

# EDUCATIONAL EQUITY BEYOND ACCESS



**Institutional Action  
In Support of  
Undocumented,  
DACAmented &  
Immigrant Students**



# PREFACE

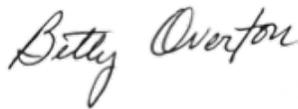
For almost a decade, in collaboration with a wide range of partners across the country, the National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good (National Forum) has been effective in convening regional and national discussions on higher education opportunities for immigrant and undocumented students. The American Council on Education (ACE) has featured this work as a “nationally significant” approach.

In 2014, continuing this effort, the National Forum formalized its partnership with the National Center for Institutional Diversity (NCID) and together have publicized their commitment to aligning scholarship and practice in the service of helping our institutions move beyond access.

In April of 2015, the NCID and National Forum hosted a two-day summit at the University of Michigan, titled Educational Equity Beyond Access: Institutional Action in Support of Undocumented, DACAmented and Immigrant Students. The summit was organized with the following goals:

1. Broaden public support, influence policy and practice and increase philanthropic commitment to ensure opportunities for postsecondary education for undocumented, DACAmented, and immigrant students;
2. Identify institutional barriers encountered by undocumented, DACAmented, and immigrant students;
3. Examine efforts to create inclusive, dignified and responsive campus climates for undocumented, DACAmented, and immigrant students.

Throughout this report, you will learn from the scholars, institutional leaders, and students who addressed the summit, adding to the dialogue about intersections of immigration and higher education from multiple vantage points. We intend for this work to prompt reflection and further action on campuses in support of undocumented, DACAmented, and immigrant students.



Betty Overton, PhD  
Director, National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good  
Professor of Clinical Practice, Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education  
University of Michigan



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# A BROKEN PLEDGE

I pledge to the United States of America  
The land of opportunity,  
The place I call home  
Filled with empty promises  
I only long for the American dream  
My lack of citizenship crushes my every hope  
And I am forced to think I'll never become  
anything besides the typical cleaning lady  
I fear I'll end up like my parents; working 3 jobs  
just so they can provide a meal each night

I've been dehumanized my whole life by one  
word, "illegal"  
because I don't have the preferred documents  
Illegal as if I weren't from earth, an alien

I pledge for liberty,  
Yet I barely know the feeling of freedom,  
cause I know I can be deported any day

I pledge for indivisibility,  
Yet I'm separated and divided from the rest

I've pledged and pledged and pledge and I've been given back no amnesty  
I've pledged and pledged and pledged and still they want me gone

**Lalita Ramirez-López**  
**Undergraduate Student**  
**Washtenaw Community College**

Citlaxochilt (Lalita) was born in Mexico and immigrated to the U.S. when she was 3 years old. Currently Lalita is working two jobs and attending a community college. She is doing general education and in the process of figuring out what she wants to pursue as a career and hopefully transfer to a four-year college. Lalita presented a spoken-word poem, excerpted above, to open the summit.

Lalita opened up the Summit by reading a poem describing her experience being undocumented.



Click here to listen to the full poem on the NCID youtube channel.

## INTRODUCTION

The number of undocumented, DACAmented, and immigrant students in the United States continues to grow. Many arrived as young children, and aspire to live and work in the United States. As they move beyond secondary school, attaining higher education is a tremendously important part of their dream.

However, this group of students faces serious obstacles due to policies related to their status. Undocumented secondary school students often struggle to access higher education, due to fear of deportation, difficult financial circumstances, or a lack of allies on college campuses. Immigrant students who attempt to enroll in postsecondary education, documented or not, face complex state and federal policies on tuition and financial aid that are often barriers.

Higher education educators and administrators have an increasingly important responsibility to be prepared, knowledgeable, and flexible with respect to immigrant students and their unique challenges. In 2012, one important federal policy directive, known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), granted some undocumented students the opportunity to apply for work authorization and Social Security numbers. DACA offers temporary but renewable relief from deportation, as long as recipients continue to

meet eligibility requirements. This opens crucial but fragile potential for students to begin pursuing their goals, whether through legal employment, college education, or both.

Recipients of DACA relief are often referred to as “DACAmented,” a play on words that highlights their unique situation: no longer undocumented, but not fully protected by permanent resident status.

However, DACA does not confer eligibility for federal financial aid, and defers to individual states on important educational policy questions, including whether to grant in-state tuition and public financial aid to this group of students. This shows that the goal to achieve postsecondary education is still challenging for DACA recipients, and more so for many thousands of undocumented students who hold the same dreams. In fact, with the continuing lack of comprehensive federal immigration reform, the pace of progress toward addressing the undeniable needs of undocumented, DACAmented, and immigrant students remains slow and uneven. Denial of the right to higher education continues to affect these students.

Advocates for undocumented, DACAmented, and immigrant students both in secondary schools and higher education, must work in a more collaborative, informed, and purposeful way to push forward the cause of increasing access and equity for all students.

## INDIVIDUALS WHO WISH TO APPLY TO DACA MUST MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- Arrived in the United States before reaching their 16th birthday; - Have resided in the U.S. continually from June 15, 2007 to the present date;
- Were under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012;
- Have never had a lawful immigration status on or before June 15, 2012, or any lawful immigration status or parole obtained that had expired as of June 15, 2012;
- Are currently in school, have graduated or obtained certificate of completion from high school, have obtained General Education Development (GED) certificate, or are an honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or the Armed Forces of the United States;
- Have not been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, or three or more misdemeanors, and do not otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety;
- Were physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making the request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS;
- Pay a fee of \$465.00.

A man with short dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie, is speaking into a microphone. He is looking slightly to the right. The background is a solid dark blue color.

**“Many times we tend to criminalize the stories of our parents for bringing us here, and I think that in itself is the biggest mistake we can make, because our parents are not criminals.**

**In fact, they came to this country to give us hope, to give us a reality that they themselves could not realize.”**

**José Luis Zelaya**

José Luis came to the United States alone at age 13, to join his family and flee violent, impoverished conditions in Honduras. He proceeded from high school to community college and then Texas A&M, where he completed undergraduate and master’s degrees, and where he is currently a Ph.D. student.

# STUDENT NARRATIVES

## GROWING UP UNDOCUMENTED - MANAGING STRESS, EXPECTATIONS, AND ASPIRATIONS

A series of panels helped frame the summit in key areas: barriers faced by immigrant students, practice and policy challenges of serving immigrant students, and immigration narratives. The panelists shared important insight, using their knowledge and experience to enrich the discussion and inspire fellow attendees. In particular, students talked about the isolation, anxiety, and heavy stress they had felt before receiving DACA status, especially because support and resources were often nonexistent. However, panelists also reflected on the determination and resilience developed through difficult circumstances.



### EARLY AWARENESS OF INHABITING UNCERTAIN LEGAL STATUS:

“Through the navigation of my parents, I knew exactly where to go and who to contact whenever I needed to update my fake social security number to be able to work. This was like a social contract between the orchard owners, and between the packing shed owners, knowing that they needed us just as much as we needed them. That was my first encounter understanding what it meant to be undocumented but navigating through that status.”

Laura Bohórquez García  
Dream Educational Empowerment  
Program (DEEP) Coordinator  
United We Dream



### THE STRAIN ON FAMILIES THAT ARISES FROM UNDOCUMENTED STATUS:

“Your family are people that aren’t often talked about when it comes to deportation cases, and I think they’re the ones that actually suffer more, because they don’t know what happens.”

Rafael Robles  
Undergraduate Student  
University of Illinois-Chicago



**CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE PANEL DISCUSSIONS**

Student narratives throughout the summit brought awareness to the experiences of undocumented, DACAmented and immigrant students. In particular, students talked about the isolation, anxiety, and heavy stress they have faced, especially because support and resources are often nonexistent. However, student panelists also reflected on the determination and resilience developed through difficult circumstances. The following is a collection of quotes from students themselves:



Susana Muñoz  
Assistant Professor of Higher Education  
Colorado State University

Having spent almost a decade studying the experiences of undocumented individuals, Dr. Muñoz aims to better understand the college experiences of undocumented students through personal narratives. At the institutional level, Dr. Muñoz explores how colleges and universities can be more inclusive and supportive for the learning of undocumented students. Her latest book, *Identity, Social Activism, and the Pursuit of Higher Education: The Journey Stories of Undocumented and Unafraid Community Activists*, highlights the courageous efforts by undocumented students to mobilize a pro-immigration agenda in the U.S.

Dr. Muñoz moderated a student panel on barriers encountered by undocumented, DACAmented, and immigrant students.



**THE ANXIETY OF EXPLAINING UNDOCUMENTED STATUS, EVEN TO FRIENDS:**

“(Friends) would always ask, ‘Why don’t you have a driver’s license, why can’t you do this, why can’t you do that, why aren’t you in college?’ Eventually it just started to become too overwhelming, so I decided (not to) tell them, for my own sake. I didn’t feel like anybody really understood ... that you can also be undocumented if you’re from Africa, if you’re from Asia.”

Kururama Sánchez  
Undergraduate Student  
Western Michigan University



[Click here to listen to the panel discussion.](#)



“I didn’t think that a four-year university was going to be an option ... It was through talking to other counselors and finally being able to overcome the fear of being rejected by other people, or them not understanding.”

Dulce Rios Ortiz  
Undergraduate Student  
University of Michigan

**In 2012, there were roughly 11.2 MILLION undocumented immigrants in the U.S.**

Paul Taylor, et al., *Unauthorized Immigrants: Length of Residency, Patterns of Parenthood* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, December 1, 2011), p. 7.

# PARTICIPANTS

There are an estimated  
**65,000**  
 undocumented  
 students

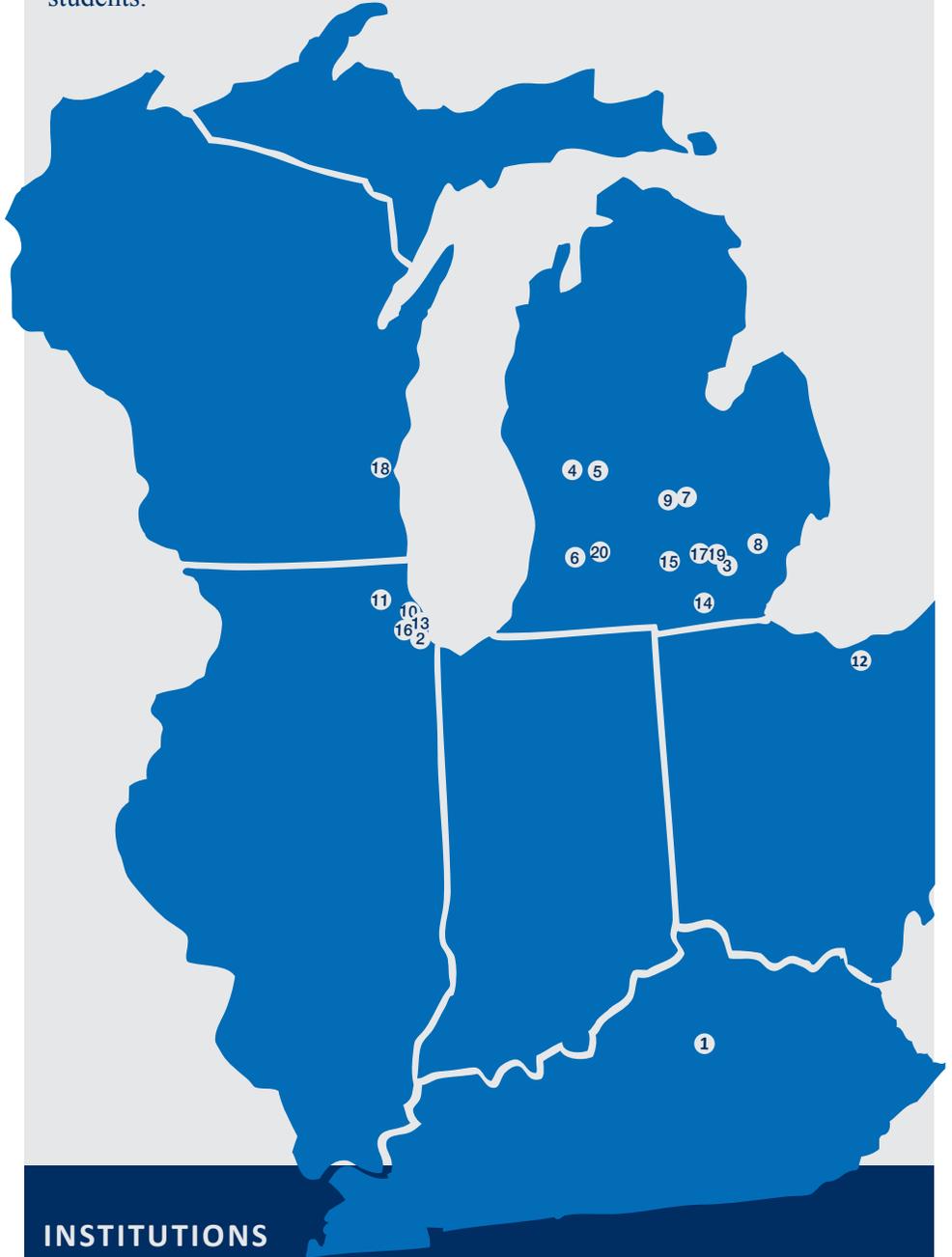
children born abroad  
 who are not U.S.  
 citizens or legal residents

who graduate from U.S.  
 high schools each year.



Jeffrey S. Passel, Further Demographic Information Relating to the DREAM Act (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2003), 1.

Institutional leaders, educators, and immigrant rights advocates, primarily from the Great Lakes region were invited to participate in this two-day summit. Given the interdependence of bordering states' policies, we aimed to create a network of support for individuals with unique institutional positions to advocate for undocumented, DACAmented, and immigrant students.

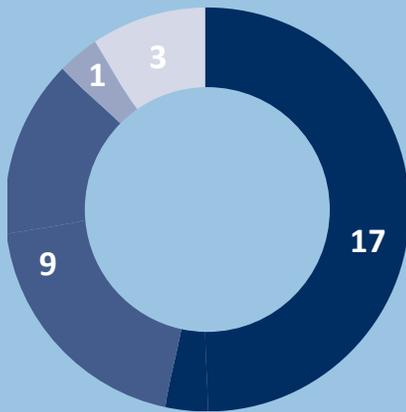
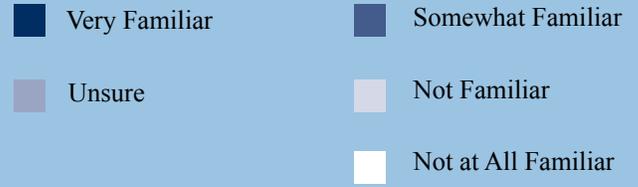


## INSTITUTIONS

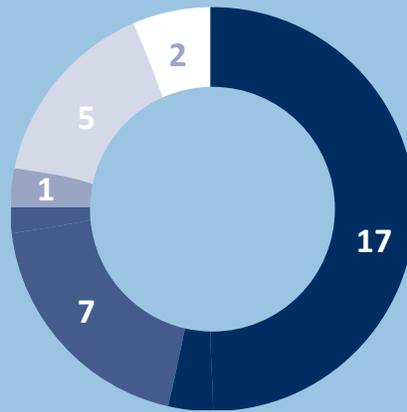
- |   |                                       |   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Bluegrass Community and Technical College (Kentucky) | 10. Niles North High School           | Institutions Not Pictured<br>- Harvard University (Massachusetts)<br>- United We Dream (Washington D.C.)<br>- University of Texas at Austin<br>- University of Texas at El Paso |
| 2. Chicago Public Schools                               | 11. Northeastern Illinois University  |   |
| 3. Eastern Michigan University                          | 12. Oberlin College                   |   |
| 4. Grand Rapids Community College                       | 13. Roosevelt University              |   |
| 5. Grand Valley State University                        | 14. Siena Heights University          |   |
| 6. Kalamazoo Valley Community College                   | 15. Spring Arbor University           |   |
| 7. Lansing Community College                            | 16. University of Illinois Chicago    |   |
| 8. Madonna University                                   | 17. University of Michigan            |   |
| 9. Michigan College Access Network                      | 18. University of Wisconsin Milwaukee |   |
|   | 19. Washtenaw Community College       |   |
|   | 20. Western Michigan University       |   |

Participants in the summit were invited to participate in a survey. The purpose of the survey was to give respondents and summit organizers additional context for immigrant, DACAmented, and undocumented student support across institutions. The results, presented in part here, helped raise participants' awareness, an important first step in creating commitment and action.

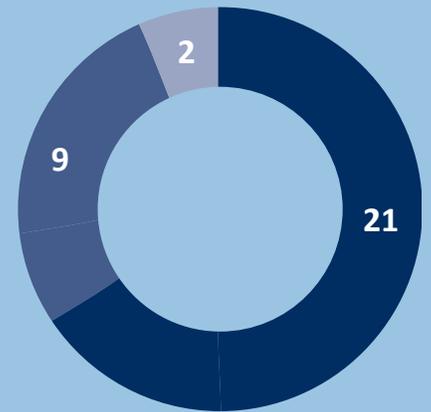
**FAMILIARITY WITH THE TERMS UNDOCUMENTED, DACAMENTED AND IMMIGRANT STUDENT (N=32)**



IMMIGRANT STUDENT



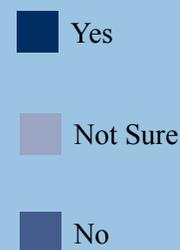
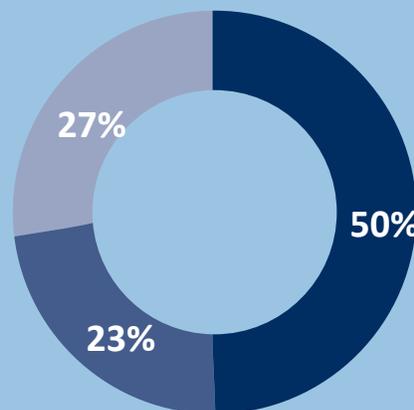
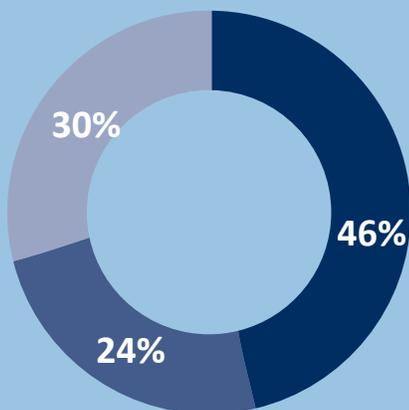
DACAMENTED STUDENT



UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT

**HAS YOUR INSTITUTION CHANGED ITS PRACTICES RELATED TO UNDOCUMENTED, DACAMENTED, OR IMMIGRANT STUDENTS IN THE PAST THREE YEARS?**

**DOES YOUR INSTITUTION HAVE PROGRAMS THAT ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF UNDOCUMENTED, DACAMENTED AND IMMIGRANT STUDENTS?**



# POLICY & PRACTICE

## SEEKING ALLIES AND THINKING BEYOND DACA

A panel of researchers and practitioners moderated by Dr. Betty Overton-Adkins, director of the National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good, spoke about the complex and fast-changing policy environment affecting undocumented, DACAmented, and immigrant students. With states evolving a wide variety of policy responses to this student population, panelists explored the implications for higher education. They noted that many undocumented students may not qualify for DACA but may qualify for other avenues to legal status. One example given was the U Visa, for victims of criminal activity, such as human trafficking, domestic violence, or other abuse.

The panel called for educators to listen carefully when dealing with students of uncertain legal status, and to proactively seek up-to-date training and competent legal assistance when appropriate. Perhaps most important, panelists unanimously encouraged the audience to think critically about DACA and continue toward a more comprehensive approach.



## HOW TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS IN UNCLEAR SITUATIONS:

Everyone in this room can be a first responder. You may be the first point of contact that a student has (to find out) what is available to them, what can you do to help them. As a first responder, having the correct information is key. I want you to expand your frame of reference beyond DACA.

Benish Anver  
Policy Staff Attorney  
National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project

## ON THE NEED TO CONTINUE WORKING TOWARD COMPREHENSIVE REFORM:

With the passage of DACA, a lot of the momentum I felt has died down, and we need to bring that back on again. ... So we have to keep the momentum going. We have to empower youth to take action at the levels that we had back in 2008, 2009. ... We also have to realize that thousands of our students are not eligible for DACA.

Luis Narváez  
College Access for Special Populations Specialist  
Chicago Public Schools

## UNDERSTANDING THE CHOICES FACED BY IMMIGRANT STUDENTS:

There is a dilemma that we need to think through, in order to provide the best support. Because it's really hard to argue with a DACAmented student, to say, 'You really need to get your education,' when they're saying, 'But I really need to help feed my family.'

Matthew Matera  
Executive Director  
Scholarships A-Z

## THE LABOR CENTER

The Labor Center at UCLA has served as an essential hub for organizers in the movement to achieve recognition and equity for undocumented students. Director Kent Wong connected the current undocumented student rights movement to the broader arc of social justice and civil rights movements. By learning from organizers such as Rev. James Lawson of the Nashville sit-in movement and Cesar Chavez of the United Farm Workers, Wong made the case that today's student activists can dramatize the inequitable educational conditions faced by undocumented people.



## INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

As an example of institutional commitment to social justice, Marygrove College President David Fike spoke of the college's effort to provide an inclusive environment for undocumented students, refuge for unaccompanied minors, and education to people too long marginalized from higher education in the United States.

*Shortly after the summit, Dr. Fike recently accepted the role of President at Golden Gate University.*

“We as faculty, we as educators, we as civic and community leaders, owe a duty and responsibility to these young people. We are celebrating the 50th anniversary of Selma. We are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Delano grape strike. And it is time for us to learn from the lessons of the past, to embrace the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., to embrace the teachings of Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, and to stand with undocumented immigrant students for their fight for justice and for dignity.”

Kent Wong

# COMMITMENTS & SOLUTIONS

## FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION

Throughout the summit, common themes emerged. Undocumented, DACAmented, and immigrant students detailed the hardships and triumphs of their experience. Advocates and institutional leaders spoke of educators' responsibility to take action and support immigrant students despite the lack of clear governmental policy.

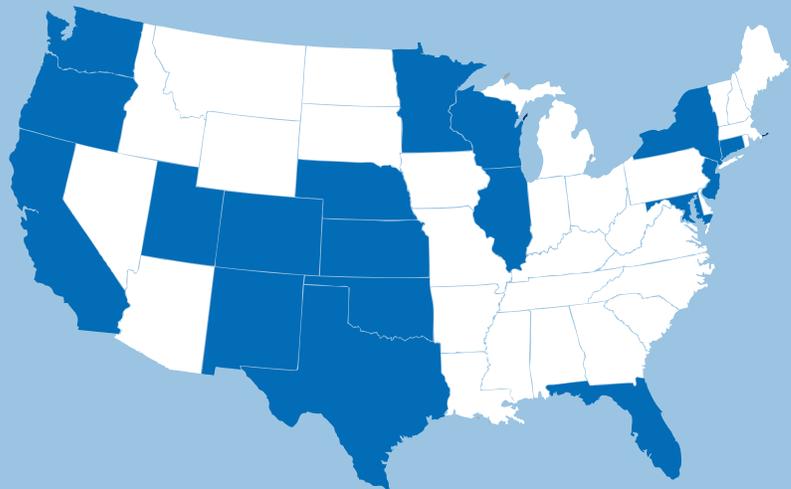
“Ultimately, we’re here to increase access ... It’s about collective institutional responsibility. It goes beyond one individual.”

Luis De La Cruz  
Master’s Student,  
Ford School of Public Policy  
University of Michigan

“Our conversations here are centered on the violation of human rights. Every time that a family is separated, a child or parent is deported, every time that education is denied, or that we don’t listen and respect voice and power of speech, then we’re violating human rights.”

Eva Moya  
Assistant Professor of Social Work  
University of Texas at El Paso

## 18 States Allow In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students



Sixteen states provide these provisions through state legislation - California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Washington. Two states—Oklahoma and Rhode Island— allow in-state tuition rates to undocumented students through Board of Regents decisions.

Alene Russell, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, State Policies Regarding Undocumented College Students: A Narrative of Unresolved Issues, Ongoing Debate and Missed Opportunities,” March 2011.

Concluding discussions remained focused on tangible steps to improve conditions for undocumented, DACAmented, and immigrant students. Participants were asked to list actions they could take on their campuses and commit to these actions. A partial list of these actions is below:

1. Stay informed about the policy environment facing immigrant students on both a local, state, and national level
2. Encourage student advocacy efforts and actively seek out student perspectives and input on their needs
3. Establish partnerships with experienced organizations such as United We Dream to plan on-campus training for institutional staff
4. Work with human resources to remove barriers and create procedures for hiring DACAmented students on campus
5. Join lobbying efforts for equitable policies, in particular with respect to eligibility for in-state tuition and public financial aid
6. Investigate ways to leverage existing student support programs, such as first-generation initiatives, into expansion for immigrant students
7. Move beyond a focus on higher education, working with K-12 efforts and career development aimed at immigrant students
8. Solidify networks of allied alumni to aid with advocacy

It is our intent that this report will prompt awareness and create action beyond the educational access of undocumented, DACAmented, and immigrant students. We want to hear what you are doing at your own campus! To share please complete this [form](#).

# RESOURCES



After seeing the need for a network for leaders at colleges and universities, in 2013, the National Forum launched the uLEAD Network to provide a platform for practitioners, administrators, and institutional leaders, to address complex challenges relating to access and diversity in higher education.

For a state-by-state breakdown of policies, as well as current news affecting immigrant students, see the uLEAD Network's site at [www.uleadnet.org](http://www.uleadnet.org).

In addition, resources such as training modules, informational webinars and reports are made available to higher education professionals seeking additional ways to support undocumented students and enable institutional changes.

## **UNITED WE DREAM:**

Best practice toolkit for educators (includes examples of what different schools across the nation are doing to work with and for undocumented students)

## **EDUCATORS FOR FAIR CONSIDERATION:**

2013-2014 Scholarship Lists

## **US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION:**

Federal Student Aid – Non-US Citizens/

## **UC BERKELEY**

UndocuAlly Training Program

## **NATIONAL IMMIGRATION LAW CENTER:**

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

## **NATIONAL IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S ADVOCACY PROJECT (NIWAP):**

Benefits Map

## **NIWAP:**

DACA for Immigrant Crime & Violence Survivors

## **NIWAP:**

Directory of service providers with experience supporting immigrant crime victims

## **IMMIGRATION ADVOCATES NETWORK:**

National Immigration Legal Services Directory

## **CATHOLIC CHARITIES:**

Immigration/Naturalization Services

## **LIVING UNDOCUMENTED:**

Documentary Lesson Plan and Resource Guide

Advocates for immigrant students and education leaders, both in secondary schools and higher education, must work in a more collaborative, informed, and purposeful way to push forward the cause of increasing access and equity for all students.

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