

ANTI-RACISM

A Student Plan of Action

Undocumented Students



Adopted by the Delegates April 6, 2024

Introduction

The Student Senate for California Community Colleges (SSCCC) proudly represents students from the most diverse student population in the nation, the California Community Colleges (CCC).

Undocumented students represent a resilient and diverse segment of our educational landscape. These are individuals who have immigrated to a new country, seeking opportunities and a better life, yet find themselves navigating the complexities of an undocumented status. Their journey is marked by determination, courage, and a pursuit of knowledge against the backdrop of legal uncertainties.

California¹ Community Colleges has the largest population of undocumented college students serving roughly 83,000 students based on data collected by the American Communities survey. Over the years, our undocumented community has faced a series of challenges across the nation.

The experiences of undocumented students are shaped by a delicate balance—striving to excel academically while grappling with the uncertainty that their undocumented status brings. Their presence underscores the importance of creating inclusive and supportive learning environments that acknowledge the unique hurdles they face.

The SSCCC connected with undocumented students across the state to create the Chapter 4 - Undocumented Student Task Force. The task force created this chapter after conducting research and hosting a series of talks and town halls to understand the education experiences of undocumented students better. The highlights include background information on the culture and traditions of many undocumented students, current problems, and solutions this diverse community recommends implementing.

¹CalMatters, November 23 2023, Fewer undocumented students have DACA. California's colleges want to help, even if the options are limited found at [this link](#).

Undocumented Community²

The undocumented community is comprised of members from across the globe. Each community member comes from different walks of life, so it is important to acknowledge these differences. The assumption that the undocumented community is comprised solely of Latin, Central, and South American people is false. Additionally, we need to understand that we have refugees and asylum individuals who take part in our community. A recent survey from the Public Policy Institute of California found that

“The vast majority of California’s immigrants were born in Latin America (49%) or Asia (39%). California has a sizable population of immigrants from dozens of countries; the leading countries of origin are Mexico (3.9 million), the Philippines (825,200), China (768,400), India (556,500), and Vietnam (502,600). Among immigrants who arrived between 2012 and 2021, more than half (51%) were born in Asia, while 34% were born in Latin America.”

Some of the key concerns shared with us include:

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Undocumented students face challenges accessing higher education due to limited financial aid options and eligibility restrictions. In some states, policies allow in-state tuition for undocumented students.

- One research participant explained, “Mt. San Jacinto College has a general scholarship application. However, there are no scholarships for undocumented students, which discourages students from applying. I want to see scholarships for undocumented students sponsored by colleges themselves (no outside resources) to show support for our community. The lack of scholarships for undocumented students makes our community feel excluded from financial resources, which is unacceptable considering the great need for financial aid in our community.”

²Public Policy Institute of California, Immigrants in California, January 2024 found at [this link](#)

DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS (DACA)

- The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals is ____
- DACA is not currently accepting new qualifying undocumented members to join the DACA program.
 - DACA plays a considerable role in the lives of our undocumented students, faculty, staff, and administration.
 - “At Mt. SAC, we have undocumented faculty who have been negatively affected by the recent changes in DACA. The SSCCC should advocate on behalf of all individuals affected by the limitations of DACA within our system of higher education.”

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Undocumented students can not participate in work-study opportunities because they lack a Social Security number. As a diverse system of higher education, Community Colleges should offer work-study opportunities for all students.

- “The SSCCC shall seek partnership with the UC and CSU systems to advocate on behalf of AB 2586, which would allow undocumented students to have the benefit of work-study at their respective institution of higher education. Additionally, the SSCCC should find other ways to help undocumented students find alternative ways to support our undocumented community and find ways to work to properly sustain ourselves”

BACKGROUND CHECKS

- Certain academic programs require service hours or clinical trials, which require students to have a background check. .
- Miscommunication between administrators and students is a significant concern. While students don’t need a social security number for a background check; many still believe they do. Administrators should make this process friendlier for undocumented students and clarify that a social security number is not necessary.
 - “It would be amazing for our state-wide student-run organization to bring this issue to our elected officials and chancellor’s office. We hope that you will support our community of undocumented students to feel safe and welcome on campus.”

UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT CENTERS

- Over the years, undocumented students have experienced hardship finding a community on campus. We strongly believe all campuses should have an undocumented student center with resources available for students.
- Moreover, these centers must be well-staffed. Students have faced challenges reaching out to staff, such as the financial aid officer, legal counsel, tutoring, and others. These staff members need to be well-versed and knowledgeable in this area to ensure they provide proper support to our undocumented students.
 - “We need our own program director, exclusive advisors, financial aid officers, and transfer counselors who understand the needs of the community and can actually provide the resources to help undocumented students”

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

California is the first state to offer Health Care services to Undocumented people; nonetheless, the rest of the country lacks this critical service.

FINANCIAL AID

- Many undocumented students receive a financial aid grant; however, not everyone receives the same amount of grant funding. For instance, students receiving Cal grant B, have access to student support programs like EOPS, MESA, and Trio, which Cal grants A and C recipients can not access.
- Many students switch majors due to their financial aid status, as not all majors qualify for financial aid. Expanding financial aid to all majors and opening up support organizations for students who qualify for any type of financial aid would be helpful.

LEGAL CHALLENGES

Undocumented students face the risk of deportation and encounter legal challenges related to their immigration status. Changes in immigration policies can impact their ability to remain in the country.

BORDER PATROL ON CAMPUS

The undocumented community acknowledges that Border Patrol may be a career path for veterans and other students at our school. However, the lack of communication and consideration towards the undocumented community creates a frightening environment for our undocumented community whenever border patrol is present on campus.



CULTURAL AWARENESS AND RESPECT



It is important to create a climate of cultural awareness and respect that allows students of color to feel welcome, free to express their opinions, and safe, as undocumented students often face serious challenges that are unique to their community. Undocumented persons serve as the backbone of our workforce; for instance, the Pew Research Center claims,

“An estimated 7.6 million undocumented (or unauthorized) immigrants worked in the U.S. as of 2017 – down from a peak of 8.3 million in 2008 – accounting for nearly 5% of all U.S. workers. About 750,000 unauthorized immigrants held jobs in industries that produce and distribute food – food production (290,000), food processing (210,000), food retail (170,000), and food distribution (70,000).”

Recommendations:

- Appreciate the contributions of undocumented students and other people of underrepresented students to society;
- Create an environment where students can thrive while being their authentic selves;
- Establish appropriate etiquette sensitive to cultural backgrounds.

EQUITY TRAINING

Provide adequate training for all employees and students to understand cultural diversity and address issues of racism, unconscious bias, and microaggressions to pursue racial equity conducive to student success.

Suggestions:

- Require student orientation to include anti-racism and microaggression training, student rights in the grievance process, and where to go to report instances of racism and microaggressions.
- Advocate at your local college for job opportunities for undocumented students.
- Provide opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and college administration to be involved in equity training development.



PEER MENTORS AND ALLIANCES

Establish appropriate channels of communication for students to seek help and resources in addressing racism, microaggression, and other racial barriers to their education

Suggestions:

- Create a peer mentor program or equity center with students from different backgrounds who are trained to resolve conflict, receive complaints, mentor others, and provide information to students struggling with racial barriers.
- Form a participatory governance committee to address diversity, equity, and inclusion with representatives from the student body associations and faculty, so students have a platform for policy recommendations and administrative remedies.



CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

The classroom experience for an undocumented student varies based on different factors, such as location, school policies, and individual circumstances. It's important for educators and administrators to be aware of the unique challenges faced by undocumented students and to work towards creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Providing resources, guidance, and mental health support can contribute to a more positive classroom experience for undocumented students.

Suggestions:

- “Hello, everyone, My name is Alejandra, and I'm a student at Santa Barbara City College; my journey here hasn't been easy due to my undocumented status. I came to the United States as a child with my parents, seeking a better life and greater opportunities. Despite excelling in school and dreaming of attending college to pursue my passion for English, being undocumented posed significant challenges for me.
- One of my biggest struggles has been financial. Without access to federal financial aid or state grants, affording tuition, textbooks, and other expenses has been incredibly difficult. I've worked multiple jobs and pinched pennies wherever I could, but the financial burden weighs heavily on me.
- The uncertainty of my future is another constant worry. Living in fear of deportation and the threat of family separation is a heavy weight I carry. Despite my academic achievements and contributions to my community, I often feel like an outsider, excluded from many opportunities simply because of my immigration status.
- But I refuse to let these challenges define me. I've sought support from immigrant advocacy organizations and found a community of fellow undocumented students facing similar struggles. Together, we've advocated for policies that would provide greater support and resources for students like us.
- Despite the obstacles, I'm determined to continue my education. With the help of scholarships from local organizations and the support of professors and mentors, I've managed to navigate the complexities in our system of higher education.
- I like to reflect on the resilience I've shown and the obstacles I've overcome. Though the path has been difficult, I know that I'm stronger for it. With my Associate's degree in hand, I'm ready to transfer to a four-year university and continue pursuing my dreams.
- I may be undocumented, but I refuse to let that hold me back. I know that I'm not alone in my journey toward a brighter future.”

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The SSCCC is grateful to all members who participated in the Chapter 4 chapter development. This document is the result of an entire year of work, from recruiting undocumented students from across the state to join us by sharing their experiences to hosting town halls and hearing from other students' input.. The SSCCC will actively collaborate with our system partners, including but not limited to, the Chancellor's Office, faculty, staff, administration, and other student organizations, to dismantle the barriers of racism and racial inequities impacting students' lives. We encourage all students, faculty, administrators, and community members to join us as we create change in the California community college system in the pursuit of student success and racial equity.



Next steps



- Establish safe spaces on all campuses, such as resource centers, where undocumented students can seek support and guidance.
- Expand to all 116 colleges, educate folks on existing services, and advocate for funding for these services.
- Review and update college policies to be inclusive and supportive of undocumented students, including admissions and tuition policies.
- Establish partnerships with local organizations, legal clinics, and community groups to provide additional support and resources.
- Support and encourage student-led advocacy initiatives to address the unique needs of undocumented students.
- Provide training for faculty and staff to increase cultural competency and better serve the diverse student population.
- The SSCCC will continue to fight for our undocumented student community rights in collaboration with our system partners as we have done in the past.
 - The SSCCC advocated for the use of ITIN numbers for background checks and the implementation of cultural awareness training for faculty and staff on our campuses.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Task Force Membership

- Ivan Hernandez, Vice President - Ex-officio Member & DEIAA Chair
- Regional Affairs Director II - Olivia Garcia-Godos Martinez, Chair
- Legislative Affairs Director IV - Annie Koruga, Vice Chair

Members

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