



Find Your Path To Higher Education: A Guide For Undocumented Students

As an undocumented student, you may be feeling nervous and confused about your next steps after high school. Can you attend higher education legally? And even if you are allowed to attend, will you be able to afford it? Where do you turn for advice? ASA's Education and Career Planning has put together this Q&A to answer some of the most Frequently Asked Questions about undocumented students and higher education. Have a question not listed below? Don't despair—you can talk to one of our education advisors anytime in-person or over the phone. All of our services are free and confidential.

Q&A

Q: I am an undocumented student who was brought to the U.S. as a child. Can I pursue higher education?

A: Yes! **There is no federal law that prohibits the admission of undocumented immigrants to U.S. colleges.** Further, there are no federal or state laws that require you to prove citizenship in order to enter private institutions of higher education. However, there are a handful of states that bar undocumented students from attending public colleges and universities.

Q: What's the difference between public and private institutions?

A: Public higher education institutions are community colleges or state colleges/universities that are supported financially by the state. In Massachusetts, the various campuses of the University of Massachusetts, Bunker Hill Community College and Cape Cod Community College are all examples of public institutions. Private institutions, on the other hand, receive no funding from the state. Because public institutions are partially funded by taxpayer dollars, some states do not allow undocumented students to attend their public institutions.

Q: Is there financial help available to help me pay for higher education?

A: Undocumented students are not eligible for federal financial aid, including loans, grants, scholarships or work-study money. State aid may be available, and you may also be eligible for in-state resident tuition rates at public higher education institutions (public institutions frequently charge in-state residents lower tuition than out-of-state students). You can see a breakdown of current state laws and policies at the [National Immigration Law Center's website](#). Additionally, the higher education institution you attend may provide its own financial aid to undocumented students; check with the institution for additional sources of financial aid. Finally, you may be eligible for outside private scholarships; check out these opportunities:

- MALDEF <http://www.maldef.org/leadership/scholarships/index.html>
- Latino College Dollars www.latinocollegedollars.org
- College Green Light <http://blog.collegegreenlight.com/blog/category/undocumented-students>
- Scholarships for Hispanics www.scholarshipsforhispanics.org
- Genesco Migrant Center www.migrant.net
- Mexican Scholarship Fund <http://mexicanscholarshipfund.org/>
- La Plaza Scholarship and Fin. Aid Guide http://www.laplaza-indy.org/egov/docs/1315851068_685729.pdf
- Sociedad Amigos de Colombia (Indiana) <http://sadco.org/sadco-scholarship-program>
- Salvadoran Scholarship Fund www.salef.org
- Educators for Fair Consideration <http://www.e4fc.org/resources/scholarshiplists.html>
- Act on a Dream at Harvard College <http://www.actonadream.org/resources/scholarships/>
- 1000Degrees <http://www.1000degrees.org/students/scholarships/undocumented-students/>

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Q: How do I apply for institutional aid?

A: You will have to file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and/or the CSS Profile. To file the FAFSA, you will need a Social Security Number so you'll have to be approved for DACA (more on DACA below) or hold Temporary Protective Status. If you have one or two undocumented parents, you can insert 000-00-0000 in lieu of an SSN.

Q: What's DACA?

A: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals was an immigration policy enacted in 2012 as an Executive Action under President Obama. DACA allowed certain undocumented immigrants who entered the country before their 16th birthday and before June 2007 to receive a renewable two-year work permit and exemption from deportation. In September 2017, President Trump formally ended DACA. However, multiple lawsuits challenging the termination of DACA have been filed across the country. Currently, only renewal applications for people who have had DACA in the past are being accepted; no new first-time DACA applications are allowed at this time. See the National Immigration Law Center's FAQ (<https://www.nilc.org/issues/daca/faq-uscis-accepting-daca-renewal-applications/>) for more details and the latest updates.

Q: What's the DREAM ACT?

A: Whereas DACA was a temporary reprieve from deportation, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act is federal legislation that would allow undocumented immigrants who meet certain requirements to go to college and have a path to permanent citizenship. The federal DREAM Act was not passed by Congress, but several new proposals have been put forward that would extend DACA protections for three years to give Congress time to enact permanent legislation. Additionally, several states have passed their own "DREAM" laws that allow undocumented students to receive state financial aid and pay in-state tuition rates at public colleges.

Q: Are there cheaper alternatives I should consider to pursue higher education?

A: With fewer financial aid options available, you may be thinking college is financially out of reach. Think about exploring these strategies to minimize overall costs, such as:

- Certificate programs or an associate degree
- Attending a community college for the first two years and transferring to a four-year college. Check credit transfer policies BEFORE heading down this path.
- Dual enrollment programs that allow you to earn college credit during high school.
- Earning college credit by performing well on Advanced Placement and/or College-Level Examination Programs.
- Applying for institutional scholarships. Connect with someone in the Admissions or Financial Aid office who works with Multi-Cultural Students or International Students to ask about scholarship opportunities.

Q: Where else can I go for help and advice?

A: Try these resources:

- Educators for Fair Consideration www.e4fc.org
- Catholic Legal Immigration Network <https://cliniclegal.org/presidentialtransition>
- The National Immigration Law Center <https://www.nilc.org>
- Local Immigrant and Refugee Coalitions: They may offer FREE legal aid and immigration clinics. Boston area: MIRA Coalition <https://www.miracoalition.org/>
- United We Dream <http://unitedwedream.org>
- The local MA Student Immigrant Movement (SIM) <http://www.simforum.com/>

You can also drop by or call an ASA's Education and Career Planning for free, confidential one-on-one guidance.

Visit www.asa.org/planning-center for specific locations, hours of operation and contact information.