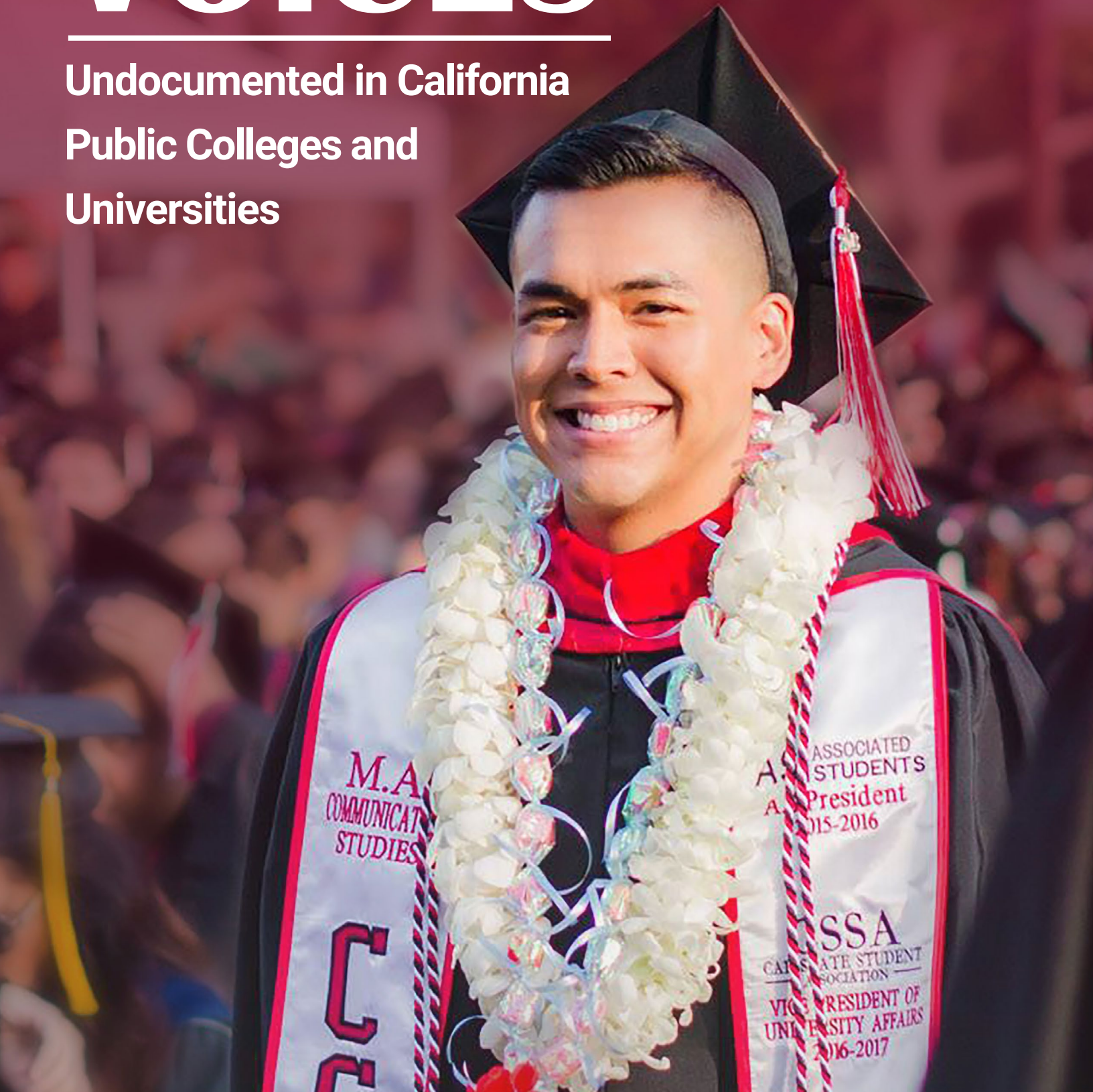


# In Their VOICES

Undocumented in California  
Public Colleges and  
Universities

The Campaign for  
College **15** Years  
Opportunity

ONE MISSION: Making College Dreams a Reality.



## INTRODUCTION

California has a proud history of welcoming the immigrant and recognizing the tremendous value immigrants bring to the fabric of our state and the inextricable ties that bind our collective future.

College opportunity is key to ensuring that California can meet its economic goals, maintain its global standing, and keep up with technological advances. As California's economy becomes increasingly reliant on a better-educated workforce and further connected to a global marketplace for its services and products, immigrant students are poised to make major contributions to future growth.

Nearly 27 percent (three million) of the United States' undocumented immigrants reside in California.<sup>1</sup> Among this diverse population of undocumented immigrants, however, few adults have a college degree. Conservative estimates find that between 64,000 and 86,000 undocumented students are enrolled in California's public higher education systems.<sup>2</sup> **Losing, or even underutilizing, these talented students poses a threat to our state's workforce and economy when you consider California needs an additional 1.65 million college-educated workers by 2030.**<sup>3</sup>

In September of 2017, the Trump Administration announced that it was removing protections for immigrants by rescinding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and ordered the Department of Homeland Security to stop accepting new or renewal applications. Numerous lawsuits ensued, and several courts have halted the Administration's attempts to end DACA.<sup>4</sup> As a result, current DACA holders and potential DACA recipients are in a state of limbo, unsure of their status and what the future will hold. At that moment, the nation and California's undocumented students became particularly vulnerable to losing out on college opportunity.

In response to the uncertainty of DACA and protections for undocumented students, the Campaign for College Opportunity established the **California Undocumented Higher Education Coalition**. The coalition is composed of educators, civil rights organizations, business representatives, philanthropic organizations, students, and community-based groups working to strengthen California's workforce and economy by ensuring college access and success for undocumented youth in the state.

The coalition believes that supporting undocumented students—who have been raised in our communities, attend our public schools, and abide by our laws—in achieving their college dreams supports both California's economy and its values.

In an effort to inform policymakers, college and university leaders, and campus personnel about the needs, experiences, and obstacles facing undocumented students in California's public colleges and universities, the coalition recommended that the Campaign for College Opportunity convene undocumented students to listen and learn from them first-hand.

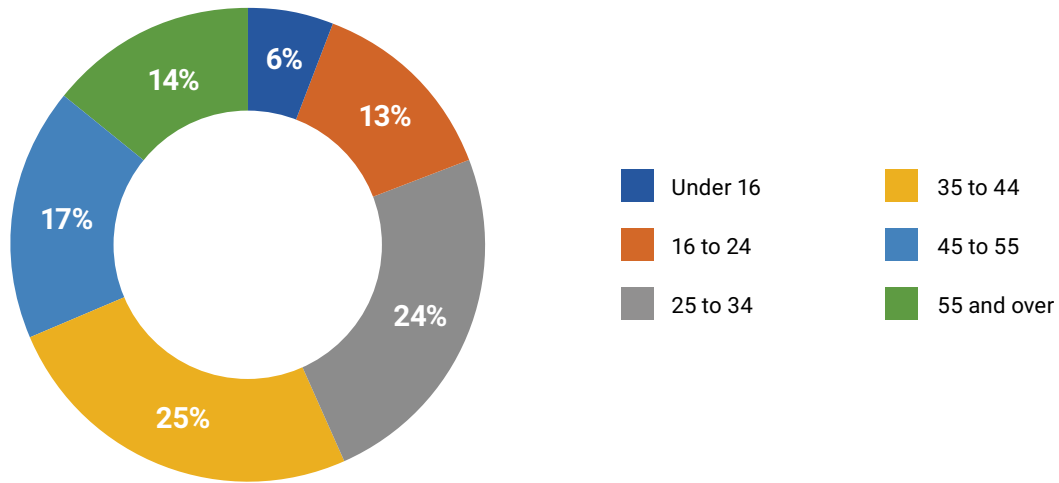
In this brief you will find information on California's undocumented residents, public policies that have shaped the current state of college opportunity for undocumented students, and the key findings from our conversations with undocumented students regarding financial aid, campus resources, legal services, and more.

We urge readers—policymakers, college and university leaders, and campus personnel—to use this brief to inform their work to remove barriers to college opportunity for undocumented students and improve critical student supports that will make a college degree possible for all those who seek it.

# CALIFORNIA IS HOME TO THREE MILLION UNDOCUMENTED RESIDENTS

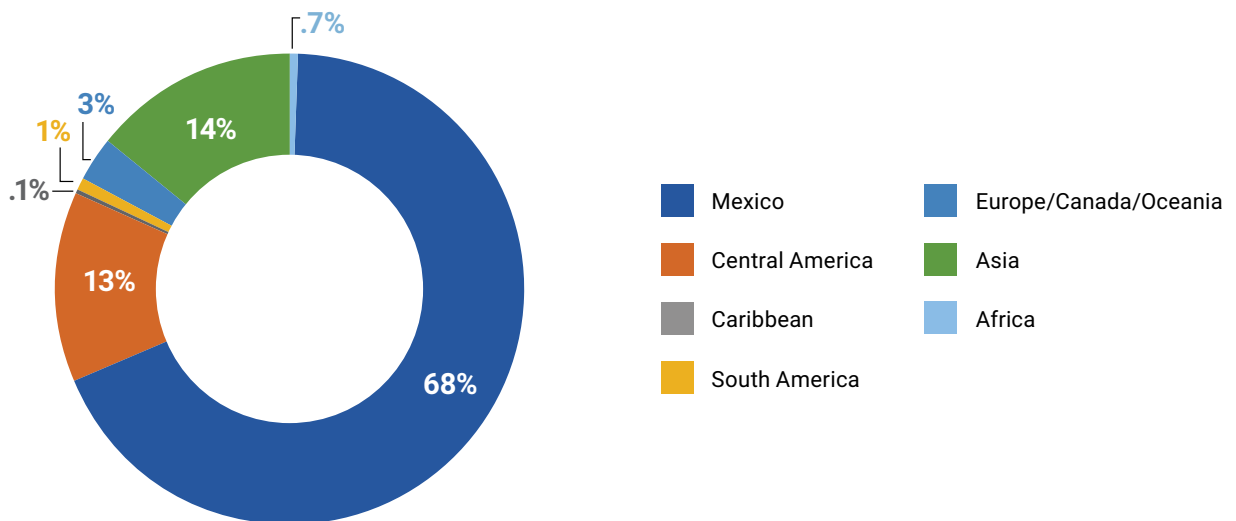
California is home to more than three million undocumented residents, representing one quarter of all undocumented immigrants in the United States. Of these, close to 600,000 are 24 years old and younger, accounting for one-fifth of the state’s undocumented population.<sup>5</sup>

**FIGURE 1: CALIFORNIA’S UNDOCUMENTED POPULATION, 2012-2016**  
*Almost half of California’s undocumented population is under 24 years of age*



Source: Migration Policy Institute

**FIGURE 2: COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN FOR CALIFORNIA’S UNDOCUMENTED POPULATION, 2012-2016**  
*81 percent of California’s undocumented residents are from Mexico and Central America*



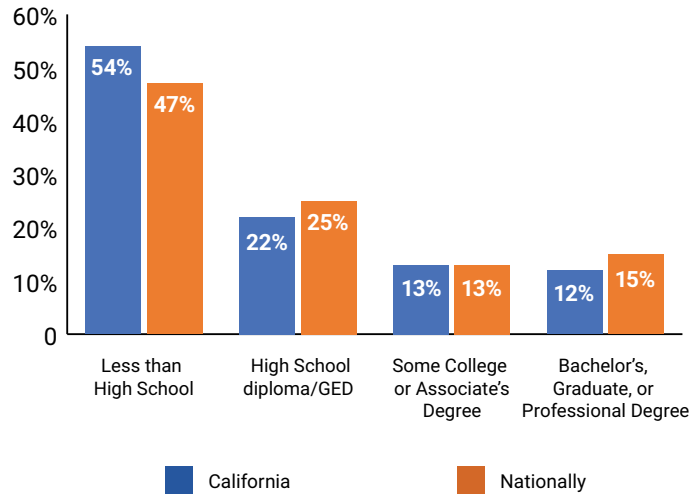
Source: Migration Policy Institute

While the majority of undocumented residents are from Mexico and Central America (81 percent), there is great diversity within California’s undocumented population by country of origin.

Compared to undocumented adults across the nation, California’s undocumented adults have educational attainment rates that are lower than that of the rest of the country.

**FIGURE 3: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF CALIFORNIA’S UNDOCUMENTED POPULATION, 25 YEARS AND OLDER, 2012-2016**

*Educational attainment rates of undocumented adults trail the nation’s*

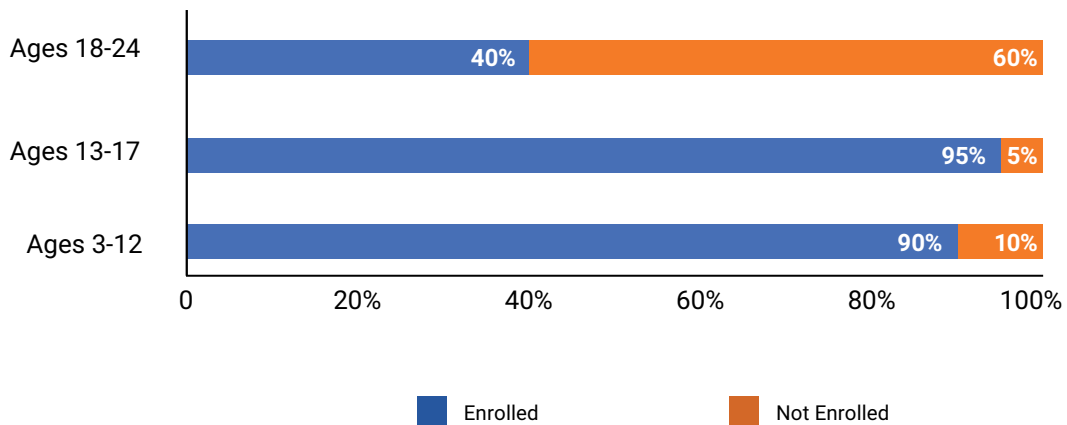


Source: Migration Policy Institute

The Migration Policy Institute estimates that 93 percent of school age undocumented children and youth in California (ages 3-17) are enrolled in school.<sup>6</sup> However, the same cannot be said for “traditional” college age undocumented residents. Of those that are ages 18-24, only 40 percent are estimated to be enrolled in college.<sup>7</sup>

**FIGURE 4: SCHOOL ENROLLMENT OF CALIFORNIA’S UNDOCUMENTED CHILDREN AND YOUTH, 2012-2016**

*More than half of college-aged undocumented residents are not enrolled in school*



Source: Migration Policy Institute





Of students who are enrolled in school, approximately 27,000 undocumented immigrants graduated from California high schools in 2016.<sup>8</sup>

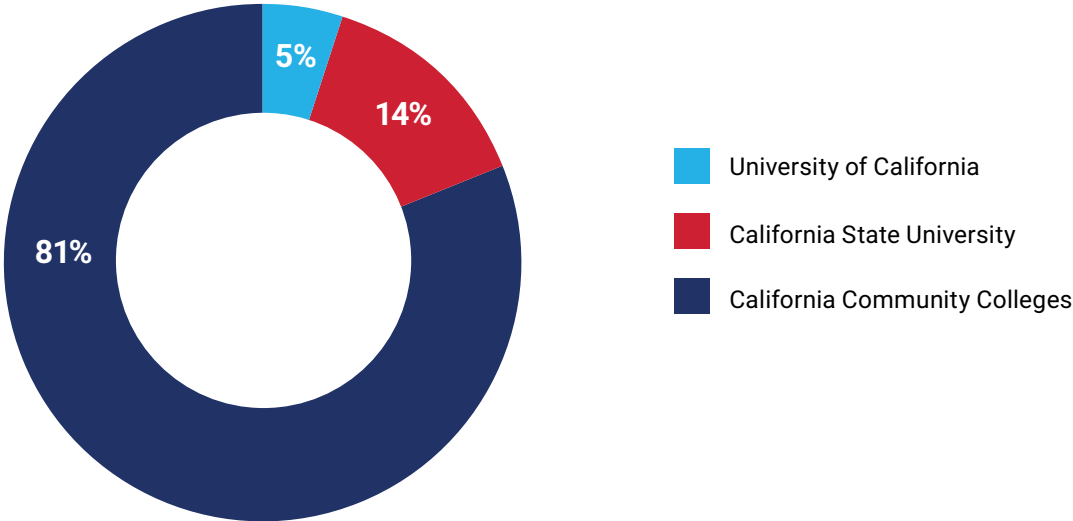
**TABLE 1: ESTIMATED NUMBER OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED FROM U.S. HIGH SCHOOLS, 2016**

LOCATION	NUMBER OF UNDOCUMENTED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES	STATE SHARE OF TOTAL UNDOCUMENTED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES
United States	98,000	100
<b>California</b>	<b>27,000</b>	<b>27</b>
Texas	17,000	17
Florida	5,000	6
New York	4,000	4
New Jersey	4,000	4
Illinois	4,000	4
Georgia	3,000	3
North Carolina	3,000	3
Virginia	2,000	3
Arizona	2,000	2
Maryland	2,000	2
Washington	2,000	2
Colorado	1,000	2
Nevada	1,000	1
Massachusetts	1,000	1
Other	18,000	19

Source: Migration Policy Institute

Although no official enrollment numbers exist, it is estimated that approximately 86,000 University of California (UC), California State University (CSU) and California Community College (CCC) students are undocumented.<sup>9</sup>

**FIGURE 5: COLLEGE ENROLLMENT ESTIMATES AT THE UC, CSU, AND CCC, 2018**  
*The vast majority of California’s undocumented students attend California Community Colleges*



Source: University of California, California State University, and the California Community Colleges



“Since I came to the states back in third grade, my entire social circles were American and that is how I thought about myself, not really feeling the impact of being...of not having a real immigration status or being on this limbo status. I didn’t feel the weight of [my status] until the end of high school when everyone was applying for colleges and I’m finding out, ‘Oh, I don’t have access to financial aid?’ I remember, as someone who is a high achieving student, I thought I was going to be able to navigate the [college going process] the way the school tells you to—just casually pick the schools you like and think about your interest. I did not know that [my status] would prevent me from doing that. I didn’t have any of those luxuries. I was just devastated my senior year.”

- Yatta Kiazolu, Ph.D. student at UCLA

# CALIFORNIA POLICIES PROTECTING COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

California has been at the forefront of enacting policies that ensure more of the state's undocumented residents are able to access and succeed in higher education. Some key enacted policies include:

## **AB 540 (Firebaugh)**

### ***Exemption from Nonresident Tuition***

Signed into law in 2001, AB 540 allows eligible undocumented, legal permanent resident, and U.S. citizen students to pay in-state tuition at public colleges and universities if they (1) attended a California high school; (2) Graduated from a California high school or receive the equivalent, such as a GED; and (3) Submit an affidavit to the California public college or university a student is attending or plans to attend attesting that they plan to apply for legal status as soon as they are eligible to do so.<sup>10</sup>

## **AB 130 (Cedillo) and AB 131 (Cedillo)**

### ***California Dream Act***

Signed into law as a pair in 2011, these bills allow AB 540 students to apply for Cal Grants and non-state funded scholarships, resulting in the creation of the California Dream Act Application (CADAA).<sup>11</sup> Following enactment of the California Dream Act, AB 540 students could receive "entitlement" Cal Grants but were restricted in how they could access the "competitive" Cal Grant program. Since completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the first criterion a student must meet for competitive Cal Grant, FAFSA filers are considered before their peers who submitted a CADAA. With over 325,000 annual applicants for the competitive Cal Grant but fewer than 26,000 total awards,<sup>12</sup> this effectively means that AB 540 students are barred from accessing competitive Cal Grants, despite potentially having greater financial need.

## **SB 1210 (Lara)**

### ***The California DREAM Loan Program***

Signed into law in 2014, this act provides AB 540 students with access to DREAM Loans, which offer interest rates that are consistent with those for the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan program.<sup>13</sup>

## **SB 68 (Lara)**

### ***Expansion of AB 540 & Exemptions from Nonresident Tuition***

Signed into law in 2017, SB 68 allowed for units earned at the CCC and adults schools to also qualify students for AB 540 and the in-state tuition rates offered at California public universities.<sup>14</sup>

## **SB 54 (de Leon) & AB 21 (Kalra)**

### ***Sanctuary State & Model Practices for California Colleges & Universities***

Signed into law in 2018, SB 54 prohibits state and local law enforcement and other public agencies from directing resources towards immigration enforcement activities.<sup>15</sup> SB 54 also required that the California Attorney General publish model policies for how these agencies could limit assistance to federal immigration enforcement authorities and ensure public spaces remain accessible to all state residents, regardless of documentation status.

Signed into law in 2017, AB 21 required that the CSU Board of Trustees and governing boards for individual community colleges adopt such model policies issued by the Attorney General by March of 2019 and requested that the UC Board of Regents do the same.<sup>16</sup>

## **AB 1895 (Calderon)**

### ***DREAM Loan Repayment***

Signed into law in 2018, AB 1895, guarantees that California DREAM Loan borrowers will have access to the same income-based repayment options that students who utilize federal student loans can access starting in 2020.<sup>17</sup>

## **SB 354 (Durazo)**

### ***California DREAM Loan Program for Graduate Degree Programs***

Signed in 2019, SB 354 expands the DREAM loan eligibility to a student pursuing graduate or professional education.<sup>18</sup>

## **AB 1645 (Rubio)**

### ***Dreamer Resource Liaison***

Signed in 2019, AB 1645 requires the California Community Colleges and the California State University, and requests the University of California, to designate a Dreamer Resource Liaison on each of their respective campuses to designate on-campus staff to help undocumented students access supports and resources available to help them pursue their education.<sup>19</sup>

## Budget Allocations

In 2017, Governor Brown approved \$3 million towards DREAM Loans for undocumented students at the UC and the CSU, as well as \$7 million for emergency aid for undocumented students at the CCC.<sup>20</sup>

In 2018, Governor Jerry Brown allocated \$21 million one-time funds to provide legal services for undocumented students, staff and faculty at the UC, CSU, and CCC.<sup>21</sup>

The 2019-20 State Budget established the Cal Grant B Service Incentive Grant Program to offer grants to students who are not eligible for federal work study programs and that complete specified volunteer or community service hours. The budget also provided funding to support the UC legal immigration services program.<sup>22</sup>

## Taking a Stand

California has taken proactive measures to combat administrative and legislative actions by the federal government that would be harmful to undocumented students. The UC Regents and President Janet Napolitano filed a lawsuit seeking to prevent the Trump Administration's intent to terminate the DACA program. In their complaint, they stated that terminating DACA would cause irreparable harm to the system.<sup>23</sup>

In 2016, then Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom called on California's three systems to better protect undocumented students enrolled on their campuses. In a letter, he said, "We have both a moral and economic imperative to protect our students, [and] the future workforce and families of California," and he asked them to "codify practices, improve training, and formally declare themselves as sanctuary campuses, where residents can pursue a higher education without fear."<sup>24</sup> Collectively, the three systems sent a letter sent to the Trump Administration urging them to uphold DACA so that they "could pursue their dreams of a higher education without fear of being arrested, deported, or rounded up for just trying to learn."<sup>25</sup>

"The University of California, California State University, and the California Community College systems each have thousands of DACA students studying at our institutions. They are constructive and contributing members of our communities. They should be able to pursue their dream of higher education without fear of being arrested, deported, or rounded up for just trying to learn."

Letter from CCC Chancellor Eloy Ortiz-Oakley, CSU Chancellor Timothy White, and UC President Janet Napolitano  
November 29, 2016





# CALIFORNIA’S UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS SPEAK OUT

California’s promise to support the education of all of its students—including those without legal standing—is evident. Despite these proactive measures, undocumented students are still encountering significant roadblocks on their road to college and during their college journey.

To better understand these roadblocks and what can be done to break them down, we hosted two convenings with undocumented CCC and CSU students in Los Angeles in August of 2018. Additionally, we interviewed at length students from the UC, CSU and CCC. Students we spoke with came from 14 different campuses.

**TABLE 2: CAMPUS REPRESENTATION OF STUDENTS INTERVIEWED**

CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES	CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY	UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Chaffey College	CSU Fullerton	UC Berkeley
Cerritos College	CSU Long Beach	UCLA
East Los Angeles College	CSU Los Angeles	
Los Angeles City College	CSU Northridge	
Los Angeles Harbor College	CSU Sacramento	
Los Angeles Trade Technical College		
West Los Angeles College		

Although unique in many ways, the students we spoke with consistently raised the same themes:

1. Resources for undocumented students are inconsistent across campuses.
2. Campus climate is often hostile for undocumented students.
3. Access to financial aid is a key factor in an undocumented students’ ability to go to college.
4. Undocumented students continue to need access to legal services for themselves and/or their families.
5. Professional experience requirements for graduation or professional development pose a challenge to undocumented students.

## Resources for undocumented students are inconsistent across campuses.

Since passage of the California Dream Act and the increase in undocumented students enrolled in college, approximately 50 undocumented student centers have opened on numerous campuses to offer support to students.<sup>26</sup> Though not all centers are alike, similar services are offered, including academic support, financial aid, psychological and legal counseling, and referrals to free or low-cost services off-campus.<sup>27</sup> But in a state with close to 150 public campuses across three systems, inequities exist in the availability of these centers as well as the resources they provide to students. On some campuses these centers may be actual physical spaces with dedicated staff and resources, while on other campuses, these centers may be little more than a table in a larger space with fliers containing information.

For those campuses with well-established centers, students point out that having a space where they can gather, where clubs can coalesce, and where professional staff can provide resources—including financial aid, academic support, and mental health services—is key to their sense of belonging, well-being, and academic success.

Other students talked about the importance of undocumented student centers providing some basic, yet essential necessities.

Raquel, a CSU student, shared, “We have a DREAM Center that provides free printing [and] a fridge for your food. People use the center frequently, stopping by for printing. They also use the space for club meetings such as SURGE and the Pre-Health DREAMers club.”

Yadira, a community college student, likewise finds the DREAM Resource Center that recently opened was very helpful as “they have free printing, gift cards, and someone you can talk with about your problems.”

Nayeli, a community college student, remarked that at her school, students wanted a DREAM Resource Center but didn’t get one. Instead, they got what she calls a “social justice center.”



One of the earliest challenges identified by the **California Undocumented Higher Education Coalition** was the lack of information or confusing messaging that students received from their campuses about resources available to them. Preliminary scans of campus websites by the Campaign indicated inconsistent, inaccurate, and limited information for students. As a result, the Campaign conducted a landscape analysis of each UC, CSU and CCC campus—147 campuses in total—and created an interactive campus resource map. The map includes information on campus centers, support programs, web addresses with relevant information, and contact information of undocumented allies and liaisons. You can view the *California Undocumented Student Resources Map* at [bit.ly/CAUndocMap](http://bit.ly/CAUndocMap).



Though not labeled a DREAM Resource Center, the services have still been helpful:

I'm kind of happy that it is a social justice center because it removes the target off student's backs and is more inviting to many students. ... Before this, undocumented students couldn't find help for financial aid. A lot of students have issues on a daily basis. The DREAMers Club has helped students out by providing a network of support, but the club began getting questions for help and could not do enough to help all of the students coming to them for help. We only have seven members in the DREAMer's Club but have 1,200 undocumented students in the school.

Even among campuses with centers, the majority are not well-established, and students shared significant challenges. As already noted, some centers consisted of only a table with fliers, while others were an out-of-the-way office with little or no staffing.

Miriam, a CSU student, remarked, "Our center is very small just an office, it's extremely tiny. It feels like a hostile environment."

For others, the lack of inadequate space does not provide the confidentiality their circumstances often require. Discussing a desire for a private space where she could let her guard down and express her feelings, Miriam observed, "My campus is very political and can be challenging. Sometimes I just want a shoulder to cry on and someone to talk to and I don't feel like I have that."

Raquel similarly noted that on her CSU campus, their space is too small to adequately serve the needs of their student population. "We've had to continually fight for space within the campus. At [our campus] 1,500 people are undocumented and the space is very tiny. How do you expect that to work? Students have had to fight for this space—the administration has not provided adequate space."



Others shared that centers and resources do not offer accommodating hours or promote their services, which leads to significant underutilization of services. Diana stated that their undocumented student center closes at 5 pm and is underused because it does not fit the needs of the student population, “By the time students are done with classes and work they can’t utilize it. We wish there were better hours.”

Pamela shared that her community college now has a DREAM Center, but it is not well used. Because of that, they risk losing the space:

The campus has said if not enough DREAMers go to the center that the campus will close it. There’s not enough support for the center itself. Too few students go. On a good week, we will maybe have 10 students, but we need at least 10 students a day. The DREAM Center is very informative and they provide scholarship information for undocumented students. But not enough students use it because there’s not enough attention given to the center.

Given the challenge of space, need, and underutilization, students recommend having a mandatory orientation for undocumented students to introduce the incoming students to the resource center, build trust, and inform students of all campus-available resources. Students also recommended a one-unit class, once a week, at the undocumented resource center to get students to visit and familiarize themselves with the space and services. In offering this class, Miriam recommended that administration be mindful of the day and time the course is offered, saying, “[If] it’s a one-unit class that meets on Fridays, about 20 students attend. But it could be more if it wasn’t on a Friday. I didn’t take the class because it conflicts with my work schedule.”



### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Provide funding for campus staff positions focused on serving undocumented students, as well as staff positions at each public higher education system office dedicated towards supporting campus staff.
- Provide a mandatory one-unit orientation for incoming undocumented students at the campus level.



## Campus climate is often hostile for undocumented students.

Students related experiences in which they were made to feel as though they did not belong on their campuses. Some shared that professors and administrators undertake activities or make statements that are offensive, insensitive, and perpetuate a sense of fear amongst undocumented students. Mariana, a community college student, shared, “My professor would frequently bring up that undocumented students are breaking the law and I sometimes felt as though she was accusing and directing her comments at me. It made me very uncomfortable to be there.”

In a similar vein, Jose attends a CSU campus and feels that “there are some White professors within departments who really don’t understand what it means to be undocumented. I have asked professors to talk about undocumented rights and they say undocumented folks don’t have rights.” Even worse is the experience of Mariela, a community college student, who was told she didn’t belong.

“Faculty and administration don’t take into account policy changes for Dreamers. They don’t take it as seriously as other policy and law changes. I have been told by departments that I don’t belong here, or a program doesn’t exist here when it does.”

The hostile environment extends beyond the classroom and encroaches into public spaces. Raquel recalled a time when the administration was less than attuned to the needs of their undocumented student population. “Sometimes the administration does not take our needs into account. During our career fair, the California Border Patrol was on campus right next to our DREAM Center and they didn’t even give us a warning. This made us feel unsafe.” Diana, also a student at a CSU, has had a similar experience on her campus, remarking, “This also happens on our campus. Border patrol will be present during the career fair and its very scary and intimidating.”

## ALLY TRAINING

An ally to undocumented students is a person who believes that undocumented students have a right to be enrolled in a university and should not be targets of anti-immigrant discrimination, and who creates a climate of trust.

To effectively support undocumented students, an ally must possess awareness about undocumented students in one’s sphere as well as knowledge about policies, laws, and practices affecting undocumented students. Allies must also attend workshops to develop skills related to taking action to effect change and develop support networks.

Ally training is therefore developed and delivered with the goal to create a welcoming and supportive campus environment for undocumented immigrant students and increase faculty and staff knowledge about the needs, concerns, and issues of undocumented students and their families.

Moreover, ally training ensures faculty and staff are educated about the relevant immigrant laws impacting students and the related issues and challenges that may arise as a result of coming into contact with the immigration system.

Trainings may last anywhere from three to five hours or longer and may address topics such as the history, laws and policies affecting undocumented students, reviewing statistics about the undocumented student population, and practicing what it means to be an ally to undocumented students.<sup>28</sup>

The idea of explicitly identifying as undocumented to professors or others in positions of authority is difficult, but, as some students shared, having even just one ally on campus can make the difference for students. As Madeleine framed it:

When I was younger, one of the things I wanted to do for myself, mental health wise, was to not bring my undocumented status into the classroom. I felt like it came with a lot baggage. I didn't want anyone to treat me differently. So, I actually didn't come out to many professors, until maybe around the time Trump got elected. I realized I couldn't go to class. It was harder to go to class at the time, and I ended up e-mailing a professor saying I needed extra time with this paper we were doing and that I'm undocumented and I didn't want to say this because I drew boundaries between myself and the classroom. And I was expecting some sort of brushing off response. But [my professor] was very understanding and was like, 'You shouldn't have to separate your identities when you come into the classroom because you should be bringing your full self into it, and you can have the extension.

To combat the lack of awareness among individuals in positions of power, Diana shared that her campus hosts an ally training for faculty and staff that orients them to legal issues regarding undocumented students and prepares them to work as allies alongside undocumented students.

The DREAM Center started ally training, they brought in students and let us talk about what is difficult, what the challenges are, and how the [DREAM Center] could be more inclusive. They also want to start a mentoring program and internship with staff or faculty.

Students recommend that this type of ally training needs to exist across all campuses in the CSU and community colleges to ensure a more inclusive and safe environment that improves undocumented students' sense of belonging.

Beyond overt hostility, students shared that faculty and staff awareness of the rights of undocumented students is often insufficient. They have experience with staff providing misinformation to undocumented students, leading to confusion and situations that yield adverse academic outcomes. Mariela, currently enrolled at a community college, described the experiences of her younger sister also enrolled at a community college.

There are many discrepancies among staff and departments with information. My younger sister tried to transfer to ELAC and was shut down by the financial aid officer who didn't know anything about AB 540. And the person who did know something about DREAMers was not available. So [my sister] wasn't able to transfer in time and had to come back to her school.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- All California colleges and universities should offer the necessary training for administrators, faculty, and staff to increase awareness of the laws, policies, and practices affecting undocumented students.
- Fund ally training for campus administrators, faculty and staff to better support undocumented students.

**Access to financial aid is a key factor in an undocumented student’s ability to go to college.**

Paying for college was one of the biggest challenges undocumented students had to face when thinking about going to college. California was one of the first states to address financial aid options for undocumented students through legislation, discussed in greater detail earlier in this brief, that allows some undocumented students to pay in-state tuition, receive state financial aid, established the DREAM Loan program at the four-year universities, and provides income-based repayment options for those loans.<sup>29</sup> The CADAA provides students with access to state-sponsored aid in the form of the Cal Grant. Since the CADAA was first implemented in 2013, more than 200,000 applications have been received, with roughly 50,000 applications submitted to the California Student Aid Commission in the 2017-2018 aid cycle.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, only about 9,000 of these 50,000 applicants were offered Cal Grants in the 2017-2018 aid cycle<sup>31</sup>—even though undocumented students are eligible for competitive Cal Grants these grants are only disbursed to undocumented students after all other eligible applicants for competitive grants receive awards. These funding shortages mean that low-income undocumented students still face considerable costs.<sup>32</sup>

**TABLE 3: FINANCIAL AID GAPS FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS**

*Financial aid gaps for for undocumented students are exacerbated due to lack of access to federal aid*

	FINANCIAL AID GAP FOR CALIFORNIA STUDENTS	FINANCIAL AID GAP FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS
California Community College	\$6,946	\$14,369
California State University	\$5,733	\$18,628
University of California	\$5,004	\$24,667

Source: Campaign for College Opportunity

Note: The financial aid gap is the cost borne by students after earnings from a reasonable amount of student work (for eligible students), contributions from parents that reflect family disposable income, and grant aid from state and federal governments and institutions are deducted from the cost of attendance.

Marcos, as CSU graduate, talked about the limited opportunities he could pursue given the financial hardships he would experience as a result of attending college before passage of the California Dream Act in 2011. Although he was able to attend a CSU campus because he received a California Student Opportunity and Access Program scholarship, his high school AVID coordinator provided some funds to pay tuition, and his family was able to provide partial support, he ultimately had to make the difficult decision to take a leave of absence from school to find work.

Everyone was pitching in a little bit, but after the second semester of my second year, I knew the scholarships were going to run out... I knew the third year was going to be really tough, and I was going to have to start paying out of pocket.

But in taking the time off, he once again encountered roadblocks associated with his status.

I was trying to find someone who was willing to pay me under the table. It was really tough. I wasn’t able to find anything at the time. I was looking, but I was just not having any luck. I ended up working full-time for a couple of years, and it took me a couple more years to go back to college.

Angee, however, found that the CCC Board of Governors (BOG) fee waiver was instrumental in her ability to attend school. She said, [The resource I find most useful is the BOG waiver because it helps me to cover schooling. It's something I can depend on to always be there as financial support.](#)” Still, others indicated how after a time, financial aid becomes more limited for undocumented students. Raquel, a student at the CSU, noted that [“for STEM majors, its especially hard for undocumented students to finish. I'm a fifth-year student but the DREAM Act only covers me for four years. Luckily, I had applied for a scholarship, but the DREAM Act needs more funding.”](#)

These students recommend that efforts should be made to expand the time undocumented students can access aid given that many undocumented students are heads of household and may take longer to earn their degrees.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Allow eligible undocumented students to compete for competitive Cal Grants without additional barriers.
- Extend DREAM Loans and affordable borrowing options for students pursuing graduate or professional education.
- Extend the fund eligibility time period for undocumented students to accommodate longer degree completion time periods.

### **Undocumented students continue to need access to legal services and emergency funds.**

When asked about ways to expend the \$21 million allocated in the state budget in 2018 to provide legal services for undocumented students at the UC, CSU, and CCC, students supported expanding partnerships formed by their campuses with non-profit organizations to provide legal services. This is important, because as Jesus, a CSU student, emphasized: [“Don't reinvent the wheel and don't build something that already exists. Partner with nonprofits that already provide those legal services and are experts.”](#) Jose, another CSU student, agreed with this assessment and noted it would be [“most helpful to campuses that don't have DREAM Resource Centers.”](#)

Students felt that any legal services provided should also be offered to family members and the amount of time with a legal services professional should be extended. Mariela stated:

[I want to have a good amount of time with legal services. My school had a lawyer on campus for a short time, but we were only able to meet for 15 minutes. I want the lawyer to be there at least once or twice a month and meet for 30 minutes or more.](#)

Moreover, as Nayeli recommends, any support services on campus could include referrals to outside services.

[Having students be directed to legal services is helpful if they are not available on campus. Having \[legal services\] on campus is good, but having outside people who can direct you to a broader list of resources is also useful.](#)



Extending the support made available to students to families is important as they are less likely to have support but equally at risk of harm. This is a critical observation given the number of students who hail from mixed-status families. Across the country, it is estimated that most children of undocumented residents are US citizens.<sup>33</sup> In California specifically, the Migration Policy Institute estimates that over one million undocumented residents live in mixed status households (with children who are U.S. citizens, documented non-citizens, or both.)<sup>34</sup>

**TABLE 4: MIXED STATUS HOUSEHOLDS IN CALIFORNIA (AGES 15 AND OVER)**

	ESTIMATE	PERCENT
Reside with at least one U.S. citizen child under 18	882,000	30%
Reside with non-citizen children only under 18	204,000	7%
Reside with no children	1,815,000	63%
TOTAL	2,901,000	100%

Source: Migration Policy Institute

Raquel said it was important to include families because, as she says, “What does a student do if their family is deported? An emergency fund would be helpful.” Nayeli likewise agreed with this recommendation, saying, “I know a student who has a son who was taken away so maybe having some sort of family type services to assist” would be helpful. Angee, a community college student, suggested that some of the funds be directed to support the needs of undocumented students with disabilities.

Students are grateful and urge the continuation of financial resources for the DACA renewal application, with Jose advocating to schools that they “should prioritize paying DACA renewal fees,” as the \$495 fee may be prohibitive for many students. They also suggest that emergency funds be established to cover costs that arise for undocumented students that could include housing, transportation or legal fees. Miriam called on colleges to “put more money into our emergency funds [because] they are very important and useful to students.” She further believes that the amounts available should be higher especially “for those who have very high needs.”

Above all, Jesus at the CSU talked about the importance of consistency and how funding for support services, should be seen as a long-term investment. It isn’t enough to require DREAM Resource Liaisons, but funding for these liaisons should be guaranteed. He said, “There shouldn’t just be [a mandate for] a liaison [on campus], but ... also funding for the liaison. We need a secure source of funding for our centers and our liaisons.”



**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Provide on-going financial support to ensure the stability and availability of legal services programs and DREAM Resource Liaisons.
- Provide emergency funds to cover basic and special needs like housing, transportation and legal fees.



### Professional experience requirements pose barriers.

Now more than ever, many academic majors require students to complete some relevant work-experience by the time of graduation. This can take many forms including internships, fellowships, and formal employment. These professional experience requirements for graduation pose a challenge to undocumented students. Jesus, enrolled at the CSU, talked about how difficult it was to secure internships and work experience.

The business program requires students to have internship hours. Other than the VITA internship there are challenges getting an internship. We aren't able to join a firm after graduating and getting a degree [if] you don't have [internship] experience or documents. Many majors require internship hours, but many places don't want to have us intern because we lack documents.

DACA provides an individual with authorization to work. Without it, undocumented students would not have the work authorization to meet the professional work experience requirements of their academic majors.

DACA alleviates some of these challenges, but not all students are eligible to apply. As such, it is incumbent on each college to weigh their requirements in light of the students they serve and determine what accommodations can be made for students whose status does not allow them to fulfill every requirement. Investing in service-study opportunities would help address the unmet financial needs of undocumented students, as well as provide meaningful opportunities for students to build their professional skills and resumes. AB 540 (Limón), for example, has established a service-incentive grant program to offer grants to undocumented students who complete specified volunteer or community service hours and meet academic requirements.<sup>35</sup>



#### RECOMMENDATION

- Support efforts like the service-incentive grant program to offer grants to undocumented students who complete specified volunteer or community service hours and meet academic requirements.

## CONCLUSION: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

[My parents] never thought that we would be in the place where we are in. I think, this is where the immense...the amount of pressure on my shoulders is that my dad reminds me 'it may not have worked for your mom and I and I've come to terms that things might not get better and we don't have a pathway. But I know we did this for you because we know that you are in a much better position than we are to succeed.' And I don't take that responsibility lightly—it's what gets me up in the morning every day. -Miguel, UC graduate

California is a leader in the nation in providing college opportunity for undocumented students. California was one of the first states in the nation to offer in-state tuition and access to state financial aid for undocumented students. More recently, California has enacted policies to provide undocumented students with broader access to the state loan program and legal services.

While California's commitment to college opportunity for undocumented students is laudable, our conversations with undocumented students at California's community colleges and California public university campuses illuminate on-going challenges facing these students in their pursuit of higher education.

California's undocumented students are committed to their education and want to succeed. They continue to be resilient in the face of hostile campus climate, insufficient campus resources and financial aid, and a tremendous need for on-going legal services. State leaders can support undocumented students in meeting their higher education goals by providing ongoing funding to ensure continuous legal and support services. At the same time, colleges and universities must do a better job of disseminating accurate information, allocating adequate spaces for undocumented students to meet, and providing sufficient training to ensure administrators, faculty, and staff can speak knowledgeably and empathetically about issues affecting these students.

There are over half a million undocumented residents under the age of 24 in California. The civic and economic contributions these residents can make are significant but can only be realized if state and college leaders make the necessary investments and changes in practice to better support undocumented students. The nation's eyes continue to be upon California as it trailblazes a new standard of what it means to provide college opportunity to undocumented students.



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We truly appreciate all of our partners in the **California Undocumented Higher Education Coalition** for continuing to ensure California protects and expands college opportunity for undocumented students in our state.

AB 540 Ally Training Project	Presidents Alliance on Higher Education & Immigration Undocumented Student Center
Alliance for a Better Community	Sierra College
Asian Americans Advancing Justice	Santa Ana College
California Community College Chancellor's Office	Sierra College
California LULAC	Southern California College Access Network
California State Student Association	Southwestern College
California State University, San Bernardino	Student Senate for California Community Colleges
Californians Together	Students Making a Change
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles	The Education Trust—West
Community College League of California	The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Cuesta College	The Institute for College Access and Success
Hispanas Organized for Political Equality	UC Student Association
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities	UCLA Civil Rights Project/ Proyecto Derechos Civiles
Immigrants Rising	UCLA UndocuScholars
Los Angeles City Office of Immigrant Rights	Undocumented Student Program - UC Berkeley
Leticia A. Network	UnidosUS
Los Angeles Community College District	USC- Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration
Los Angeles United Methodist Urban Foundation	USC- Pullias Center for Higher Education
- Kid City Hope Place Los Angeles Unified School District - S.E.P.A center	Year Up
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund	Young Invincibles



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