California Community Colleges
Dreamers Project

Strengthening Institutional Practices To Support Undocumented Student Success

A collaborative effort between the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO), the Foundation for California Community Colleges (Foundation), and Immigrants Rising, the Dreamers Project lays the groundwork for a longer-term program and initiatives needed to meet undocumented students’ needs. The project includes a landscape analysis undertaken through an online survey of community colleges and four regional meetings, as well as guidance from an Advisory Group and a final report submitted to the CCCCO.

In the full finalized report, the Foundation and Immigrants Rising present identified, shared challenges in serving undocumented students. Recommendations about how to better serve undocumented students, paired with promising practices underway, are provided for implementation at the individual, group, and institutional levels to create systemic change that benefits California.

For questions about the Dreamers Project, contact:

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California Community Colleges

50,000-70,000
ESTIMATED UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS ENROLLED AT CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
FINDING

Inadequate ability to outreach to undocumented students and protect student data

RECOMMENDATION

Improve identification, student data protection, and outreach

Reduce equity gaps in undocumented student enrollment by building pathways that increase service awareness and reduce fear.

- Develop and implement new methods to effectively outreach to current and incoming undocumented students.
- Increase student awareness of FERPA and SB 54 protections.
- Identify and strengthen outreach and academic pathways to and from CCCs.
- Incorporate resources in college catalog, class schedules, and course syllabi.
- Each college should have at least one webpage with key undocumented student resources.

FINDING

Insufficient institutional support/campus-wide trainings

RECOMMENDATION

Increase staff training and support

Ensure all CCC personnel are adequately trained to build institutional practices that promote compliance with California state laws and educational codes.

- Coordinate consistent and up-to-date trainings for faculty, staff, administration, student leaders and Board of Trustees to ensure the necessary knowledge, competency, and skills to effectively serve undocumented students.Ensure college departments are aware of FERPA, SB 54 and model policies (AB 21).
- Coordinate ongoing professional development and support for counselors, DRC coordinators and other staff.
- Engage in cross-campus and online learning and networking.

FINDING

Need for dedicated stakeholders, staff, and space at each campus

RECOMMENDATION

Formalize support for dedicated stakeholders, staff, and space at each campus

Expand and formalize campus-wide support and retention of undocumented students through the creation of a task force, a dedicated position, and measurable benchmarks.

- Participate in a campus-wide task force that meets regularly to address undocumented student needs and systemic solutions.
- Advocate for a full-time position in support of undocumented students.
- Ensure there is an Undocumented Student Program or Resource Center with measurable benchmarks.
- Access dedicated and sustainable funding streams for programmatic support and staff.

FINDING

Need for better access to financial support

RECOMMENDATION

Improve access to financial support for all undocumented students

Increase undocumented students’ ability to receive all financial aid and scholarships for which they are eligible.

- Develop trainings for all front-line enrollment staff regarding in-state tuition & CA Dream Act eligibility.
- Work with Financial Aid to create and disseminate for CA Dream Act checklists.
- Promote the March 2 deadline for Cal Grants.
- Ensure campus scholarships are open to all undocumented students.
- Create a dedicated scholarship.

FINDING

Need for increased student engagement and direct services to increase student retention

RECOMMENDATION

Expand strategies to promote student retention

Promote undocumented student certificate or degree completion through increased opportunities for student leadership, as well as access to credible legal and mental health services.

- Promote a safe space by fostering or expanding undocumented student and ally clubs.
- Develop and strengthen student leadership through undocumented student peer mentor programs.
- Coordinate regular activities such as welcome nights, storytelling workshops, pop-up art shows.
- Develop and promote partnerships with culturally competent and no or low-cost mental health and legal service providers.

FINDING

Need for definitive guidance from the CCCCO

RECOMMENDATION

Ensure CCCCO’s statewide guidance and policy support

Provide systemic oversight regarding equitable implementation of state laws, alignment with CCCCO initiatives, and sustained advocacy to improve all campus climates for undocumented students.

- Advocate for adequate, dedicated, and sustainable staff, centralized within the system and spearheaded by the Chancellor’s Office, to ensure all campuses are compliant with state laws and education codes as well as promote undocumented student success.
- Participate in Undocumented Student Week of Action.