

BULLETIN

Newsletter of the National Association for College Admission Counseling

Site Enhancements Bring Excitement to the Second Season of OnlineCollegeFair.com

As it enters its second season, OnlineCollegeFair.com has made tremendous efforts to ensure not only excellent technical service and operation, but also positive and proactive support for its participants and exhibitors. During this past spring and summer, NACAC members and staff have aggressively promoted the Online College Fairs, a free college

search service developed by NACAC, to various educational organizations, institutions, and associations. A special promotion with NACAC's National College Fair program has brought new exhibitors to the virtual exhibit hall, and communication has continued with various groups in efforts to strengthen the program's already strong roster of students and

See pages 15–25 for a preview of governance materials to be presented and voted on at the Assembly and General Membership meetings during the National Conference, September 20–23.

parents.

In an effort to strengthen the site's reputation and participant potential, OnlineCollegeFair.com has recently joined in collaborative efforts with three well-respected national organizations:

- Best known for their college admission testing program, ACT is one of the largest, independent, not-for-profit educational testing organizations in the world. Agreeing to assist in the promotion of OnlineCollegeFair.com benefits both organizations and addresses the true purpose behind Online College Fairs: assisting students' school-to-college transition. "The move to a collaborative relationship is to the benefit of the students," remarked Larry Erenberger, senior consultant with ACT's Education Services Division. "Those who are pursuing college information will

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NACAC Issue Focus:

Postsecondary Education for Undocumented Students

This article is the second in a series of articles on undocumented students.

In the February 2001 NACAC Bulletin, we reported on the issue of undocumented students in U.S. public elementary and secondary schools. In this article, we will examine the legal difficulties facing these students as they attempt to make the transition to higher education.

The Plyler v. Doe Supreme Court case in 1982 made it clear that children of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. are entitled to a free public K-12 education. Underpinning the Court's decision was the concept that minor children are not responsible for the actions of their parents. Denying children the right to K-12 public education because of their parents' immigration status is, as a result of this case, considered a violation of basic rights under the Constitution.

However, if those children succeed in their free K-12 public education, what are their prospects for making the transition to postsecondary education? (Continued on page 8)

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ONLINE COLLEGE FAIRS

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now have available to them online the appropriate resources necessary to properly explore the educational options available to them.”

- The National Research Center for Colleges and University Admission (NRCCUA), a non-profit organization that serves the needs of high schools, college-bound high school students, colleges and universities, has promoted the site in the form of summer mailings. Approximately 28,000 teachers and guidance counselors at more than 18,700 high schools throughout the nation will receive information about the Online College Fairs.
- Careers and Colleges, a quarterly magazine designed to help high school students set and meet their academic, career, and financial goals, will promote the program in its magazine and website. The magazine is distributed to 750,000 high school students and 7,000 guidance counselors nationwide. The backbone of the related Web site—careersandcolleges.com—is the “Virtual Guidance Counselor,” a unique database that enables students to match their interests in various areas of study with complimentary career paths.

In addition to these joint ventures, several enhancements have been implemented on the site to assist, inform, and improve navigation not only for the students, but for the college and university exhibitors as well.

“OnlineCollegeFair.com is already such a helpful service,” explained NACAC President Marybeth Kravets. “The enhancements will only augment the site by presenting useful information to our current and potential participants.”

The home page (www.onlinecollegefair.com) has been upgraded into a twenty-four-hour, seven-day-a-week online environment, allowing users a clearer and more straightforward

means to navigate. While users will still need to log in to participate in chat dialogue, they can obtain valuable information simply from the home page.

Sections are now available on the home page to better inform current and potential participants about Online College Fairs. Pages about the actual program, detailed fair descriptions, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for students, parents, counselors, and other interested parties have been added. A resource page, dedicated to organizations deemed helpful to OnlineCollegeFair.com’s overall mission to serve student’s college aspirations, can be accessed through the homepage.

New chat software to work alongside the current Java Script has been implemented on the site, which should cut down on technical issues during Online Fairs. Upon entering the chatroom, participants who do not have Java installed in their computers will have an alternate chatroom with the HTML client loaded onto their browser. The text flow will be slightly slower, but is still very manageable.

Other projects with OnlineCollegeFair.com include researching and experimenting with ways to increase the loading time in the chatrooms, as well as changes to the exhibitor booths, to make them more user-friendly.

These positive steps will bring about a new energy to the site. Twelve fairs are planned this season, consistently scheduled for the second Tuesday of each month. With a new look, new partners, and a more aggressive marketing and promotional campaign, OnlineCollegeFair.com promises to be an influential tool in the college admission arena, charting the course for new technology in the college search process.

For more information, contact the Online College Fair Department at 800/822-6285 or email support@onlinecollegefair.com.

UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

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tion? As many NACAC members and other educators have discovered, that question is difficult to answer. Federal laws governing immigration and higher education assistance raise a significant hurdle for undocumented students. Because undocumented students are often—but not always—in the U.S. as a result of illegal immigration, they are not looked upon favorably under the law.

Recent Immigration Law

In 1996, Congress passed and President Clinton signed the “Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA),” Public Law 104-208. The IIRIRA revised the country’s immigration laws and enacted strong prohibitions on access to government services and benefits by illegal (and, in some cases, legal) immigrants.

Section 505 of IIRIRA states, “an alien who is not lawfully present in the United States shall not be eligible on the basis of residence within a State (or political subdivision) for any postsecondary education benefit unless a citizen or national of the United States is eligible for such a benefit... without regard to whether the citizen or national is such a resident.”

Under the Higher Education Act, a student must be a United States citizen or have documentation from the Immigration and Naturalization Service proving legal immigrant or resident status in order to receive any “grant, loan, or work assistance” from the federal government. As a result, students who have graduated from high school, some with perfect 4.0 GPAs, are effectively prohibited from attending college because they cannot obtain financial aid.

Furthermore, states consider in-state tuition a government benefit, and have cited the IIRIRA law as a federal obstacle to providing such a benefit to undocumented students. For even though in-state tuition is a state, not

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For more information on Online College Fairs, contact the Online College Fairs Department at 800/822-6285.

UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

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federal, benefit, states often defer to the federal government on immigration policy, since immigration law and enforcement is primarily a federal responsibility. Stephen Yale-Loehr, who teaches immigration law at Cornell Law School, notes that “some state leaders ([including] the governor of California) believe any law passed by the state in this area would be in violation of federal law, specifically Section 505 of IIRIRA.”

Federal law does not prohibit undocumented students from applying and being accepted to college. According to Ellen Badger, director of international student and scholar services at Binghamton University, “Admission offices should not be in fear of admitting an undocumented student. There are no penalties for enrolling them. There are no INS requirements for reporting them.” Ms. Badger cites a 1994 cable from the INS—still in force in 2001—that states, “The effect of Plyler [v. Doe] on postsecondary education is not clear; however, Congress has not adopted legislation which would permit states and state-owned institutions to refuse admission to undocumented aliens or to disclose their records to the INS.”

Nor does the law prohibit private funds from being used to support undocumented students in the pursuit of higher education. However, given most undocumented students’ limited financial resources, it is nearly impossible for them to afford out-of-state tuition rates, obtain a private loan, or pay for the costs of post-secondary education out-of-pocket. There are very few private financial funds available to these students, and even fewer resources on where to find such assistance.

Perspective on the Dilemma

Undocumented students are given the tools to contribute to American social and economic life through the guaranteed public K-12 education. However, the effect of federal law restricting higher education benefits is to force many students into low-pay-

ing jobs, potentially onto the public service rolls, into unwanted marriages to obtain documentation, or into other such situations that fit with the American public’s traditional misperceptions of immigrants.

How widespread is the dilemma?

Consider the following statistics:

- According to the INS’s most recent count, there were five million undocumented immigrants living in the United States (1996). The seven states with the largest undocumented population are California (2 million), Texas (700,000), New York (540,000), Florida (350,000), Illinois (290,000), New Jersey (135,000), and Arizona (115,000).
- According to reports on file with the Department of Education, one-fifth of all undocumented immigrants are under the age of fifteen. And according to the National Immigration Law Center, between 50,000 and 70,000 undocumented students graduate from high school every year.

As stated above, obtaining some form of documentation is the key to solving the dilemma of high-achieving undocumented students. The process of obtaining documentation for an undocumented student who already resides in the U.S. is often more difficult than obtaining documentation for an individual who has not yet entered the country. For students who want to obtain postsecondary education, pursuing documentation may have the effect of reducing their prospects for going to college.

What to do?

Educators and students who are caught in this dilemma are left with very few options, none of them standardized or well-known. Recently, lawmakers in the states and in Congress have taken note. The next and final Bulletin article in the series will describe efforts currently underway to provide a legal route for these students to gain access to financial and higher education. In addition, Yale-Loehr of Cornell Law School and Badger of Binghamton University are

co-authoring an article on the law governing undocumented students in higher education to submit to the NACAC Journal of College Admission.

For more information about topics covered in this article visit the following Web sites:

U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service
www.ins.usdoj.gov

United States Immigration Forum
www.immigrationforum.org

National Immigration Law Center
www.nilc.org

United States Department of Education
www.ed.gov

U.S. Department of Education/ERIC Clearinghouse
“Undocumented Children in the Schools: Successful Strategies and Policies”
www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed321962.html

The Urban Institute
www.urban.org