of these states as models. Implementing similar policies and programs in other states can significantly improve the educational outcomes and overall well-being of undocumented students across the country.

California

- **California State University (CSU) System**

CSU is committed to ensuring academic opportunities for all students regardless of citizenship status. They provide extensive resources, including legal services, financial aid through the California Dream Act, and support services on all campuses.

- **University of California (UC) System**

The UC system offers a variety of resources, including the Dream Loan program, undocumented student centers, legal advising, and income generation options for undocumented students.

- **California Community Colleges**

They provide financial aid, legal services, and support programs to ensure undocumented students can access higher education without financial and legal barriers.

Why Focus on California

EXTENSIVE FINANCIAL AID:

Programs like the California Dream Act and DreamLoan provide substantial financial support.

COMPREHENSIVE LEGAL AND SUPPORT SERVICES:

The state offers robust legal, academic, and emotional support services through multiple institutions.

Colorado

- **Immigrant Services Program at Metropolitan State University of Denver**

Provides comprehensive support including legal assistance, financial aid, and advocacy for undocumented students.

- **Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition**

Offers advocacy, legal resources, and community support to ensure undocumented students have access to education and legal protections.

- **Colorado Application for State Financial Aid (CASFA)**

An essential resource for undocumented students in Colorado. It allows students who are ineligible for federal financial aid to apply for state-funded financial aid.

Why Focus on Colorado

- **STRONG ADVOCACY NETWORKS:**

Organizations like CIRC provide significant advocacy and legal support.

- **EDUCATIONAL ACCESS:**

Universities in Colorado have dedicated programs to support undocumented students financially and legally.

New York

- **CUNY Citizenship Now!**

Provides free, high-quality, and confidential immigration law services to help individuals and families on their path to U.S. citizenship.

- **New York State Youth Leadership Council (NYSYLC)**

Offers advocacy, leadership development, and support services for undocumented youth.

- **New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC)**

Provides advocacy and policy work, legal services, and community education to support undocumented students.

Why Focus on New York

- **COMPREHENSIVE LEGAL AND ADVOCACY SUPPORT:**

New York provides extensive legal assistance and advocacy through various organizations.

- **FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS:**

Programs and scholarships specifically designed for undocumented students help reduce financial barriers such as The Senator José Peralta New York State DREAM Act.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Section I. Glossary of Terms

Undocumented Person

An undocumented person refers to a foreign-born individual that has entered the United States without inspection (and not subsequently obtained any right to remain) or who has stayed in the United States beyond the expiration date of a visa or other status Pg. 2

Section II. Glossary of Terms

Plyler v. Doe (1982)

In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Plyler v. Doe that undocumented students have access to a free public k-12 education, regardless of immigration status. Pg. 4

Title IV

Requires that applicants for federal financial aid for postsecondary education be U.S. citizens or permanent residents, denying undocumented students access to the FAFSA and federal financial aid. Pg. 5

USCIS. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

(USCIS) Is a branch of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). USCIS is primarily responsible for handling immigration benefits, such as applications for asylum, DACA, work permits, green cards, and citizenship. Pg. 5

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act

The Personal Responsibility and Work Oppor-

tunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 requires states to take affirmative steps if they want to provide state and local benefits like state financial aid and eligibility for in-state tuition for undocumented students. This means that a state would have to pass legislation if they want to provide these types of benefits. Pg. 6

Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA) of 1996

Under this law, undocumented students cannot receive postsecondary benefits solely based on where they live. Pg. 7

FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA),³⁷ institutions may not disclose personally identifiable information (PII) contained in education records without the student's written consent except under certain conditions. Pg. 7

The DREAM Act

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors, or "DREAM" Act, was first introduced in 2001. This bill was envisioned as a method to provide "current, former, and future undocumented high-school graduates" a pathway to U.S. citizenship. Pg. 8

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or "DACA," is an administrative program instituted under President Obama's executive authority. DACA allows undocumented immigrants who

meet specific criteria to be given deportation protections and an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) or a “work permit.” Pg. 10

Employment Authorization Document (EAD)

Individuals who are temporarily in the U.S. and eligible for an EAD, or more commonly referred to as a work permit, may file Form I765. This document provides its holder a legal right to work in the U.S. It should not be confused with a green card. The EAD is issued for a specific period of time based on the individual’s immigration situation. If someone has a valid EAD, they are authorized to freely work in the U.S. Pg. 10

Section III. Glossary of Terms

Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)

An ITIN is an U.S. tax processing number. It is a nine-digit number that begins with the number 9 and has a 7 or 8 in the fourth digit. The IRS issues ITINs to individuals who are required to have a taxpayer identification number but who do not have, and are not eligible to obtain, a Social Security number (SSN). ITINs are issued regardless of immigration status because both resident and nonresident individuals may have federal tax return and payment responsibilities under the Internal Revenue Code. Pg. 26

The CSS Profile

The CSS Profile is an online application used by colleges and scholarship programs to award non-federal institutional aid. The CSS Profile requires a fee for each college or university to which it is sent, which may pose a financial barrier for some students. Students may qualify for fee waivers. Pg. 29

Section IV. Glossary of Terms

Mixed-Status Family

A family where members have different immigration statuses. For example, some members might be U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents, while others may be undocumented immigrants or have temporary protected status. In the context of financial aid, mixed-status families often face unique challenges and considerations when applying for assistance, as eligibility and documentation requirements can vary based on each family member's status. Pg. 26

United We Dream

The largest immigrant youth-led organization in the nation, providing resources, campaigns, and advocacy efforts for undocumented youth. Pg. 33

Immigrants Rising

Founded in 2006, Immigrants Rising is a non-profit organization that transforms individuals and fuels broader changes for all immigrants. Immigrants Rising holds that, with resources and support, undocumented people are able to get an education, pursue careers, and build a brighter future for themselves and their community. Pg. 35

Higher Ed Immigration Portal

A new digital platform that integrates data, policies, and resources about DACA and undocumented, other immigrant, international, and refugee students to support immigration reform and federal policymaking, fuel change at the state and campus level, and build a di-

verse movement of partners and stakeholders advocating for these students. Pg. 36

State Legislative Tracker

The State Legislative Tracker monitors pending state legislation related to driver's licenses, in-state tuition, state financial aid, and professional licensure. This tool tracks current proposed policies that directly impact the following populations: DACA, Undocumented, TPS, Refugees and Asylum Seekers. Pg. 40

Section V. Glossary of Terms

Job Outlook

A statement that conveys the projected rate of growth or decline in employment in an occupation over the next 10 years; also compares the projected growth rate with that projected for all other occupations. Pg. 36

Professional Degrees

Examples include Master of Business Administration, Doctor of Medicine (Medical Doctor), Juris Doctorate (Law Degree), Master of Engineering, Master of Science in Nursing, Doctor of Dental Science, and more. These degrees focus on developing knowledge and skills required for a specific professional. Though some may include aspects of research, they are much more oriented on the practice of a profession. Pg. 36

Research Degrees

Examples include Doctoral and Research Master's degrees. These are research intensive degrees focused on your development of an independent scholar with expertise in a specific area of research and scholarship. Pg. 36

Other Notes

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About the GMAT Exam The Official GMAT Web Site, Graduate Management Admissions Counsel, <https://www.mba.com/us/the-gmat-exam/about-the-gmat-exam.aspx> (last visited May 2, 2018).

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

About the K-12 Strategy Group

The K-12 College Counselor Strategy Group is a collaborative initiative powered by The Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, The National College Attainment Network (NCAN), and Teach for America. This group comprises dedicated high school advisors, college counselors, and college educators, with a focus on building a robust college counseling guide specifically tailored to support, advise, and build community with undocumented high school students.

About the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration

The non-partisan, nonprofit Presidents' Alliance brings college and university presidents and chancellors together on the immigration issues that impact higher education, our students, campuses, communities and nation. The Presidents' Alliance manages the Portal, and provides resources, research, policy briefs, narratives, and analyses.

About Teach For America

Teach For America is a leadership development organization for those who want to co-create a more just world alongside young people in their communities. Today we are a network of nearly 70,000 leaders who started in the classroom and remain in lifelong pursuit of the vision that one day, all children will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.

About the National College Attainment Network

NCAN is a nonprofit membership and advocacy association. Our mission is to build, strengthen, and empower communities and stakeholders to close equity gaps in postsecondary attainment for all students. NCAN's 600 member organizations across the U.S. help nearly two million first generation, low-income students annually prepare for, apply to, and succeed in college.

About Immigrants Rising

Immigrants Rising empowers undocumented young people to achieve educational and career goals through personal, institutional and policy transformation. It is a partner on campus resources and effective practices for the Portal.

About First Gen Empower

First Gen Empower (FGE) addresses educational inequity by providing crucial support to first-generation, low-income, and undocumented students, as well as educational institutions, including UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz, USC, Suffolk University, and others.

About Grad Advisory Board

The Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration (Presidents' Alliance) established the Undocumented Graduate Student Initiative Advisory Team, a group of deans, faculty, staff, undocumented students, and organizational experts to inform and guide the Presidents' Alliance work and objectives in promoting and supporting greater access to and through graduate and professional programs for undocumented students.

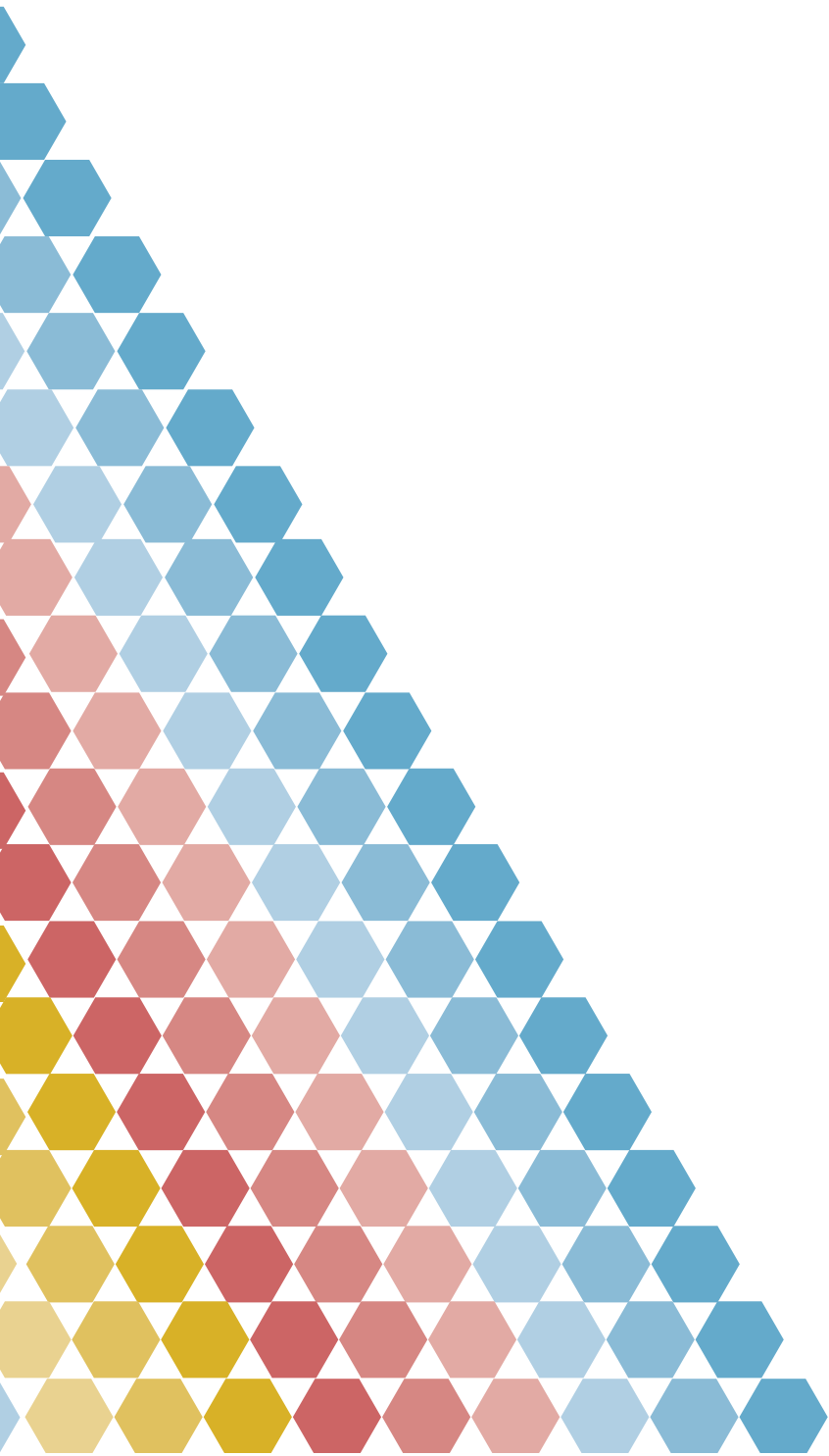
About BreakThrough Central Texas

Breakthrough Central Texas is a college access organization and they work to create a path to and through college for students who will become the first in their families to earn a college degree. They partner with thousands of middle, high school, and postsecondary students and their families.

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