



In the Shadows of the Ivory Tower: Undocumented Undergraduates and the Liminal State of Immigration Reform



The UndocuScholars Project
The Institute for Immigration, Globalization, & Education
University of California, Los Angeles

CONNECTING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE AND POLICY

This report is the result of a joint collaborative effort between the Institute for Immigration, Globalization, and Education at the University of California, Los Angeles and the UndocuScholars Community Advisory Board, Research Advisory Board, and Student Advisory Board.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Amidst the turbulent crosscurrents of immigration reform, nearly a quarter of a million undocumented undergraduates are struggling to find their way in higher education. Their liminal state calls for research to inform the unique needs and challenges of this growing student population. In this report, we shed light on the range and complexities of undocumented undergraduates experiences based on a sample of 909 participants across 34 states originating in 55 countries. The participants attended an array of postsecondary institutions including two-year and four-year public and private colleges that range in selectivity. In this report, we describe their demographic characteristics, experiences in college, as well as their aspirations and anxieties. Further, we make specific recommendations for what colleges should consider to better serve this population. Lastly, in light of executive actions in 2012 and 2014, this data can be used to extrapolate some of the issues that are likely to define this newly protected immigrant population moving forward.

Characteristics of Undocumented Undergraduates

Undocumented students are diverse in terms of countries of origin, languages spoken at home, and religion. They encompass a range of immigration histories and vary along the spectrum of socioeconomic status.

- Participants emigrated from 55 different countries of origin
- On average, participants had resided 14.8 years in the U.S.; in most cases, the majority of their lives have been spent in the U.S.
- Participants reported 33 different primary languages spoken at home
- 61.3% had an annual household income below \$30,000, 29.0% had an annual household income of \$30,000 to \$50,000, and 9.7% had an annual household income above \$50,000
- 72.4% were working while attending college
- 64.1% reported having at least one member of their household who was citizen or lawful resident
- Deportation is a constant concern. Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of participants reported worries about being detained or deported. 55.9% reported personally knowing someone who had been deported including a parent (5.7%) or a sibling (3.2%)
- Undocumented undergraduates reported significantly elevated levels of anxiety. 28.5% of male and 36.7% of female participants' anxiety scores were above a clinical cut off level (in contrast to 4% and 9% of a norm population

- Undocumented college students reported strong longings to belong in American society. A vast majority (90.4%) said they would become citizens if they could

Undocumented students also attend a wide range of postsecondary institutions – ranging in type, selectivity, and size – and represented a range of different academic majors.

- 28.2% were majoring in STEM, making these the most popular majors.
- 48.2% attended four-year public colleges or universities, 42.4% reported attending two-year public colleges, and 9.4% attended private colleges
- 67.6% were first-generation college students (neither parent had attended college)

The Policy Context for the Undocumented College Student Experience

We identified specific ways Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was beneficial to some undocumented students relative to their financial stability and well-being, access to resources and opportunities, and participating more fully in college and society.

- 65.9% applied for and received DACA; DACA recipients were most likely to be female and attending four-year public and private colleges or universities

- 85.5% of students with DACA reported it had a positive impact on their education
- DACA recipients reported higher rates of working, receiving grants and scholarships, and participating in internships than students without DACA
- DACA recipients reported better access to transportation, more stable housing conditions, and a greater desire to become U.S. citizens if given the opportunity than students without DACA

However, there are also notable limitations to DACA that continue to impede access and success in higher education for undocumented students.

- Policies that determine whether or not undocumented students will pay in-state or out-of-state tuition, if they can gain access to certain forms of financial aid, and in some cases if they can enroll in institutions in certain states that are governed at the state, higher education system, and institution levels
- While DACA has been an important first step toward greater security, the provisional nature had many students asking, “What will happen when DACA ends?”
- A higher proportion of DACA recipients (89.6%) than DACA non-recipients (70.8%) reported ongoing worries about the detentions of friends and family, which are correlated with higher levels of anxiety among DACA recipients

The Campus Experience

Undocumented students face a number of unique barriers that impact their ability to attend and succeed in college, which have implications for the work of higher education practitioners.

- 56.7% reported being extremely concerned about financing their college education
- 75.6% of respondents attending two-year colleges and 69.4% of respondents attending four-year colleges worked while attending college, which inhibited their ability to succeed academically

- Among respondents who reported stopping-out, 73.9% indicated that it was due to financial difficulties

Undocumented students reported challenges within their campus communities and discussed a desire for safe spaces.

- Respondents spoke of their sense of isolation on campus as they felt uncertain about who they could trust
- Students reported high levels of being treated unfairly or negatively due to their legal status by faculty, counselors, other students, financial aid officers, campus administrators, and security guards/campus police
- Of the respondents with access to organizations, centers, or safe spaces where undocumented students can gather to share experiences, 73.1% reported making use of them; this highlights the importance of these spaces

Lessons Learned and Looking Ahead

Implications for Policymakers

- Considering that recent executive action will create employment authorization for more than 3.9 million tax-paying undocumented residents who will generate an estimated \$4 billion in new tax revenue, states should offer equitable tuition policies for undocumented students. The review of these policies is especially important for the states with unstipulated tuition policies and the nine states with restrictive tuition policies.
- The federal government should provide clear guidelines for ways the higher education community could better serve DACA students regarding work authorization, internships, and access to scholarships.
- There is a need for closer examination of the guidelines for federal and state financial aid for both, undocumented students and citizen and lawful permanent resident children of undocumented parents. For the latter group, procedures need to reflect changes to work

authorization for undocumented adults with citizen and lawful permanent resident children.

Implications for Colleges and Universities

- Higher education institutions should proclaim their commitment to and support for undocumented students as members of their campus communities. This endorsement should reflect their commitment to welcome, embrace, recognize, acknowledge, and provide a safe space for these students.
- There is a need within the higher education community for an on-going dialogue to inform admissions and outreach, financial aid, transition programs, student support services, retention programs, and efforts to assist students with pursuing graduate school or careers.
- It is particularly important for higher education institutions and systems to review and, if necessary, revise procedures related to DACA, including employment, internships, and study abroad.
- Faculty should anticipate having undocumented students in their academic programs, in their classrooms, and as advisees, be aware of their unique barriers and challenges, and be knowledgeable about resources on campus that can respond to their needs.
- Colleges and universities should be sites for legal clinics and other consultation services for undocumented residents in their local communities regarding DACA and other immigration matters. This affords current and aspiring law students with valuable, first-hand experience, and the opportunity to serve their local communities.
- Colleges and universities should provide counseling support and mental health services on campus provided by culturally responsive service providers.

Implications for Higher Education Associations, Scholarship Providers, Foundations, and Corporations

- Higher education associations and community advocacy groups should be the front-line providers for their constituents about how to navigate the process of gaining access to and succeeding in college.
- There is a need for philanthropy to engage with scholarship providers and the higher education community to develop funding opportunities for undocumented students at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
- Foundations should support research that can generate information about innovative and effective programs and practices.
- Corporations should review their recruitment and hiring practices to afford undocumented students with access to internships and other career opportunities.

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INTRODUCTION

Amidst an era of deep anxieties about the economy, national security, and rapidly changing demographics, immigration sits center stage as one of the most polarizing social and political issues in American society. Undocumented youth who arrive to the US as children have become a central focus of the immigration debate. While the 1982 *Plyler v. Doe* U.S. Supreme Court decision affords undocumented youth access to a K-12 education, there is no similar federal edict that informs how undocumented youth are to be treated in postsecondary educational settings. Faced by a broken immigration system¹ along with multiple challenges associated with this socially stigmatized status², the educational aspirations of too many undocumented youth go unrealized.

Over the last decade and a half, a social movement among undocumented youth emerged calling for greater access to higher education and a pathway to citizenship. In response, a bi-partisan legislative proposal – the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act – has been introduced in several forms in the House of Representatives and the Senate, but has failed to become law. Acknowledging the lack of legislative action and the tenuous state of undocumented youth, President Obama took executive action in 2012 to create the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program,³ which protects many undocumented youth from deportation and provides a temporary permit to work. In 2014, President Obama extended the DACA age eligibility, in addition to offering deferred action for undocumented parents of citizen children – Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA).⁴

Despite this recent executive action, a great majority of policies determining the treatment of undocumented students in college settings are made at the state, higher education system, and institution levels. These policies determine whether or not undocumented students will pay in-state or out-of-state tuition, if they can gain access to certain forms of financial aid, and in some cases if they can enroll in institutions in certain states. In other words, individual states and institutions have institutionalized a wide variety of higher education policies that range from relatively inclusionary to highly exclusionary.⁵ Given this policy context, there is a need for a broader understanding and discourse about undocumented undergraduates. In this report, we shed light on the range and complexities of undocumented college student experiences and provide recommendations for policy and practice.

Background and Context

Over the past 35 years, the undocumented population has increased dramatically from under a million in 1980, peaking at nearly 12.2 million in 2006, to a current estimate of approximately 11.3 million.⁶ An estimated 2.1 million youth arrived to the United States as children, during the peak years of the great migration at the turn of the millennium.⁷ Unsurprisingly, given the many obstacles undocumented children and youth face, few have found their way to college.⁸

Mixed-Status Households

In 2014, President Obama announced deferred action for undocumented parents of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents, Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA), along with expanding the DACA age eligibility. It is estimated that there are 16.6 million people who live in mixed-status families – that is a family with at least one undocumented immigrant and one U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident.²⁹ The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that 4.5 million U.S.-born children have at least one undocumented parent.³⁰ In 2012, the Department of Homeland Security deported 88,517 undocumented immigrants who reported having at least one U.S. citizen child.³¹ The Applied Research Center found that in 2011, at least 5,100 U.S. citizen children of undocumented immigrants were living in foster care due to their parents being detained or deported.³²

The Pew Research Center estimates that about 200,000 to 225,000 undocumented immigrants are enrolled in college, accounting for about two percent of all college students.⁹ While approximately 25 to 30% of all 16 to 24 year olds enroll in college, only about 10% of undocumented immigrants ages 16 to 24 appear to do so.¹⁰ When they do, they are more likely to attend 2-year colleges,¹¹ a

setting that offers opportunities for advancement, but with lamentably low transfer and graduation rates.¹²

We position the current report in the context of past research that has shed light on the ways in which undocumented students face a number of challenges that are unique to their legal status. Key themes emerging from the literature include:

Undocumented youth experience unique developmental challenges that impact college access. They are disproportionately more likely to grow up in poverty, crowded housing, lacking health care, and residing in households where families have trouble paying rent and affording food.¹³ As undocumented adolescents and young adults begin to make critical developmental transitions, they confront a series of barriers that interrupt them from moving forward in tandem with their documented peers,¹⁴ such as driving and taking their first job; undocumented youth are legally excluded from these important rites of passage.¹⁵

Affordability is a significant factor that impacts college access and choice for undocumented students. Financing college has been noted to be a source of stress and a barrier to higher education for many undocumented college students.¹⁶ Because of lack of access to in-state tuition or financial aid for many undocumented students, many are attending colleges that are closer to home, choosing to attend college based on affordability, and are more likely to work.¹⁷

Resiliency and determination to achieve higher levels of academic achievement are common among undocumented college students.¹⁸ Like all immigrants, undocumented immigrant youth possess an array of strengths including hope, optimism, and motivation, which can serve them well in their educational pursuits.¹⁹ However, undocumented students take longer to complete a bachelor's degree than documented immigrant students due to the lack of affordable college tuition and access to financial aid.²⁰ Compared to documented immigrant students, a greater proportion of undocumented students have been found to enroll as part-time students, take time off from school, and delay matriculation after high school.²¹

Psychological well-being is a barrier to academic and social engagement. Undocumented college students report disproportionately high levels of stress, anxiety, and fear due to their undocumented status.²² Their college experience is also affected by feelings of shame and uncertainty and they report higher levels of perceived discrimination.²³ Studies have also found that undocumented college students report feelings of isolation on campus due to their fear of disclosure, and barriers associated with a lack of community and limited support from institutional agents.²⁴ Undocumented students have reported high levels of fear of their own deportation or the deportation of family members.²⁵

While these studies have shed considerable light on the undocumented student experience, they have primarily relied on samples of students in only a handful of states, focused almost exclusively on Latinos, and examined the college student experience in more selective, four-year colleges and universities. Thus, there are gaps in knowledge related to the experiences and outcomes of undocumented students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, attending college in different states or in a range of institutional settings.

Purpose of the Report

The impetus for this study was the lack of survey data to empirically represent the range of educational experiences and life circumstances of undocumented undergraduates. Thus, in this research project, we aimed to study students from a range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, in as many states as possible, and in a range of different institutional settings. We discuss the results from the survey in the context of the liminal state of immigration reform and its impact on college access and success for undocumented undergraduates. The following questions informed the findings provided in this report:

1. What is the profile of undocumented undergraduates including demographics (e.g., gender, countries of origin, language, religion, socioeconomic background) and student characteristics (e.g., colleges attended, majors)?

2. In what ways are undocumented undergraduates who applied for DACA different from those who did not? What are the benefits of DACA described by the undocumented undergraduates who applied for and received it? And what are the limitations?
3. What are the lessons learned from undocumented undergraduates that can inform higher education policies and practices?

This report seeks to provide a comprehensive perspective of the experiences and outcomes of undocumented undergraduates in higher education, including the demography of this student population, an understanding of where and why they enroll in college, and how they present unique challenges for individual campuses, states, and our national higher education priorities generally. We also place the study of the undocumented student experience in the context of higher education priorities. At a time when our national higher education reform efforts have prioritized increasing the proportion of our population with a college degree, undocumented students have been neglected and their potential has been under-realized. To this point, it is important to consider the undocumented student population in the context of the democratic mission of US higher education, which emphasizes the value of an educated citizenry for the good of society.

THE UNDOCUSCHOLARS PROJECT

Responding to the need for research on undocumented college undergraduates, we launched the UndocuScholars Project, which is housed in the Institute for Immigration, Globalization, and Education (IGE) at the University of California, Los Angeles.

The primary focus of the UndocuScholars Project is to expand the capacity in the field to pursue the following objectives:

- **Expand the knowledge base** on undocumented students to challenge false assumptions, damaging misperceptions, and the extent to which immigrant sub-groups are misunderstood and mischaracterized in higher education and in the broader mainstream public;
- Focus more attention on how our **research informs institutional practices**, which is critical for expanding postsecondary opportunities and outcomes of undocumented students in higher education. Specifically, we want to identify and highlight models of successful practices in institutions that vary by institutional type (2-year and four-year) and control (public and private); and
- Develop and pursue a strategy to **guide the discourse about immigrants** in the mainstream public broadly, and for the policymaking discourse and process specifically, with a particular emphasis on increasing knowledge about the heterogeneity among undocumented students.

A significant strand of work in the UndocuScholars Project was a national survey focused on the experiences of *undergraduate* undocumented students. The measures used in this study were closely informed by existing research conducted by the *Research on Immigrants in College Project*, the *Higher Education Research Institute*, the *National UnDACAmented Research Project*, and Professors Sara Goldrick-Rab at the University of Wisconsin and William Perez at Claremont Graduate University. We consulted closely with the UndocuScholars Student Advisory Board (consisting of student leaders and advocates), Community Advisory Board (consisting of national organizations working closely on behalf of undocumented youth), and Research Advisory Board (well-regarded organization leaders, practitioners,

and faculty advisors with complementary expertise) in the development, piloting and adaptation of the measures in order to appropriately tailor them for undocumented undergraduates and make them relevant for the undocumented community. The majority of the items were forced choice items, though three open-ended qualitative questions were included. One pertained to the experience of anxiety; another to how life had changed (if at all) since DACA; and the third asked for recommendations to improve the campus experience of undocumented college students (see undocuscholars.org to view the protocol).

We developed a web portal and ongoing social media campaign as our primary strategy for participant recruitment. The website served to generate initial interest about the UndocuScholars Project as well as to recruit participants nationwide (see undocuscholars.org). The Community Advisory Board was also essential to the recruitment of students from particular states and institutions. The UndocuScholars website linked to the survey on Qualtrics which in turn provided a checklist of inclusion criteria including: being born outside the U.S. and self-identifying as undocumented; being enrolled in college as an undergraduate;²⁶ being between the ages of 18-30 years. The initial part of the questionnaire took participants through the inclusion questions and those who did not meet criteria were not able to complete the survey. Participants took a median time of 34 minutes to complete the survey. Participants were provided a \$20 gift card for completing the survey. Participants were assured anonymity; as soon as it was determined that the survey response was legitimate, the participants were sent the link to the gift card, and the email was deleted from our server to protect their anonymity.

Our sample included 909 participants from 34 states; 53.9% were female; and their ages ranged from 18 to 30 years, with an average age of 21.4 years. The full demographic characteristics of the respondents are described in the next section. See the Technical Appendix for a comparison of our sample to benchmark samples.

CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDOCUMENTED UNDERGRADUATES

Our survey results shed light on the demographic profile of undocumented students, revealing the extent to which they are a remarkably diverse population. They are diverse in terms of country of origin, language spoken at home, and ethnicity. They encompass a range of immigration histories and occupy varied positions along the spectrum of socioeconomic status. Students also attend a wide range of postsecondary institutions, which vary by type, selectivity, and size. These demographic characteristics of the undocumented college student respondents are described below.

Student Demography

Data reveal that while the majority of undocumented students are Latino, they represent nearly every major racial group, including Black, White, and Asian American and Pacific Islander, as well as a number of different ethnic sub-groups.²⁷ Among Latinos, the largest representation originated from Mexico followed by countries in Central America. The second most ethnically-diverse group was Asian American and Pacific Islander respondents representing 14 different East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and the Pacific Island countries of origin. Respondents also hailed from Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the Caribbean. Overall, the respondents to our survey emigrated from 55 different countries of origin (Table 1).

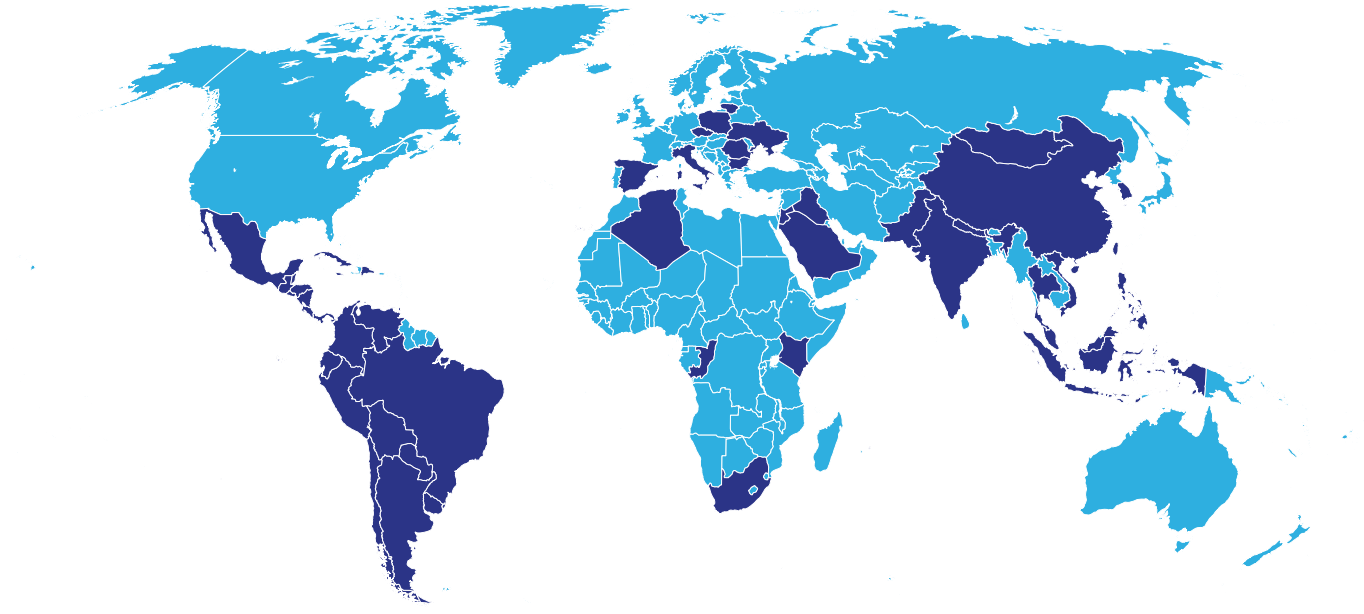


Table 1. Countries of Origin of Undocumented College Student Respondents

Latin America & The Caribbean	Asian and Pacific Islands	Africa	Europe	Middle East
Mexico	South Korea	Kenya	Lithuania	Iraq
Peru	Philippines	Algeria	Spain	Jordan
Colombia	India	Mauritius	Poland	Saudi Arabia
Guatemala	China	Republic of Congo	Bulgaria	
El Salvador	Indonesia	South Africa	Czech Republic	
Argentina	Thailand		Italy	
Brazil	Mongolia		Romania	
Venezuela	Bangladesh		Ukraine	
Honduras	Malaysia			
Chile	Nepal			
Costa Rica	Pakistan			
Cuba	Samoa			
Ecuador	Taiwan			
Belize	Vietnam			
Bolivia				
Nicaragua				
Panama				
Paraguay				
Uruguay				

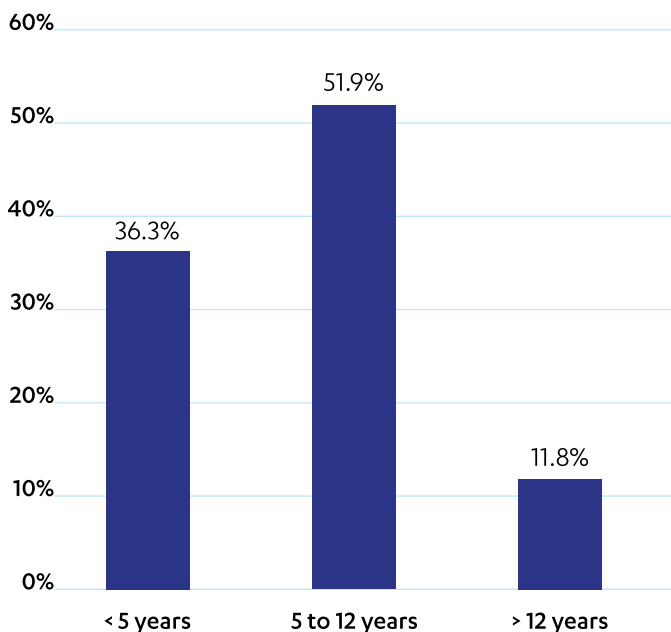
Note: The countries of origin are listed in order of frequency. For a full distribution of respondents' countries of origin, see the Technical Appendix.

Countries of Origin of Undocumented College Student Respondents



Undocumented college students represent a range of immigration histories. While the average age upon arrival for respondents in our sample was 6.6 years there was a wide distribution in age of arrivals (Figure 2). Some 36.3% arrived before they were 5 years old, 51.9% arrived between the ages of 5 and 12 years old, and 11.8% arrived between the ages of 12 and 16 years old.²⁸ On average, our participants had resided 14.8 years in the U.S.; in most cases, the majority of their lives.

Figure 1. Distribution of Age Upon Arrival in the U.S.



They bring with them a rich linguistic reservoir – reporting 33 different primary languages spoken at home. Approximately half of the participants had been enrolled in English Language Learner (ELL) or bilingual education in elementary school in the process of learning English. Another 22.6% were enrolled in English-language programs during middle school; 27.5% had never been enrolled in ELL or bilingual education.

The diversity of the participants was further reflected in their reported religious affiliations: 49.6% of respondents identified as Catholic, 14.1% as Protestant or other Christian, 3.2% as either Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist or Hindu, and 2.9% as “Other.” There were an additional 30.2% of the respondents who reported having no religious affiliation. Among the religiously minded, 61.2% of Catholics and 80.5% of Protestants and other Christians reported that religion was “important” or “very important” in their lives.

The majority of the undocumented college students reported living in mixed-status households. A large percentage of participants (64.1%) reported that at least one member of their household had birthright citizenship or had been naturalized. The majority reported having at least one documented sibling (59.9%) while 87.0% reported that one or both of their parents were undocumented. The fear of deportation was ever present in their lives; more than half of the participants (55.9%) reported personally knowing someone who had been deported. The vast majority of undocumented college students (84.6%) reported worrying about



the deportation or detainment of family or friends, while 76.1% reported worrying about being detained or deported themselves. Fifty-two of our participants (5.7%) reported that their parents had been deported and 29 respondents (3.2%) reported that a sibling had been deported. Family separations, either as a result of stepwise migration or following deportation, are not uncommon for this population. Nearly one in ten (9.0%) respondents reported that their mother does not currently reside in the United States, and nearly one in five (19.5%) reported this concerning their father.

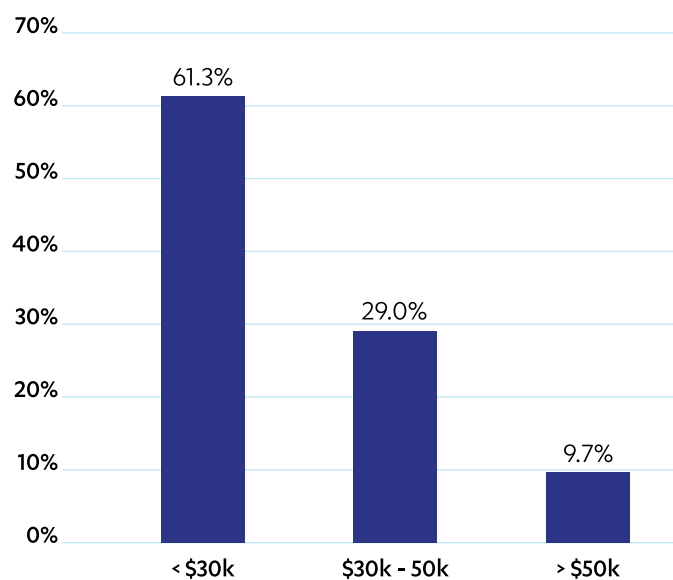
Undocumented students represent a range of socio-economic backgrounds. While 61.3% of the respondents had an annual household income below \$30,000, 29.0% had an annual household income of \$30,000 to \$50,000, and 9.7% had an annual household income above \$50,000 (Figure 2).

The level of parental education also varied considerably among respondents. A majority of the respondents (67.6%)

met the definition of being a first-generation college student (neither parent had ever attended college). There were 14.4% of respondents who reported at least one parent with a bachelor's degree or higher, and 5.4% have at least one parent with a master's degree or an advanced degree.

These data point to the rich diversity of the undocumented undergraduate student population that defy easy generalizations and ready-made stereotypes. The complex layers of demographic and socio-cultural characteristics provide a new prism to view one of the most marginalized, overlooked, and underserved populations in higher education. Even as they represent a rich tapestry, there are common threads binding them into the fabric of the nation: they have all attended American schools, they aspire to pursue careers requiring a higher education, they work long hours, and long for citizenship and to belong in their new land. In the following section, we provide some context for the educational and lived experiences of undocumented students.

Figure 2. Students' Self-Reported Household Income



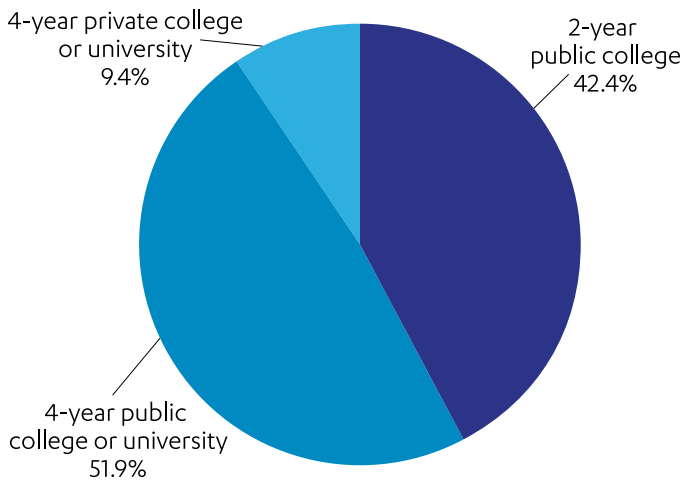
Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

It is estimated that there are 1.4 million undocumented Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) residents, representing 11.4% of the undocumented population in the U.S. The four most common countries of origin for AAPIs are India, China, the Philippines, and Korea, which constitute 88.6% of undocumented AAPI residents.³⁴ While the number of undocumented immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries has been declining numerically and in their proportional share of all undocumented residents over the past five years, there has been a steady increase among undocumented immigrants from India, China, and the Philippines over this same time period.³⁵

Representation in Institutional Settings, Majors, and GPAs

Similar to the heterogeneity between undocumented students at the individual level, their distribution in higher education is equally diverse. Respondents in our study, for example, attended a range of postsecondary institutions including 2-year and four-year public and private colleges that ranged in selectivity. A fraction attended private colleges (9.4%), while 48.2% reported attending 4-year public colleges or universities, and 42.4% reported attending 2-year colleges (Figure 3).

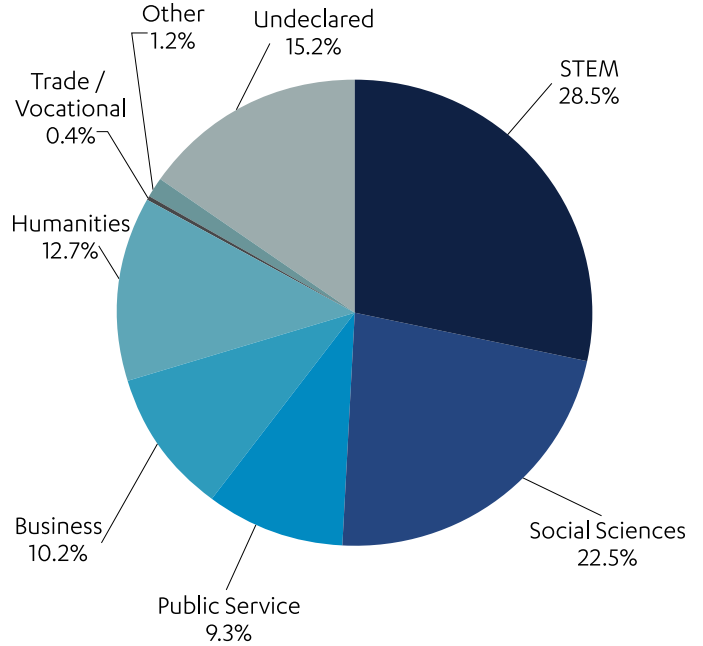
Figure 3. Distribution of Student Participants by Institutional Type



The students reported pursuing a wide array of majors from STEM (e.g., math, science, computer science, pre-medicine, etc.), social sciences, public service, business administration, humanities, and vocational fields. Almost one-third (28.2%) reported pursuing studies in STEM fields and another

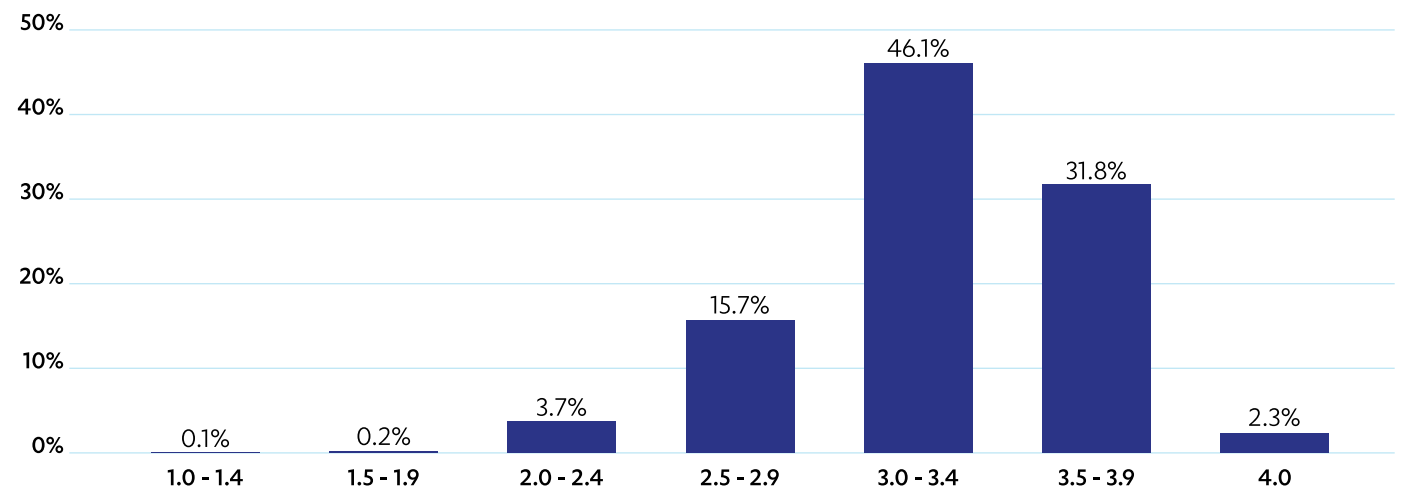
9.5% were studying in public service fields (e.g., education, nursing, kinesiology, social work, and pre-law) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Distribution of Student Participants by Major



The participants were by and large high achievers with fairly high grades (Figure 5). Of those in 2-year public colleges, 79.4% reported a GPA of over 3.0, 86.0% in 4-year public colleges reported this high GPA attainment, and 84.6% of the 4-year private college students did so. These percentages surpass the national rates of undergraduate students with 3.0 GPAs and above (50.6% of 2-year college students, 51.5% of public four-year college students, and 66.5% of private 4-year college students). The participants had high education aspirational goals with 29.7% expecting to attain a master's degree and another 13.6% expecting to attain an advanced degree beyond the master's level.⁶⁰

Figure 5. Self-Reported Cumulative Grade Point Average During College



THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR UNDOCUMENTED COLLEGE STUDENTS

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) offers temporary protection to some undocumented youth from deportation as well as a temporary permit to work. In many states DACA status allows recipients to apply for driver's licenses for the first time.³⁶ The *National UnDACAmented Research Project* found that over the last two years since DACA was instituted, DACA has increased young undocumented adults' employment rates, provided opportunities to open bank accounts and establish credit, and expanded job opportunities for college graduates.³⁷ We were interested in ascertaining some of the specific perceived benefits of obtaining DACA status for the college-going population.

Within our sample, 65.9% applied for and received DACA, while 16.0% indicated they did not qualify (for various reasons, such as they had not continuously resided in the U.S. for 5 years). A remaining 11.6% thought they might qualify but had not applied and 1.6% were in the application process or had been refused. There was missing data for the remaining 5.3%. This participation rate in DACA is higher than the 48% of the eligible undocumented immigrant youth who had applied for and received DACA two years after it was initiated, which makes sense considering our focus was on the college student population.³⁸ In our sample, females and students attending four-year institutions were more likely to apply for and receive DACA.³⁹ We considered the ways in which DACA recipients' experiences and responses were distinct from those of non-DACA recipients. We also asked the DACA recipients to shed light on whether and how DACA had changed their day-to-day experiences.

The Benefits of DACA

Over three quarters (85.5%) of students with DACA reported a positive impact on their education. We delved deeper into what students reported were the main benefits in their lives once they received DACA. The main benefits revolve around financial well-being, gaining access to valuable internships, greater stability with housing and transportation, and greater likelihood of participating more fully in college and society.

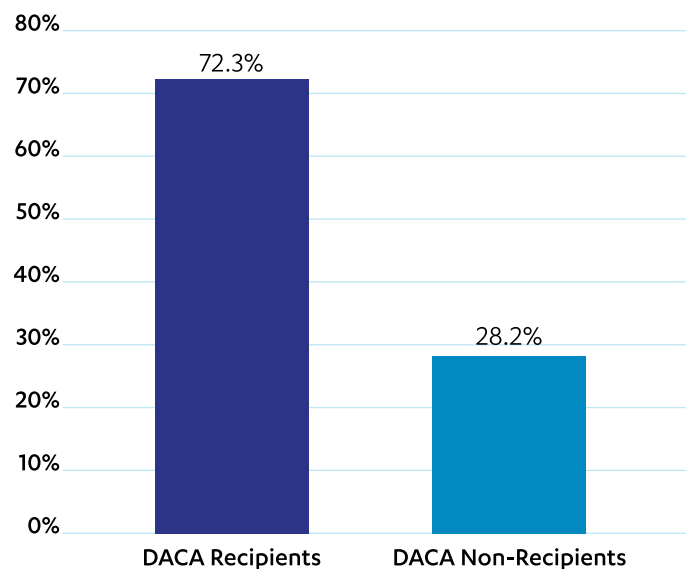
DACA recipients benefited from greater financial well-being

A key benefit of DACA is that it affords undocumented youth with a work permit, an advantage frequently noted by our respondents. We found that students with DACA were much more likely to have paid work experience (72.3%), compared to students without DACA (28.2%) (Figure 6).

In some cases, students who had previously worked in low-skilled jobs, similar to the kind in which their parents toiled, were now able to work in jobs more commensurate with their skills. These kinds of jobs had been arduous and allowed little flexibility to allow them to concentrate on

their studies. As many students indicated, this new authorization to work provided an opportunity for work aligned with their topic of study, *"Obtaining DACA status impacted my college experience directly in enabling me to get a job relevant to my career choice"* [Male from Maryland attending a 4-year public college].

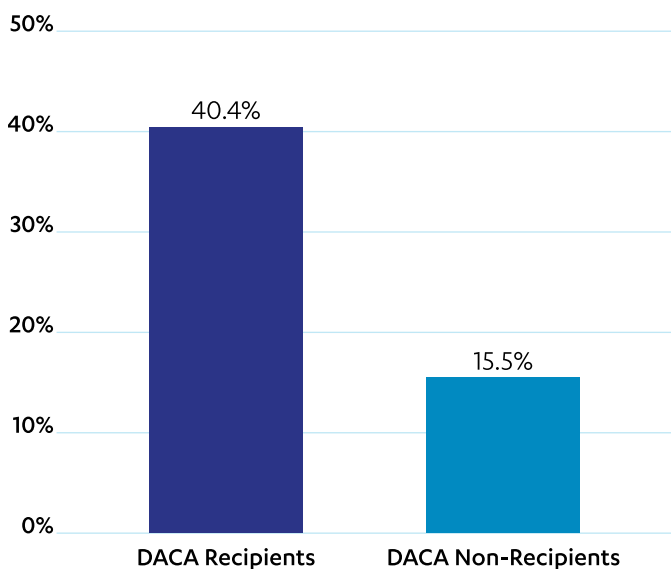
Figure 6. Students with Paid Work Experience



DACA recipients were afforded more opportunities to gain valuable internship experiences

The fact that many internship providers have residency restrictions has hindered undocumented students from gaining access to valuable opportunities. Our data reveal that students with DACA were more than twice as likely to have had an internship experience, compared to students without DACA (Figure 7). Most of these students were also attending a four-year college.

Figure 7. Students with Internship Experiences



Moreover, more than half of the students with internships (51.1%) also reported receiving compensation for their work. Thus, the opportunity to pursue internships – what many middle-class young adults take for granted as part of their professional development – was another notable benefit that came with DACA. As one participant explained: *“Most notably in the pursuit of internships, on-campus jobs, and other paid opportunities key and essential to my professional development”* [Male from Massachusetts attending a 4-year private college].

For some students, access to internships is a prerequisite to a career in their field of training. Over three quarters of students (77.4%) who have had internships reported that their internship experiences had provided skills that prepared them for career track positions in their field of choice after college. The importance of internships was also a salient theme for students in STEM fields, which represented 28.2% of our respondents. One student explained:



“DACA changed my life completely. Before DACA, I could not obtain any internship because I was always asked for a work permit and a social security number. As soon as I received DACA, I was accepted as an engineering intern at a biotech company where I developed my professional and academic skills. This made the training and education I was receiving in my classes much more relevant... And I didn’t have to worry about finding a job after school since the company I interned for offered me a full-time position as a mechanical engineer” [Male from California attending a 4-year public college].

DACA recipients had more stability with transportation and housing

An important aspect of the college experience is the stability in housing and transportation that enables students to be more fully engaged academically and socially on campus. However, three quarters of our respondents (75.5%) reported living off-campus, commuting seven hours a week to campus on average, which is greater than the national average. For some students, the journey to and from college and work was often relegated to public transportation, resulting in long commutes and more wasted time. As a student explained, *“I commute and work. I take the bus to school so it takes up a lot my time that I can be using to study, do homework, etc.”* [Female from California attending a 4-year public college]. Some students discussed how DACA afforded them with opportunities to obtain a driver’s license, which eased their commute to and from campus. As one student stated, *“I acquired a driver’s license which makes my commute a lot easier*

and safer” [Female from California attending a 4-year public college]. On average, students who had attained DACA status had average commute times that were two hours a week shorter than students who did not have DACA (7 hours per week vs. 9 hours per week respectively).

Students with DACA also noted that access to identification enabled them to attain better housing conditions. This turned out to be critical for freedom from harassment, stability, and predictability in juggling school, work and family obligations. One student described the difference in his housing situation before and after having DACA:

“With DACA I was able to get an apartment because I now obtained a social security. My first year here at [a public 4 year college] I lived in a 2 bedroom apartment with 5 other undocumented students who also attended [same institution] but at the time I was not on the lease because I did not have a social [security number]. Whenever the landlord stopped by I had to leave the apartment or hide from her. The landlord was worse than ICE. Not anymore” [Male from California attending a 4-year public college].

DACA recipients participated more fully in college and society

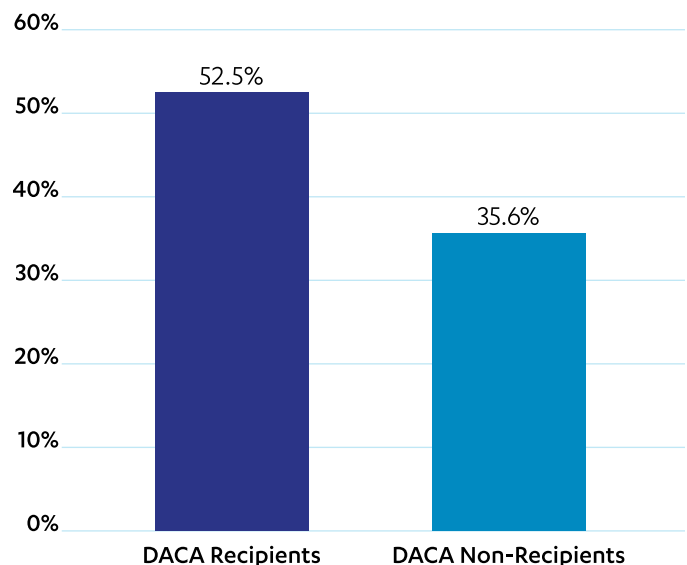
There were benefits associated with DACA that went beyond the tangibles -- IDs, work, driving (in most states), internships, less precarious housing and so on. Living in the shadows brings feelings of shame, stigma, and invisibility. A salient theme among students with DACA was a self-reported reduction in feelings of shame. Young people who have grown up in the U.S. were now able to navigate simple day-to-day interactions with a reduced sense of stigma. As one student stated, “Now I can do research work on-campus and get paid and not be awkward/ashamed in regard to coming out with my immigration status” [Male from California attending a 4-year public college]. Relatedly, students with DACA reported that their sense of pervasive social invisibility diminished. For example: “Before DACA I felt unsafe and invisible” [Female from New York attending a public 2-year college]. Since receiving DACA, one student reported, “I feel a lot better about myself as I feel as if I were finally a visible part of our society” [Male from Illinois attending a 4-year public college].



Some of the participants expressed an improvement in emotional well-being as their stress began to be alleviated after receiving DACA. One student explained: “I do not feel as worried about my immigration status as I did before, therefore I am less prone of feeling anxious and depressed - something I experienced greatly before DACA” [Female from California attending a 4-year public college].

Many students with DACA tied their newfound well-being to a belief that their future prospects had finally improved. They could now plan. As one student said, “It (DACA) has allowed me to believe in my dreams, especially in finding my identity and reaching my ultimate goal” [Female from Illinois attending a 4-year college]. With DACA, students began to feel that they could cautiously lean into aspirations that had long been hidden and or cast aside: “It gave me the liberty to come out of the shadows and demonstrate my desire to accomplish my dreams” [Female from California attending a public 2-year college]. This was also reflected in the quantitative findings that revealed higher educational aspirations among students with DACA (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Proportion of Students with Aspirations to Obtain an Advanced Degree



DACA Recipients' Longing to Belong

We asked our participants if, given the opportunity, they would apply for U.S. citizenship if they could. The vast majority indicated they would do so, with 76.1% saying they were “very likely” to do so, with another 14.3% responding “likely”; only 6.8% were “undecided,” 1.0% “unlikely,” and 1.8% “very unlikely.”

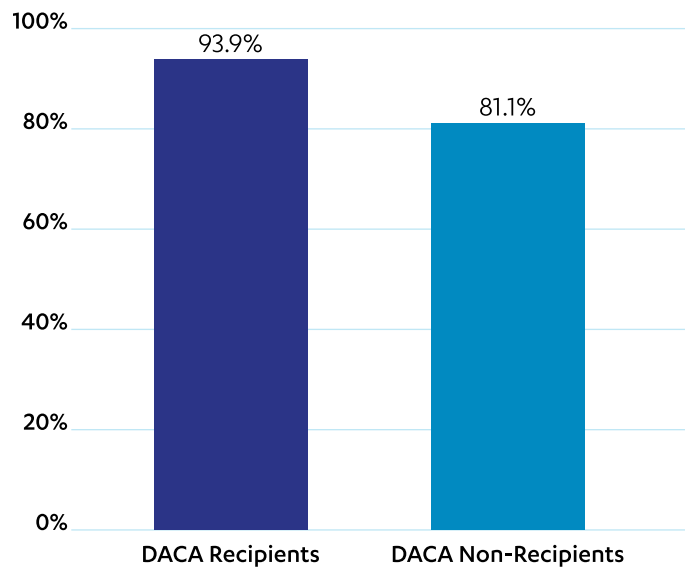
Noteworthy were the ways in which students with DACA referred to how their status contributed fundamentally to their sense of belonging to American society: *“It opened up my world to new opportunities, but more importantly it has restored my sense of belonging in this country and desire to better myself”* [Female from Washington attending a 4-year public college]. The symbolism of the new status meant: *“I feel I belong in America, because I have a legal status”* [Female from California attending a public 2-year college]. However, DACA status technically does not provide a permanent *legal* status; it simply provides lawful presence, a temporary reprieve from deportation, a point that some recipients did not seem to recognize. Simple phrases, repeating the same theme, reoccurred across surveys: *“It has restored a sense of belonging to this country”* [Male from California attending a 4-year public college]; *“I now feel like I am part of this society.”* [Male from Connecticut attending a 4-year private college]; *“I feel more American”* [Male from California attending a 4-year public college]. Indeed, these aspiring Americans longed to engage and contribute more fully to society.

We also found that students with DACA were more likely to indicate they would apply for U.S. citizenship if eligible, compared to students without DACA (93.9% vs. 81.1% respectively) (Figure 9).

“I was raised here—it is my home sweet home, so why is it wrong for me to want to stay, serve, help and work here? I too love the U.S.A., want to be a citizen, and have freedom.”

[Female from New York attending a 4-year public college]

Figure 9. Students who Indicated They would Apply for U.S. Citizenship if Eligible

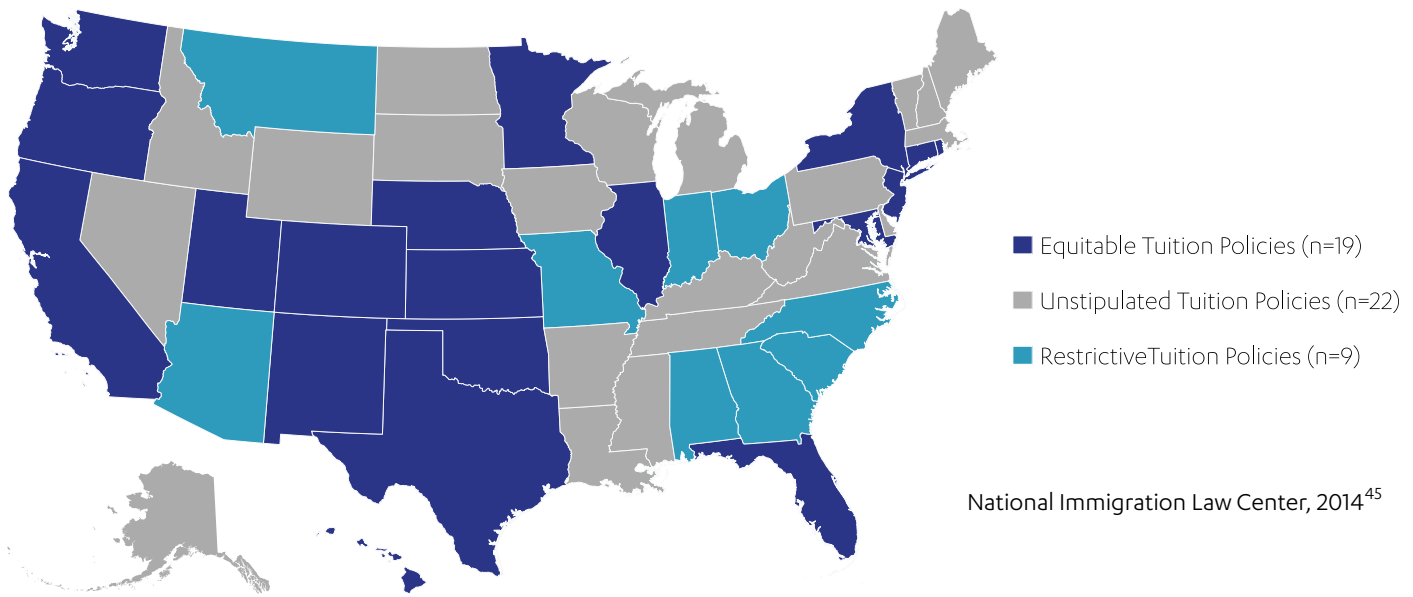


Thus, receiving a provisional status like DACA appears to have reinforced a deep seated desire to belong in American society. These findings point to the ways in which undocumented students view DACA as an opportunity for engaging and contributing to American society. Research demonstrates their desire to engage civically in ways not always fully detected by traditional measures of civic engagement. This is important to note considering the popular perception that immigrants have low levels of civic engagement or are only motivated to attain citizenship for its instrumental value. Our data reveal a deep vein of longing for citizenship as a marker of belonging to the only country they truly know.

The Limitations of DACA

While the students reported many benefits of DACA, our data also pointed to some notable limitations for addressing structural barriers that impact access and success for undocumented students generally. From the students' point of view, there are barriers associated with the provisional nature of DACA, lack of clarity and misinformation about what DACA means, concerns about the vulnerabilities of loved ones, and lack of consistency in implementation of the rules across states and institutions – which all can generate new anxieties and ambiguities. To this point, it is important to acknowledge that whether or not undocumented students will pay in-state or out-of-state tuition, if they can gain access to certain forms of financial aid, and in some cases, if they can enroll in institutions in certain states are governed at the state, higher education

Figure 10. Differences in In-State Tuition Policies for Undocumented Students



Note: States with equitable tuition policies explicitly grant in-state tuition and/or eligibility for state grant aid for undocumented students; States with unstipulated tuition policies do not have policy that explicitly address access to in-state tuition for undocumented students. States with restrictive tuition policies explicitly prohibit access in-state tuition and/or enrollment for undocumented students.

system and institutional levels. While some institutional and state settings have developed inclusive policies and practices, there are also settings with highly exclusionary policies and practices.

“Because DACA provides benefits that have never been given to undocumented youth, there are a lot of misconceptions about the new rights and opportunities we have.”

[Male from Massachusetts attending a 4-year private college]

In-State Tuition and Enrollment Policies

A very high concentration of respondents (76.9%) reported moderate to extreme concerns about financing their education, which was greater than what was found in a national study of four-year college students (67.8%).⁴⁰ The high level of concern among our respondents about the cost of higher education is not surprising considering the rapidly shifting landscape for how different states and institutions treat undocumented students, with some that have developed more inclusive tuition and aid policies and practices, while others have established more exclusionary ones.

At the state level, for example, in-state tuition policies vary from one state to another. This is important given that the

average out-of-state tuition rate at public four-year colleges is more than double the rate of in-state tuition (\$22,958 vs. \$9,139).⁴¹ Currently, 19 states have tuition equity policies for undocumented students (see Figure 10).⁴² In most of these cases, in-state tuition for undocumented students was approved through policy decisions at the state level (e.g., legislation).⁴³ Furthermore, nine states restrict undocumented students from accessing in-state tuition (Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, South Carolina).⁴⁴ In most cases, states have unstipulated aid policies for undocumented students. Simply put, undocumented students, and the higher education community alike, are affected by a particularly high degree of variability in tuition policies between states, as well as for DACA recipients and non-recipients.

Regardless of state tuition policies, it is important to note the fact that tuition policies also vary widely across different institutions. Some colleges have tuition equity policies for undocumented students that were approved through their Board of Regents. For example, the University of Hawai‘i Board of Regents and the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education passed tuition equity policies for undocumented students.⁴⁶ In addition, the University of Michigan Board of Regents passed tuition equity policies for undocumented students within three university campuses (this does not include all public postsecondary institutions in MI).⁴⁷

For the most part, states and institutions have been left with the task of deciding how DACA recipients should be treated given their unique and liminal status. In some cases, there are states that recognize DACA as proof of residency for in-state tuition policies. For example, in 2014, the state of Virginia extended in-state tuition only to DACA recipients. There are also examples where institutions are explicitly offering in-state tuition for undocumented students with DACA, regardless of state legislation (e.g., public higher education systems in Ohio and Massachusetts).⁴⁸ Arizona, Maricopa and Pima community college districts, in particular, are explicitly providing in-state tuition for undocumented students with DACA even though the state of Arizona has prohibited in-state tuition for undocumented students. It is important to note that there are three states that not only do not allow in-state tuition for undocumented students, but also have restrictive enrollment policies (i.e., Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina). Interestingly, although Alabama restricts undocumented students from receiving in-state tuition and enrolling in public colleges, DACA recipients are allowed to enroll in community colleges and some universities at in-state tuition rates.

Differential Tuition Policies

Tuition policies for in-state and out-of-state residents in public colleges and universities vary widely between different states, higher education systems, and institutions, and the ambiguity of these policies is not unique to undocumented students. In some states, public colleges and universities have “good neighbor provisions” for out-of-state residents to pay in-state tuition. For example, in Nevada, while there is a state provision to provide in-state tuition for residents of 10 counties in California, they do not have an explicit tuition policy for undocumented students, even if they are residents of Nevada. In some states, there are even provisions that afford residents of Canada or Mexico to pay in-state-tuition. These provisions can be models for public colleges and universities in states with unstipulated tuition policies for undocumented students.

In addition to tuition policies, college affordability is also affected by access to financial aid. *All forms of federal grants and loans are unavailable to undocumented students regardless of whether or not they have DACA.* As a result, access to grants or loans for undocumented students is relegated to what is

accessible to them from states and/or institutions and this varies highly from one setting to another. While DACA has not afforded students with access to in-state aid, there are five states that offer access to state grants for undocumented students through state legislative action (i.e., California, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Washington).⁴⁹

In addition to states varying in their aid policies for undocumented students, institutions also vary in their support for undocumented students.⁵⁰ While some institutions are explicitly offering institutional support for undocumented students, these are mostly selective private universities and religiously affiliated colleges. Most institutions utilize a don’t ask, don’t tell policy, meaning they do not inquire about who their undocumented students are, and do not have an explicit policy around financial support for undocumented students, though they may offer financial aid on a case-by-case basis. In some cases, institutions classify and treat undocumented students as international students, which results in augmented tuition rates.

Respondents attending four-year institutions were more likely to have grants or scholarships compared to students attending community colleges (78.7% vs. 53.2% respectively). Conversely, students attending community colleges were more likely to be paying out-of-pocket for college compared to students attending four-year institutions (30.4% vs. 15.2% respectively). However, almost no students (0.9%) were getting access to loans. These findings demonstrate the ways in which state and institutional contexts matter for undocumented students.

Higher education non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, and scholarship providers also lack consistency in their engagement with undocumented students. One example is the treatment of undocumented students by scholarship and internship providers, which lack guidance on how to provide opportunities for undocumented students. This often results in ambiguous information about eligibility for different programs, which needs to be more clearly addressed. A student described how this plays out when he attends career fairs on campus, “[At] career fairs, the campus employment center does not make companies that come on campus knowledgeable on what DACA does, so they are very unlikely to hire an undocumented student with DACA” [Male from Illinois attending a 4-year private college].

The provisional nature of DACA is a major concern for students

For many of these hard working, ambitious young people, the uncertainties about the future loomed large. One participant noted two particular concerns, “Worrying about future employment, and coming out to employers as undocumented” [Male from New York attending a public 4-year public college]. Others worried about the ongoing uncontrollable impediments and obstacles they were facing: “It is difficult to know I am being held back by something outside of my control” [Female from Arizona attending a 4-year public college]. As such, as one young woman so clearly explained, “It is not just stressful but also depressing for any human not being able or motivated to think, dream, and plan a future” [Female from New York attending a 4-year public college].

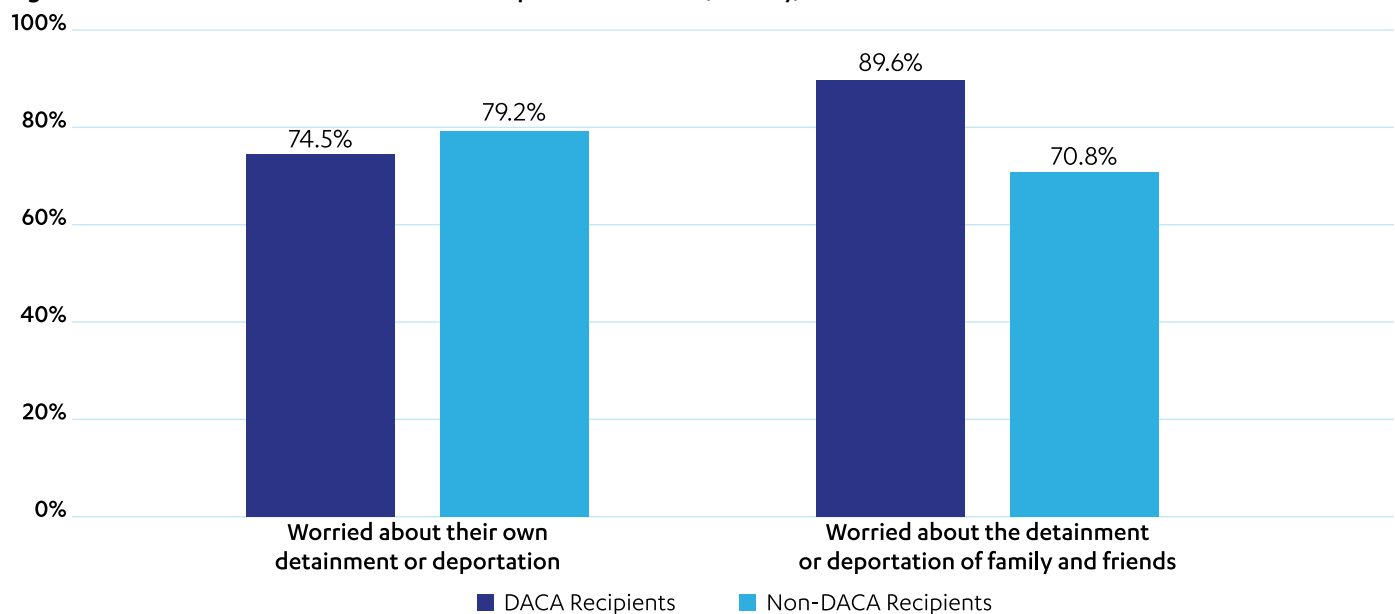
While DACA has been an important first step in bringing undocumented college students towards a sense of resolution, for many, the question remains as one simply summarized as: “What will happen when DACA ends?” [Male from New Jersey attending a 4-year public college]. Their status and future remains in limbo; as a young man from New Jersey attending a 4-year private college explained his state of mind, “I live with a cloud of uncertainty over me at all times.”

Worrying about who is in and who is out

For both DACA recipients and non-recipients, worries about deportation and detention was a prevailing issue fueling their anxieties. Ironically, DACA did not erase these concerns, and in fact drove a paradox in the data. Participants were asked about how often they worried about detention and deportation for themselves and separately for their loved ones. An advantage of DACA should be an alleviation of concerns of their own deportation as this is one of its inherent benefits. Somewhat surprisingly, nearly three-quarters (74.5%) of DACA recipients continued to report concerns about his or her own deportation in comparison to 79.2% of DACA non-recipients (Figure 11). The legal protections do not significantly obliterate worries about deportation, although DACA recipients were less likely to report being worried about this “most” of the time and more likely to report being worried “a little of the time” compared to non-DACA recipients.

Residual worries about deportation are even more apparent when considering the response to the question about concerns surrounding deportation of family or friends. While 70.8% of non-DACA recipients reported worrying about the deportation or detention of friends and family, a higher proportion of DACA recipients (89.6%) reported ongoing worries about this. Therefore it appears that for DACA recipients crossing over to the safety that DACA affords comes at a cost; a hyper-awareness of the vulnerability of loved ones left behind the line of the DACA threshold.

Figure 11. Concerns about Detainment or Deportation of Self, Family, or Friends



“I am afraid of my parents being deported on any random day.”

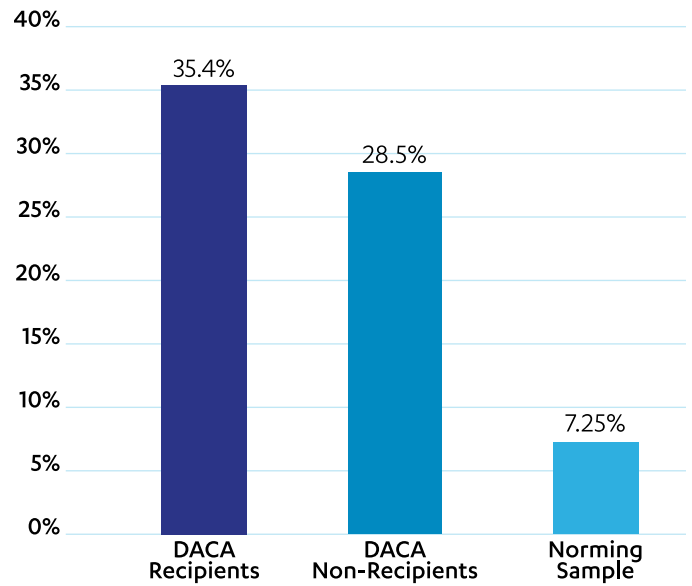
[Male from California attending a public 2-year college]



Students reported the paradox of feeling personally safer because of DACA, but having greater concerns for their family members. As one student explained, *“DACA has given me the opportunity to feel a bit more protected from deportation. However my mom, family members, and thousands of community members don’t have that opportunity. Every day I worry if my mom is going to come home safe. It’s very hard to focus and do my best in school when I have to worry about how to keep my family together”* [Female from Washington attending a 4-year private college].

Indeed, this heightened anxiety for loved ones along with the liminal nature of DACA status might be what accounted for a particularly surprising finding of this study. While we expected the anxiety levels of DACA recipients to be lower than those of non-DACA recipients, in fact they were elevated. We found that 35.4% of students with DACA reported anxiety rates above the clinical cut-off point in comparison to 28.0% of non-DACA recipients (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. Students Meeting the GAD-7 Clinical Cutoff for Anxiety



THE CAMPUS EXPERIENCE

In addition to identifying how undocumented students were affected by the policy context, we were interested in learning more about the experiences of students within different campus settings, the extent to which they have unique needs and challenges as college students, and whether or not higher education practitioners are providing support to address these issues. In this section, we discuss how students are affected by their unique financial barriers, their experiences with campus climate, and provide a discussion about the important role of higher education practitioners.

Contending with Unique and Multiple Barriers

Undocumented students face a number of unique barriers that impact their ability to attend and succeed in college. A prevailing concern for many of the participants was how to finance their education. Over half (56.7%) reported being extremely concerned about financing their college education. This was reflected in the factors that contributed to their choice of college. The two most significant factors in the college choice process for our respondents were cost and location (Figure 13). This is significantly different than what is reported in national surveys of the factors that contribute to the college choice process, where students report the reputation and ranking of the institution as their most important factors in their decisions.

Almost a third (29.0%) reported being extremely concerned about their ability to buy textbooks and necessary class materials. The concerns about financing their education

and being able to afford class material was greater among students attending college in states that do not have state DREAM Acts, compared to students attending colleges that do have state DREAM Acts (Figure 14, next page).

A very high proportion of our respondents (72.4%) worked while attending college. Community college students were only slightly more likely (75.6%) to work than respondents in four-year colleges (69.4%). Students mentioned the stresses of working long hours and managing full academic schedules. *“Being a full-time student while also working 45+ hours a week in order to afford school makes things much more stressful”* [Female from New York attending a public 2-year college]. A greater proportion of students worked off-campus (60.2%), compared to students who reported working on-campus (30.9%). However, it is also important to note that 14.1% of students reported having worked both off- and on-campus

Figure 13. Factors that Contributed to the Decision to Attend their College

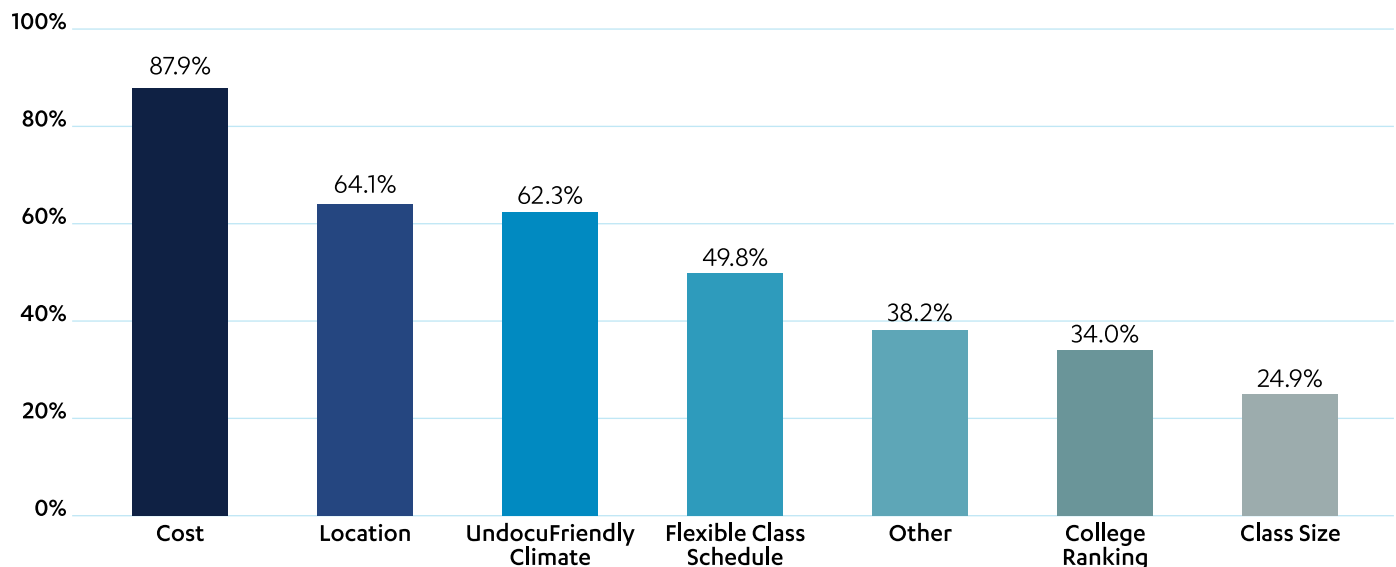
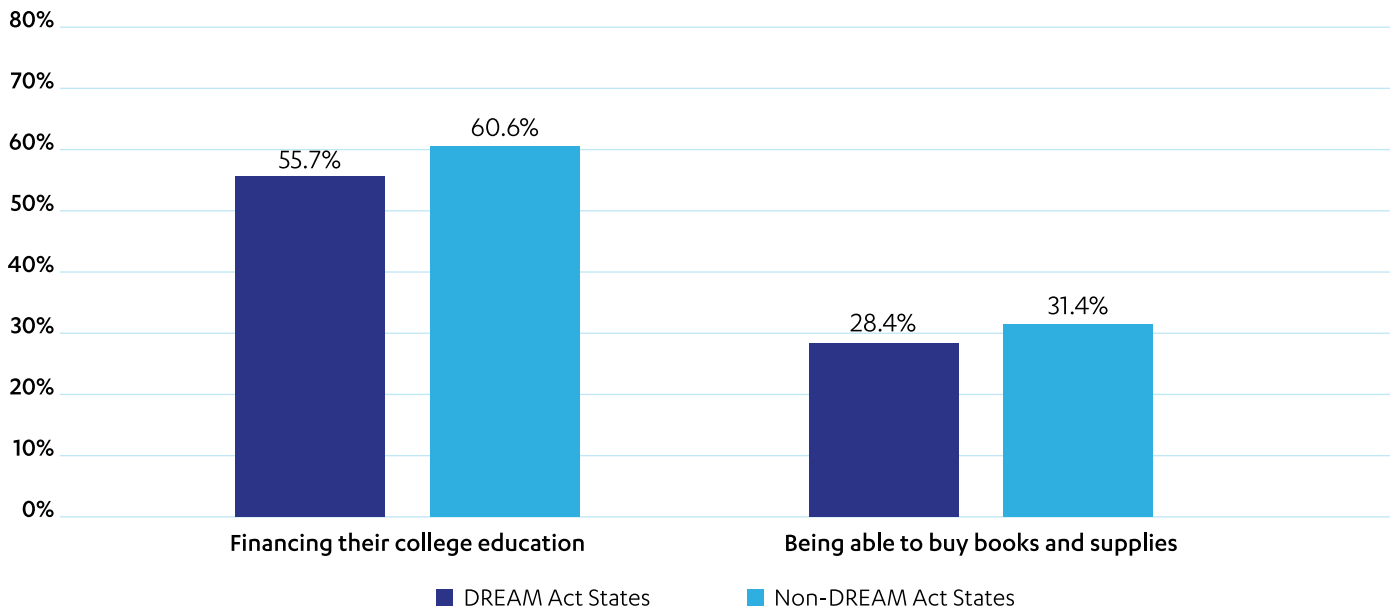


Figure 14. Differences in Concerns about Financing Education and Buying Books and Supplies for Students Attending College in States with and without State DREAM Acts



in the previous month. Working while in college led to worries about being a successful student; “Working so much has made staying in school difficult and it also makes being good at school difficult” [Female from Wisconsin attending a 4-year public college]. Almost seventeen percent (16.7%) of respondents report being enrolled in college part-time. Of those who enrolled as part-time students, 80.9% reported that this was due to financial considerations.



Financial concerns led 15.2% of respondents to take a leave of absence from school. Of those who stopped-out, 73.9% reported that it was due to financial difficulties. The issues that led to leaving school were often confounded by other challenges in their lives. As one participant explained, “The first time [the student stopped-out] was because of financial difficulties; the other two times are due to psychological issues” [Female from California attending a 4-year public college]. Another wrote of her multiple challenges, “I had constant

trouble affording college tuition, and I was also detained by Homeland Security/I.C.E for a total of three weeks. I was forced to drop all of my classes” [Female from California attending a 4-year public college]. In brief, the precarious legal status of undocumented students throws multiple obstacles in their lives and in their path to college success.

Not surprisingly, given these financial vulnerabilities, participants want campuses to recognize their substantial academic efforts and to help support them moving forward: “I want them to provide more support for undocumented students by offering resources to pay for college in the form of scholarships” [Female from Illinois attending a public 2-year college]. In many cases, students were also seeking opportunities for internships: “Provide a program that helps undocumented students find scholarships and internships that they can qualify for, to lessen the financial burden, and to feel like they have a chance at those experiences” [Female from Iowa attending a 4-year public college].

Campus Climate and the Need for Safe Spaces

Some of the undocumented students spoke of their sense of isolation on campus as they felt uncertain about who they could trust, “One of the biggest challenges is knowing who I can turn to for help to understand my undocumented status as a college student” [Male from California attending a 4-year public college]. “Not having a safe space where I can express

my feelings about being undocumented” [Female from Illinois attending a public 2-year college]. *“Finding people that I connect with and people I can trust”* [Female from California attending a 4-year public college].

Students also reported on the extent to which they were treated unfairly or negatively due to their legal status by faculty, counselors, other students, financial aid officers, campus administrators, and security guards/campus police (Figure 15, below). Students attending four-year institutions were more likely than students attending 2-year colleges to report a higher level of unfair or negative treatment by other students and campus administrators. Students attending 2-year public institutions reported a higher level of unfair or negative treatment by financial aid officials.

“Realize that you have a very important influence on students, especially undocumented students. So be sensitive, nonjudgmental, patient, motivating, and above all a person that’s approachable and trustworthy.”

[Male from California attending a public 2-year college]

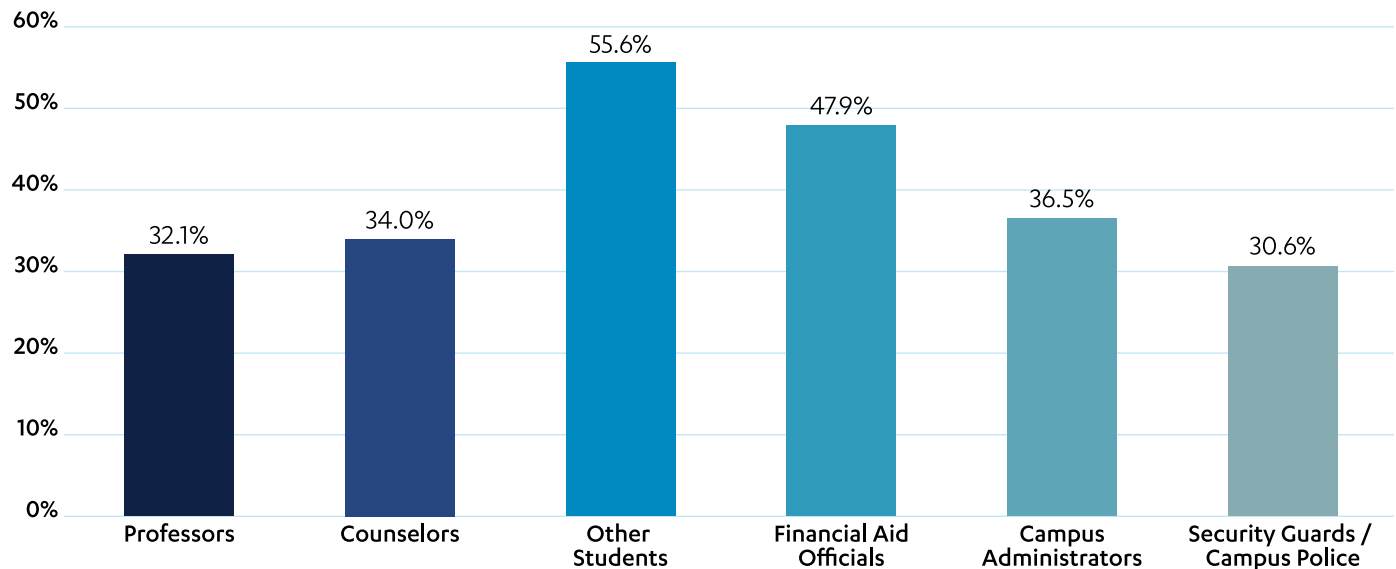
Many of the respondents reported a desire for administrators to listen to their stories, experiences, and concerns. Repeatedly we heard a version of: *“Listen to the student population. If there are students who are openly declaring their status, have a conversation with them”* [Female from Illinois attending a 4-year public college] or *“I think the biggest thing*

is to listen to us – there’s a very real chance that the administrators in question have no idea what [undocumented students] go through. None at all. So listening and hearing what we’re going through is half of the battle” [Transgender from California attending a 4-year public college].

A very tangible, actionable recommendation that students requested was the provision of a safe zone on campus. Many students discussed the importance of safe spaces (e.g., resource centers or support groups on campus). As one student explained, *“Make a student center [for undocumented students]. A lot of schools have an LGBT office in which LGBT students come and talk about their issues. It would be great if there is any support system on campuses”* [Male from New York attending a 4-year public college]. These spaces were clearly important to provide a refuge in an unsafe world, *“It would be great if campuses could have a place where students can feel safe and are not targeted”* [Male from Colorado attending a 4-year public college]. These safe zones were also recommended as sources of information. *“There should be more clubs. Those clubs should focus on providing moral support along with information”* [Female from California attending a 4-year public college]. Of students who had access to these spaces on their campuses, 73.1% reported utilizing these resources (Figure 16).

In addition to formal campus organization, some participants suggested that it would be helpful for allies of undocumented students on campus to display symbols of solidarity. In the traditions of the early days of the gay rights movement, these symbols signal undocumented undergraduates that certain spaces and people are safe to exchange information: *“I would feel safe if there were signs or maybe even a poster*

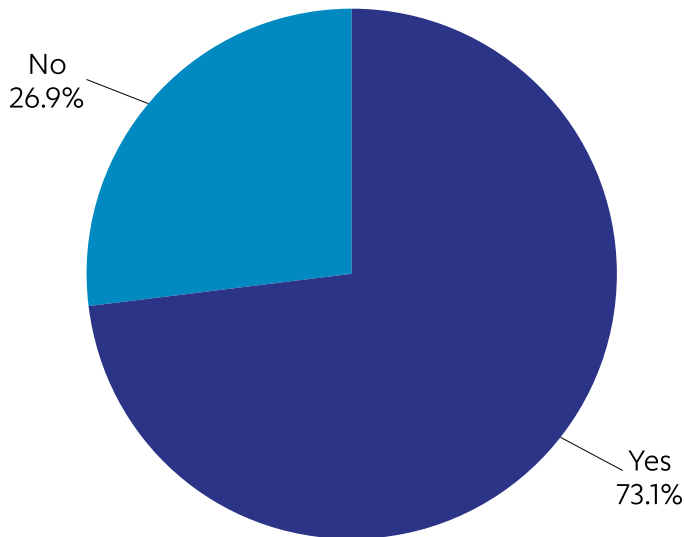
Figure 15. Reported Experience of Being treated Unfairly or Negatively due to Legal Status



showing their support for students who are undocumented... if I saw posters like that, I would feel more comfortable sharing my status not only with the counselors but also the professors.” [Female from California attending a 2-year public college].

rights movement, will they be looked at as an institution that stood on the right side of the fight? Will they be seen as an institution that took that risk, despite the negative climate?” [Female from Illinois attending a 4-year public college].

Figure 16. Made Use of Organizations, Centers, or Safe Spaces Where Undocumented Students can Gather to Share Experiences (for Students Who Had Access to Them)



Many of undocumented undergraduates also asked that college administrators become allies of undocumented students on campus by recognizing undocumented undergraduates as part of the campus community: “Administrators should recognize that undocumented students exist, and contribute to the lively nature of college campuses enriching their academic and social environments in ways that they can hardly begin to imagine” [Male from Connecticut attending a 4-year private college]. Others asked for more than simple acknowledgment: “I wish college administrators would openly embrace us and support us” [Female from California attending a 4-year public college] and “make us feel like part of the student body” [Male from Florida attending a 2-year public college].

A number of undocumented undergraduates specifically asked for administrators to act as advocates by actively making a public statement endorsing of undocumented undergraduates both inside and beyond the campus. As one student simply said: “I would want [administrators] to publically state they support undocumented students” [Female from Illinois attending a 2-year public college]. Another student explained in more detail: “I will recommend them taking the risk in being supportive of ALL students. At the end of this period, when we look at the fight for immigrant rights and the fight against family separations as something like the civil

CREATING AN ‘UNDOCUFRIENDLY’ CAMPUS

- ✓ Listen & Learn
- ✓ Be Empathetic
- ✓ Publicly Endorse Undocumented Students
- ✓ Train Faculty and Staff about Undocumented Students
- ✓ Provide Equity of Treatment
- ✓ Respect Undocumented Students’ Privacy
- ✓ Provide Safe Zones for Undocumented Students
- ✓ Provide Information to Undocumented Students
- ✓ Provide Financial Support for Undocumented Students
- ✓ Provide Counseling to Undocumented Students

LESSONS LEARNED AND LOOKING AHEAD

This nationwide survey was a unique opportunity to hear the voices of undocumented undergraduates attending an array of campuses. Beyond learning about them, their shared characteristics as well as their heterogeneity, a number of recommendations emerged that are relevant to policymakers, colleges and universities, and higher education association providers.

Implications for Policymakers

- Considering recent executive action will create employment authorization for more than 3.9 million tax-paying undocumented residents who will generate an estimated \$4 billion in new tax revenue, states should offer equitable tuition policies for undocumented students. The review of these policies is especially important for the states with unstipulated tuition policies and the nine states with restrictive tuition policies.
- The federal government should provide clear guidelines for ways the higher education community could better serve DACA students regarding work authorization, internships, and access to scholarships.
- There is a need to reexamine federal and state financial aid guidelines for both undocumented students and citizen and lawful permanent resident children of undocumented parents. For the latter group, procedures need to reflect changes to work authorization for undocumented adults with citizen and lawful permanent resident children.
- There is a need within the higher education community for an on-going dialogue to inform admissions and outreach, financial aid, transition programs, student support services, retention programs, and efforts to assist students with pursuing graduate school or careers.
- It is particularly important for higher education institutions and systems to review and, if necessary, revise procedures related to DACA, including employment, internships, and study abroad.
- Faculty should anticipate having undocumented students in their academic programs, in their classrooms, and as advisees, be aware of their unique barriers and challenges, and be knowledgeable about resources on campus that can respond to their needs.
- Colleges and universities should be sites for legal clinics and other consultation services for undocumented residents in their local communities regarding DACA and other immigration matters. This affords current and aspiring law students with valuable, first-hand experience and the opportunity to serve their local communities. CUNY's Citizenship Now is a model for such practice (<http://www.cuny.edu/about/resources/citizenship.html>)

Implications for Colleges and Universities

- Higher education institutions should proclaim their commitment to and support for undocumented students as members of their campus communities. This endorsement should reflect their commitment to welcome, embrace, recognize, acknowledge, and provide a safe space for these students.
- Colleges and universities should provide counseling supports and mental health services on campus provided by culturally responsive service providers.

Implications for Higher Education Associations, Scholarship Providers, Foundations, and Corporations

- Higher education associations and community advocacy groups should be the front-line providers for their constituents about how to navigate the process of gaining access to and succeeding in college.
- There is a need for philanthropy to engage with scholarship providers and the higher education community to develop funding opportunities for undocumented students at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
- Foundations should support research that can generate information about innovative and effective programs and practices.
- Corporations should review their recruitment and hiring practices to afford undocumented students with access to internships and other career opportunities.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

DACA (2012)

On June 15, 2012, President Barack Obama announced the creation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) initiative, which provides temporary lawful presence to undocumented youth and young adults. This initiative provides new opportunities to undocumented youth who came to the U.S. before the age of 16, have lived in the U.S. continuously for at least five years, and have graduated from high school or obtained a GED. Eligible recipients can request a temporary 2-year reprieve from deportation and apply for a work permit.

DACA (2014)

On November 2014, President Obama expanded DACA to allow individuals born prior to June 15, 1981 to apply for DACA. Additionally, DACA will now last three years rather than two.

DAPA

On November 2014, President Obama announced Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) which temporarily defers deportations from the U.S. for eligible undocumented parents of U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents, granting them access to renewable three-year work permits and Social Security numbers.

Stop-outs

The term “stop-out” refers to students that leave school for a semester or two and return at a certain period when circumstances allow.

Undocumented Immigrants

Foreign-born immigrants who do not have authorized status via U.S. citizenship, lawful permanent residence, or through visas, asylum or refugee status. Those with DACA are still undocumented, but now have temporary lawful presence in the U.S. Also referred to as unauthorized immigrants.

International Students

International students are college students who are not citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. Typically, international students have lawful presence via student visas and remain residents of their country of origin and do not intend to give up their birth citizenship. Undocumented students are not international students because they do not have authorized student visas and have resided in the U.S. for a number of years. Some international students can become undocumented if they overstay their visas after they expire.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

General Description of Recruitment

In order to recruit participants from this ‘hard to reach’ population we used a variety of recruitment strategies, including the UndocuScholars website portal (undocuscholars.org), our Community Advisory Board organization contacts, contacts at campuses across the nation, social media, posters displayed on campuses at various schools, as well as our research team and Student Advisors recruiting in-person at a number of DACA events.

The criteria for inclusion in the sample were that potential participants reported being undocumented, being an undergraduate student (or currently taking a break but having been an undergraduate student within the last 12 months), and being no more than 30 years of age. Paper versions of the surveys were distributed for completion at various events or provided to key contacts, otherwise respondents used the online version of the survey, accessible via the UndocuScholars website.

Sample. The aim of the data collection was to capture a broad sample of the population to represent the range of demographic characteristics (such as ethnicity and country of origination) as well as the types of colleges they attend, across the U.S. The nature of the population— undocumented undergraduates—renders random sampling an impossibility. We recognize the limits of our sampling strategy and cannot claim that it is representative of all undocumented undergraduates. We strove to consider the ways in which it might reflect the general undocumented college population given what we know based on available benchmarks. We used two recent studies as these benchmarks one recently released by the Migration Policy Institute (2014)⁵¹ and the other by the Immigration Policy Center (2012).⁵²

DACA status. All of the participants in the study were within the DACA-eligible age range, had completed high school in the U.S and were enrolled in college. As such, the majority was likely to be eligible for DACA. We asked our participants if they had applied for and received DACA. Indeed, 65.9% applied for and received DACA and 16.0% indicated they did not qualify (for various reasons, such as they had not been continuously in the U.S. for 5 years). A

remaining 11.6% thought they might qualify but had not applied and 1.6% were in the application process or had been refused. There was missing data for the remaining 5.3%. Those that did not apply were more likely to be male and to attend community college. Otherwise there were no obvious distinguishing demographic characteristics.

Country/region of origin. The countries of origin of the survey respondents were as follows:

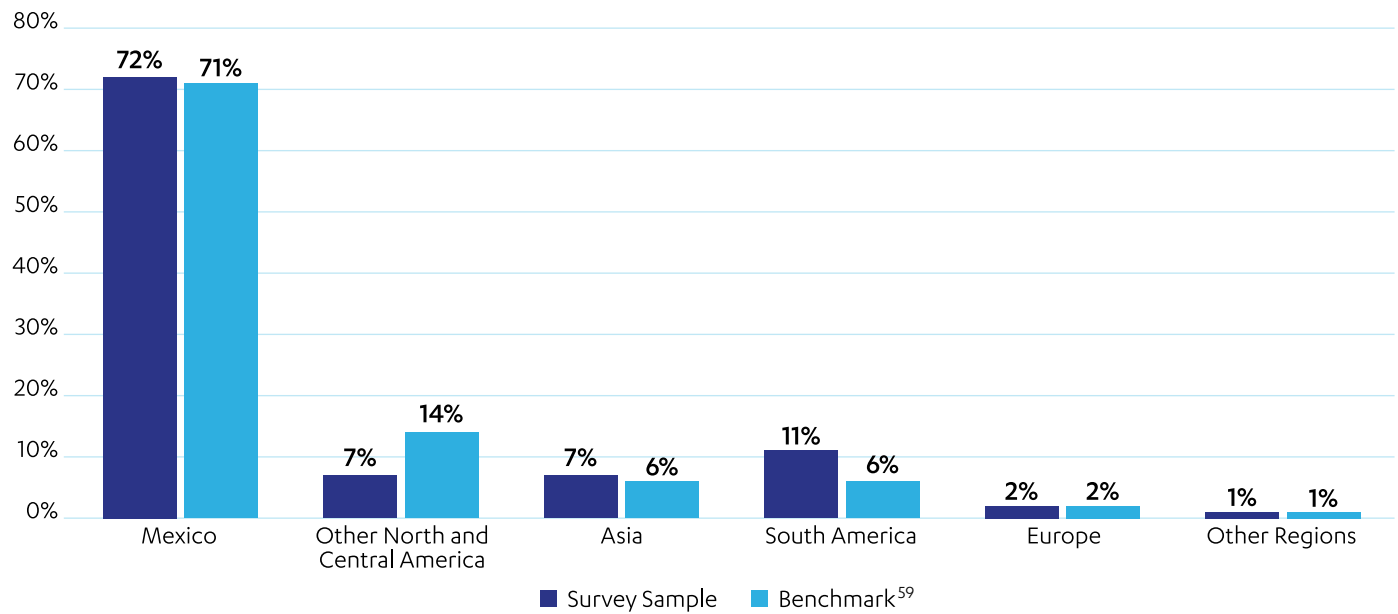
Table 2: Countries of Origin of Survey Respondents by Frequency

Countries of Origin of Survey Respondents (Frequency)	
Mexico (657)	Iraq (2)
Peru (27)	Jordan (2)
South Korea (27)	Mongolia (2)
Columbia (24)	Poland (2)
Guatemala (19)	Bulgaria (1)
El Salvador (18)	Czech Republic (1)
Argentina (17)	Dominican Republic (1)
Philippines (13)	Italy (1)
Brazil (9)	Malaysia (1)
Venezuela (7)	Mauritius (1)
Honduras (6)	Nepal (1)
India (6)	Nicaragua (1)
Chile (5)	Pakistan (1)
Costa Rica (5)	Panama (1)
Cuba (5)	Paraguay (1)
China (4)	Republic of Congo (1)
Ecuador (4)	Romania (1)
Lithuania (4)	Samoa (1)
Spain (4)	Saudi Arabia (1)
Indonesia (3)	South Africa (1)
Jamaica (3)	Taiwan (1)
Kenya (3)	Trinidad and Tobago (1)
Thailand (3)	Ukraine (1)
Algeria (2)	Uruguay (1)
Belize (2)	Vietnam (1)
Bolivia (2)	

Comparing the figures for our sample and the “Dreamers” population (Figure 17, following) reveals that the proportions of Mexicans, Asians, Europeans, and people from other regions are very similar to the benchmark population.⁵³ However, our sample is slightly overrepresented with those from South America and underrepresented with those from Central America.

Gender. Females are somewhat overrepresented. 53.5% of the sample is female, compared to a benchmark estimate of 46.1% of DACA eligible youth.⁵⁴ This may reflect the fact that females are more likely to attend college⁵⁵ and to respond to surveys than males.

Figure 17. Comparison of Regions of Origin Between Sample and Benchmark



Pre-college academic characteristics. Prior to attending college, 83.4% of the participants had attended public schools. Another 5.8% attended charter schools or magnet schools. 1.2% had attended exam/selective schools. Only 9.4% attended private or parochial schools. According to the Higher Education Research Institute, 72.7% of their national sample of four-year college students took at least one Advanced Placement (AP) course. In contrast, fifty-five percent of our sample had taken AP or honors classes during high school.⁵⁶

College type. Students from all college types were recruited into the sample, including two- and four-year colleges, public and private institutions, and colleges with a range of selectivity. In our sample, 41.3% of respondents were at community colleges, 46.9% were at 4-year public colleges and 9.1% were at 4-year private colleges, while 2.8% were currently taking a break from college. Thus, students from 4-year colleges are overrepresented, based on the benchmark compared to 70% of immigrant undergraduates enrolled in California 2-year colleges.

State of residence. While this study provides a broad representation, it is not balanced by state.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, Table 3 shows there is broad overlap between the states with the most responses to the survey and the states with the highest estimated number of DACA eligible college students.

Table 3: Top States by number of respondents & DACA eligible college students

Survey Responses	Benchmark Population
California	California
Illinois	Texas
Texas	New York
Arizona	Florida
New York	Illinois
Washington	New Jersey
New Jersey	Georgia
Massachusetts	Virginia
Florida	Massachusetts
Colorado	North Carolina
Georgia	Arizona

The highest response rates relative to the population of undocumented college students (estimated based on DACA eligibility) were in Arizona, Illinois, California and Washington.⁵⁸ Not unexpectedly, we had low response rates either in states where there are low estimates of DACA eligible students as well as in states that have particularly exclusionary policies where undocumented college students may feel particularly silenced and vulnerable. Thus, we are not fully capturing these students’ perspectives or difficulties.

Analysis Procedure

A key aim of the data collection strategy was to protect the identities of survey respondents. However, the anonymity that was afforded respondents had an unfortunate corollary, namely a large number of mischievous responses⁵⁹ to the online version of the survey. Of the over 3,500 responses received in total, more than 70% were identified as being mischievous, either having been generated by computer

programs or 'made up' by individuals, presumably with the aim of profiting from the \$20 Amazon gift voucher. This data collection issue was recognized early in the data collection process and a procedure was developed to systematically assess the genuineness of each response. First, responses were reviewed and where appropriate, were flagged as suspect based on multiple criteria, including, for example, the time taken for the survey to be completed (less than 10 minutes), lack of internal consistency e.g. between home language and country of birth or between college name, state of residence and college location, repeated verbatim qualitative responses for multiple cases in a proximate period of time, etc. Responses flagged as suspect were then reviewed by a team and a consensus decision was made. This systematic process gives us confidence in asserting that the final sample of 909 responses consists exclusively of responses that are legitimate, and that as far as possible, legitimate responses were not excluded from the final sample. The assessment of legitimacy was carried out independently of any analysis of the survey results.

The preliminary analyses presented in this report are based on quantitative descriptive analyses of forced-choice survey items and qualitative analyses to the open-ended survey questions. The analyses were conducted with SPSS with data from Qualtrics. The descriptive statistics provided are primarily the means of relevant continuous variables and for the categorical variables, the percentage of respondents (from the whole sample or by DACA status) who responded as indicated.

The percentage differences reported for DACA versus non-DACA students have been assessed using logistic regression to ensure that these results are not being driven by differences in basic demographic characteristics including ethnicity, age, gender and college-type. To assess the levels of anxiety among this population, the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 was used for the study. This 7 item scale includes items like: "Over the last 2 weeks how often have you been bothered by: Not being able to stop or control worrying." Participants respond on a 4 point Likert scale ranging from not at all to nearly every day. Items are summed with possible scores ranging from 0 to 21; the clinical cut off score in the national norming sample based on a large diverse population of 2,182 individuals was determined in the norming sample to be 10.

Qualitative codes were inductively developed based on 100 randomly selected responses. The categories that emerged were defined and a team of coders were trained on the coding definitions. Responses could be assigned multiple codes. Coding was facilitated using MAXQDA software which facilitated searching for codes, quantification of codes, and cross-analysis with survey responses.

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