Best Practices for Supporting Undocumented Students

Aliza Gilbert
College Counselor
Highland Park High School

Jessica A. Quintana Hess
Associate Director Admissions & Coordinator of Partnerships
Lycoming College
Language and terminology

**Undocumented** – Lacking appropriate documentation to establish permanent residency (Green Card)
- Technically DACA students are still undocumented

**Unauthorized** – Lacking authorization to be present and/or living in the United States

**Dreamers** – Youth who would benefit from enactment of the U.S. DREAM Act

**Generation 1.5** – current conversations, especially in research

**Illegals** – Very negative; demonizes & dehumanizes

**DACAmented** – undocumented students with DACA status
Who is undocumented?

Any individual currently in the United States who:

- entered without inspection
- entered with false documents
- entered on a legal visa but the visa has since expired
Undocumented population in the United States

11.1 million total

- 58% from Mexico
- 23% other countries in Latin America
- 11% from Asia
- 4% from Europe and Canada
- 3% from African countries and other nations

(Passel & Cohn, 2011)
Who are our undocumented students?

- Students who immigrated recently with parents and all are undocumented
- Students who immigrated recently without parents and are here with "guardians" (Homeless assessment as needed)
- Students who immigrated recently unaccompanied to reunite with parents
- Students who immigrated at a very early age with parents and all are undocumented (DREAMERS)
The undocumented student experience

The psychological impacts of immigration status:

- Constant fear of deportation (whether their own deportation or deportation of loved ones)
- Secrecy and trust
- Higher levels of stress due to financial barriers
- Anxiety about the future
- Unprecedentedly high occurrences of depression, anxiety, substance use/abuse, and suicidal ideation

Dra. Aurora Chang, PhD & Padraic Stanley, MSW
Share The Dream Conference 2015
Undocumented student needs

Compassion
Support
Recognition
Lightness
Financial assistance
Safe spaces
Empowerment
Opportunities
Respect

Dra. Aurora Chang 2015
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

• A form of protection from deportation that lasts for two years and can be renewed.

• Can obtain a work permit, a social security number, and a driver’s license (in some states).
  • Can also possibly travel outside the U.S., with advance parole (AFTER approval, WITH permission based on separate application).

• This executive memo is not a pathway to citizenship or a green card.

• Does not offer students the ability to receive federal or state financial aid.
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

ELIGIBILITY:
Arrived in the U.S. before 16th birthday
Currently 15 years old or older
Under the age of 31 on June 15, 2012
Continuously resided in the US since June 15, 2007
Present in the US on June 15, 2012
Entered without inspection or lawful immigration status expired as of June 15, 2012
Currently in school or have received a high school diploma/GED
Criminal record clear of felony convictions, “significant misdemeanors,” or multiple misdemeanor offenses
Why are we talking about this?

• Many undocumented students experience discrimination and prejudice from high school and college faculty and staff, either due to ignorance or personal biases (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2010; Pérez, Cortés et al., 2010)

• Teachers and counselors are often not the primary source of college information (Muñoz, 2008)

• Students who succeed in higher education credit high school and college agents for their encouragement and guidance (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Perez Huber & Malagon, 2007)
K-12 Context

- 1 million of the undocumented population in the U.S. are children under the age of 18 (Passel & Cohn, 2011)
- 40% of undocumented students ages 18-24 have not graduated from high school (Passel & Cohn, 2009)
- 8% of all children born in the U.S. are born to at least one undocumented parent (Passel & Cohn, 2011)
Postsecondary context

- Fewer than 10% of undocumented students attend college immediately after high school (Gonzales, 2007)
- Fewer than half of all undocumented adults ages 18-24 with a high school degree have attended any college (Passel & Cohn, 2009)
- Most undocumented students who pursue higher education will enroll in a community college due to cost (Abrego, 2006; Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2010; Perez Huber & Malagon, 2007).
K-16 opportunities


- Right does not extend to post-secondary education.

- No federal law specifically prohibits undocumented students from attending a public college or university.

- Private colleges have the right to admit or deny any student.

- State legislation and policies both support and restrict access.
Things to consider when choosing a college

- Friendly versus unfriendly states
- Travel restrictions
- Campus climate
- Knowledgeable admission staff
- Support on campus (student activities, residence life, counseling center, career development)
- College costs and aid opportunities
- Don’t just assume community college is the only option
Evaluating campus climate and support

Office of Admissions and Financial Aid

- Website info
- Contact person
- Listed in the College Advising Guide for Undocumented Students
- Separate fin aid form
- Do they admit but aren’t really sure how to help?

Support Services

- Student affairs
- Student groups
- Community Outreach
- Legal references
- Scholarships
- DACA renewal assistance
- Health insurance
Challenges completing applications

- Request for social security number
- Citizenship question
- Paying application fee and/or fee waivers
- Dilemma regarding disclosure of undocumented status
Challenges applying for financial aid and scholarships

• Biggest barrier is paying for college:
  – Limited availability of institutional aid
  – Lack of transparency in regard to merit scholarship eligibility

• Uncertainty regarding form completion
  – FAFSA – not usually recommended (even if have DACA)
  – CSS Profile or Institutional Form are better options
Challenges in determining financial need

- Lack of taxes
- Verification issues (issue also for citizens/permanent residents with undocumented parents)
Considerations when selecting a major

• Restrictions in choosing a major are easing due to DACA
  • Still a great deal of uncertainty
• Balancing “want” with what is possible
• Advising and career development support on campus
Role of high schools

Improve identification of students
  – Students with birth places outside of the U.S.
    • Smart kids with poor grades who have bad attitudes toward school. Some are bitter.*
    • High achieving students who don’t engage in the college process and ultimately never apply.*

How do you ask without asking?

*Yes, these are generalizations!
Role of high schools

• Outreach to ELL teachers, other students, past graduates
• Create opportunities for students to self-disclose status
• Revise presentations to include the terms: citizens, permanent residents and undocumented students
Role of high schools

Help students navigate college costs

• Don’t assume a community college is the only option
• Talk about costs early on and have a plan B if plan A is not affordable
  – Discuss option of attending college part-time vs. full-time
  – Explain payment plans
  – Develop outside scholarship opportunities
Get the message out that college is possible

- Include relevant information in all printed materials
  - college planning handbook
  - financial aid handouts
  - college counseling website
- Educate all high school faculty and staff that undocumented students can go to college
Individual and Institutional Commitment

- Becoming an agent of change
- Building a framework
- Creating a network of change agents
- Seeking other advocates and allies on campus
- Customizing a program of support and success
- Remain current with relevant legislation both at the national and state level
Invite self disclosure

educationvotes.nea.org
(downloadable jpeg)

e4fc.org
order posters
When a student reveals status

Situations in which a student might disclose to you.

- You are a member of his or her own ethnic/racial group
- You are a trusted mentor
- You have imposed requirements that they cannot complete without telling you of their inability to comply
- You are in a position to assist with a concern
- You have been referred by another student

Students have no way of knowing whether your reaction will be positive or negative.

Adapted from California State University (2009). AB540 Ally Training Project Facilitator Handbook., 20
Other ways to support undocumented students

• United We Dream (UWD)
  – National Educators Coming Out Day
  – Ally Training
• Support Undocumented & Unafraid Campaigns
• DREAMERS clubs and student support groups
College Advising Guide for Undocumented Students
www.iacac.org/undocumented/

- 2 year and 4 year college information
- Questions for students to ask
- Financial aid and scholarships
- Resources for parents, students, educators and college grads
- Federal and state legislation
- Career info (coming soon)
Sharing the Dream Educators Conference
www.iacac.org/undocumented/

- Being an effective ally for high school & college students
- Paying for college
- Engaging parents
- Beyond the degree –career and employment
- Myths & misconceptions
- Mental & emotional health issues
- 2 to 4 yr college transition
- Keynote by Roberto Gonzales, Harvard University
Questions?

Aliza Gilbert
agilbert@dist113.org

Jessica A. Quintana Hess
hess@lycoming.edu