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

Undocumented Students’ Most Pressing Needs
Among 111 Participating Colleges Surveyed

50,000-70,000
ESTIMATED UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS ENROLLED AT CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
## FINANCIAL AID

### 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.

- Include CA Dream Act information when conducting outreach to current and incoming undocumented students.
- Increase student awareness of FERPA and SB 54 protections.
- Promote an inclusive and welcoming campus through supportive and multilingual signage.
- Incorporate resources in college catalog, class schedules, and course syllabi.
- Each Financial Aid webpage has 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.

- Participate in consistent and up-to-date trainings for key stakeholders to ensure the necessary knowledge, competency, and skills to effectively serve undocumented students.
- Identify a subject matter expert for CA Dream Act to provide trainings to DRC Coordinators & key campus contacts.
- Ensure Financial Aid staff are aware of FERPA, SB 54 and model policies (AB 21).

### 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.

- Ensure financial aid department participates in a campus-wide task force that meets regularly to address undocumented student needs and advocate for systemic solutions.
- Support the creation a full-time position on campus in support of undocumented students.
- Ensure there is an Undocumented Student Program or Resource Center with measurable benchmarks.

### 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.

- Guaranteed trainings for all front-line enrollment staff regarding in-state tuition & CA Dream Act eligibility.
- Host interdepartmental trainings and increase communication between admissions, financial aid, and outreach staff.
- Ensure outreach materials include verbiage “FAFSA or DREAM.”
- Create and disseminate financial aid checklists for CA Dream Act.
- Ensure campus scholarships are open to all undocumented students.

### 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.

- Develop and strengthen student leadership through undocumented student peer mentor programs.
- Partner with local community-based organizations to provide undocumented students with access to credible legal services.
- Require in-service trainings for campus mental health providers to ensure provision of culturally competent services for undocumented students, including trauma therapy.

### 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.

- Ensure 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.
- Analyze Cal Grant and CA Promise Grant disbursements to increase award rates.
- Ensure campuses are compliant with immigration model policies from the CA Attorney General (AB 21).