



Students protesting on behalf of the DREAM Act in Senator John McCain's office, May 2010

F Coello is a public policy professional passionate about the empowerment of disenfranchised communities in the United States. F is particularly interested in examining how government policies and institutional practices foster educational access and success for low-income communities, communities of color, queer and trans communities, immigrant communities, and their many intersections. F is currently a graduate student at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy, where they serve as senior editor for the *Chicago Policy Review* and research assistant for the Behavioral Insights and Parenting Lab. F received their M.S.Ed. in higher education policy from the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education and their B.A. in social policy from the University of Michigan Ford School of Public Policy.

Readers with any questions or comments may contact F directly at fcoello@uchicago.edu

CMSI RESEARCH BRIEF

Minority Serving Institutions and the DREAM: Supporting Undocumented Students In Illinois

by F Coello

OVERVIEW

To this day, Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)—specifically Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs); Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs); and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)—remain a fundamental part of U.S. higher education, serving the needs of disenfranchised students of color (Gasman & Conrad, 2013). Many undocumented students, immigrant students without or with limited documentation for legal presence in the United States, fall into the categories of students historically uplifted by MSIs. Nonetheless, government and institutional forms of support for undocumented students at MSIs have been widely understudied. Through a review of the literature and interviews with institutional leaders, this report examines existing policies and practices at MSIs in Illinois aimed at supporting undocumented students. This report hopes to contribute to the growing literature on undocumented students in higher education, while further dispelling myths about who MSIs are for, by showing collaborations across social groups.

The following questions guided this report's analysis:

- How have MSIs attracted, enrolled, and/or retained undocumented students?
- What are MSIs' cultures around undocumented student access and success?
- How have MSIs transitioned after the introduction of

state legislation affecting undocumented students?

- What kinds of additional external support do MSIs require to successfully meet their commitment to increasing undocumented students' educational attainment?

CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

Because of their immigration status in the United States, many academically qualified undocumented students face multiple economic, legal, psychological, and social obstacles when attempting to obtain a postsecondary education. Each year, an estimated 65,000 undocumented students graduate high school, but only 5 to 10% of these graduates go on to pursue a postsecondary education (Educators for Fair Consideration, 2014; Immigration Policy Center, 2011). This rate is much lower than that of all high school graduates who have consistently enrolled at rates higher than 65% nationally since 2010 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). In addition, 2008 Census Data reveals that, among undocumented high school graduates ages 18 to 24, less than half (49%) were in or had attended some



college, compared to the U.S.-born resident figure of 71% (Passel & Cohn, 2009).

Psychological and Social Barriers

Because of their legal status, undocumented students are unable to qualify for many social benefits and services, often experiencing dehumanizing episodes and overwhelming rejection. Due to these experiences, undocumented students can develop a great sense of insecurity along with high levels of anxiety and fear, as well as feelings of shame and helplessness (Pérez et al., 2010). Additionally, because of negative portrayals of undocumented people, racial minorities, and lower-income people in the media, undocumented students also learn about discrimination and hatred from a young age, which can tarnish their opportunities for healthy identity development (Pérez et al., 2010).

Economic and Legal Barriers

Under current laws, many undocumented students have to pay higher out-of-state tuition rates, even if they meet other criteria for state residency, and often do not have access to federal and state financial aid. A third of the children of undocumented adults and a fifth of undocumented adults live in poverty. This is compared to the lower poverty rates for children of U.S.-born adults (18%) and U.S.-born adults (10%) (Passel & Cohn, 2009). The exorbitant cost of postsecondary education, combined with the unavailability of or limited access to financial aid, effectively prevents many undocumented immigrants from attaining higher levels of education (Alexio et al., 2012). Because employment options decrease without postsecondary credentials, limited access to education then results in limited access to employment for undocumented students (Alexio et al., 2012).

FEDERAL INTERVENTIONS

Proposed DREAM Act

Federal statutes enacted in 1996, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA), establish that higher education benefits cannot be offered to undocumented students based solely on residency in a state and that undocumented students are not eligible for financial assistance (Annand, 2008). To rectify this, the bipartisan Development, Relief, and Education for Minors (DREAM) Act was first introduced in the U.S. Senate in 2001 and in the U.S. House in 2006 to create an opportunity for some undocumented students to attend college or enlist in the military, while also providing them with a path toward legal citizenship (Alexio et al., 2012). In addition to age and selective service stipulations, DREAM Act beneficiaries would be required to have proof of: arriving in the United States before the age of 16; remaining in the United States since their initial arrival; having graduated from a U.S. high school or obtained a general education development certificate; and being of good moral character (Alexio et al., 2012; Annand, 2008).

However, since its introduction, the DREAM Act has not passed at the federal level because of fundamental disagreements. On one hand, opponents of the bill have argued that it would privilege undocumented students over legal residents (Alexio et al., 2012; Annand, 2008). Opponents have also argued that the DREAM Act needs to be accompanied by other, more restrictive immigration measures (Alexio et al., 2012). On the other hand, supporters of the bill have argued that admission of undocumented students into institutions of higher education and granting of in-state tuition would be not only socially responsible but also economically beneficial (Ruge & Iza, 2005), even for postsecondary institutions (Salinas, 2006). Additionally, legal arguments in favor of the DREAM Act have been grounded in provisions

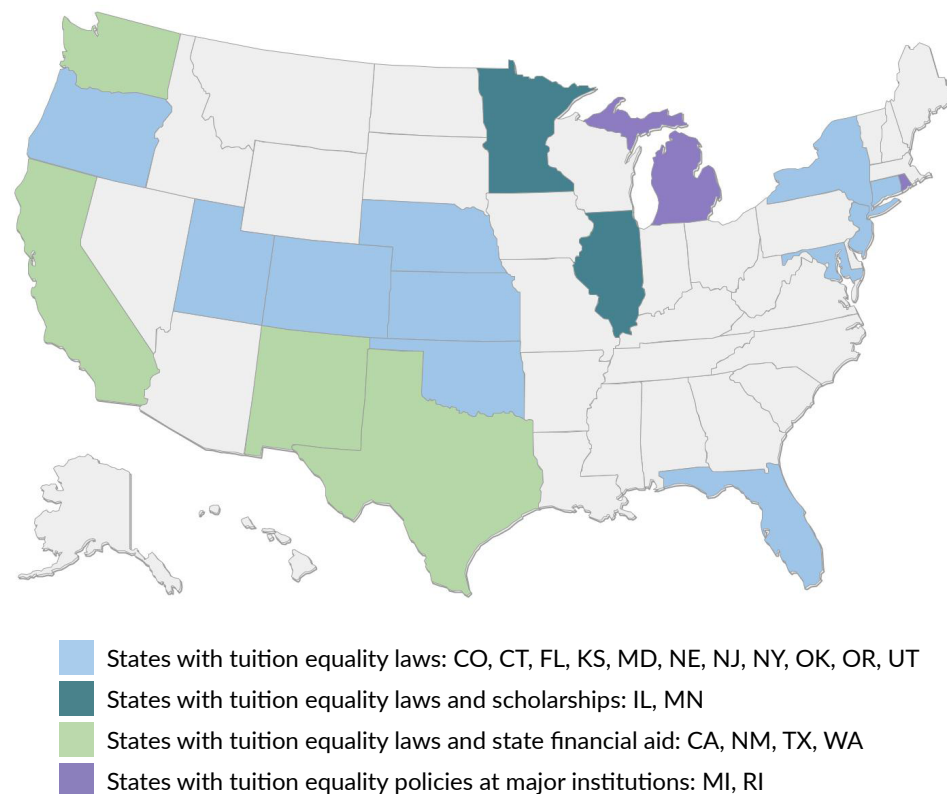
from *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), which require that undocumented children be granted access to public schools through the twelfth grade (Alexio et al., 2012; Annand, 2008).

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

Introduced in 2012 by President Barack Obama, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) initiative provides temporary lawful presence to undocumented youth who came to the United States before the age of 16, have lived in the United States continuously for at least five years, and have obtained a high school diploma or GED. Eligible DACA recipients can receive a temporary reprieve from deportation and a work permit. President Obama expanded DACA in 2014 to allow individuals born prior to June 15, 1981 to apply for DACA, which lasts three years.

While undocumented students have reported DACA's many benefits, the initiative still has some limitations for addressing barriers to higher education access and success for these students. For instance, all forms of federal grants and loans are unavailable to undocumented students regardless of whether or not they have a DACA work permit. As a result, access to aid for undocumented students depends on what is accessible to them from states and/or institutions, which varies from one setting to another. Unsurprisingly, for this reason, in a recent study on undocumented undergraduates, a very high concentration of respondents (77%) reported moderate to extreme concerns about financing their education, which was greater than what was found in a national study of all four-year college students (68%) (Teranishi et al., 2015).

Figure 1: Tuition Equality Laws and Policies in the United States



Source: National Immigration Law Center (2015)

STATE AND INSTITUTIONAL INTERVENTIONS

The landscape for how different states and institutions treat undocumented students is rapidly shifting, with some states developing more inclusive policies and practices and others with more exclusionary ones. While neither IIRIRA nor PRWORA explicitly prohibit states from admitting or enrolling undocumented students, both of these statutes allow states to decide which students pay in-state tuition (Alexio et al.,

2012; Annand, 2008; Connolly, 2005). Because of vague language in these federal statutes, varying interpretations have allowed states to either grant or deny undocumented students access to higher education funding:

- A few states, like Alabama and South Carolina, have passed statutes that serve the opposite purpose of the DREAM Act, prohibiting the mere attendance of undocumented students at state institutions (National Immigration Law Center, 2015).
- Other states, fearing repercussions like discontinued federal funding, continue to charge out-of-state tuition for their undocumented students, who do not qualify as in-state residents under current federal immigration laws (National Immigration Law Center, 2015; Annand, 2008).
- Nonetheless, 19 states have incorporated policies, similar to the proposed federal DREAM Act, that allow undocumented students who have attended and graduated from state high schools to pay in-state tuition and/or be eligible for state financial aid (National Immigration Law Center, 2015). These include states with the largest populations of undocumented students, like California and Texas, some of which also grant state financial aid.

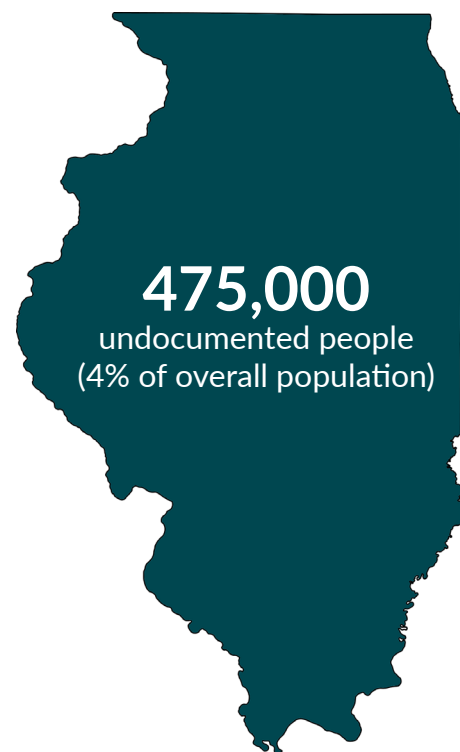
Regardless of state legislation, tuition policies vary across individual institutions. Some public institutions have tuition equality policies for undocumented students that were approved through their Board of Regents. For example, in 2013, the Regents of the University of Michigan voted to grant in-state tuition to all Michigan students who meet certain basic educational requirements, regardless of their immigration status (Woodhouse, 2013). This decision was the direct result of the work of immigrant rights advocates across the state, including student organizations at the institution (Contreras, 2013). Similarly, private institutions have begun supporting their undocumented students with private scholarships. Fisk University is an example of a Historically Black Institution supporting students in this way. Some of this institu-

tion's undocumented students are also behind efforts to enact tuition equality at the state level in Tennessee (Siner, 2015).

ILLINOIS CONTEXT

The fifth most populous state in the United States, Illinois boasts a population of over 12 million people. Of the entire Illinois population, 475,000 (4%) are undocumented (Passel, Cohn, & Rohal, 2014). Illinois has 22 MSIs, including nine HSIs, six Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), four AANAPISIs, two institutions that are both AANAPISIs and HSIs, and one institution that is both an HSI and a PBI.

Figure 2: Map of Illinois



Source: Passel, Cohn, & Rohal (2014)

Illinois has a relatively long history of supporting undocumented students, having enacted tuition equality in 2003. Illinois is also one of the few states paying close attention to college affordability, having instituted a privately funded, government-run scholarship fund for undocumented students in the state since 2011.

Tuition Equality (IL HB 60)

Passed in 2003, IL HB 60 allows for eligible undocumented students to pay in-state tuition when attending four-year public postsecondary institutions in Illinois. Eligible undocumented students must:

- Have resided with their parent or guardian while attending high school in Illinois
- Have graduated from a high school or received a GED
- Have attended school in Illinois for at least 3 years before receiving a high school diploma or equivalent (GED)
- Provide the postsecondary institution that the individual attends with an affidavit stating that the individual will file an application to become a permanent resident at the earliest opportunity the individual is eligible to do so

State Scholarship Fund (IL SB 2185, also known as IL DREAM Act)

Passed in 2011, the IL DREAM Act established the IL DREAM Fund Commission, which is responsible for providing scholarships, funded entirely by private donors and contributions, to undocumented students in Illinois. This law also requires Illinois high school counselors to be better trained and prepared to know what college options are available for undocumented students and children of immigrants in the state. The IL DREAM Act also allows undocumented students to participate in the State Treasurer's College Savings Pool and the IL Prepaid Tuition Plan, both of which allow for families of undocumented students to plan ahead and save for their children's education. Eligible

undocumented students must:

- Have resided with their parent or guardian while attending high school in Illinois
- Have attended school in Illinois for at least 3 years before receiving a high school diploma or equivalent (GED)
- Have at least one parent who immigrated to the United States

ILLINOIS MSI CONTEXT

MSIs in Illinois are doing much to equip undocumented students with lasting skills for academic and professional achievement. Through a thorough review of institutional materials available online and interviews with MSI leaders, this section covers some of this important work from the perspective of a system of two-year institutions as well as a four-year MSI.

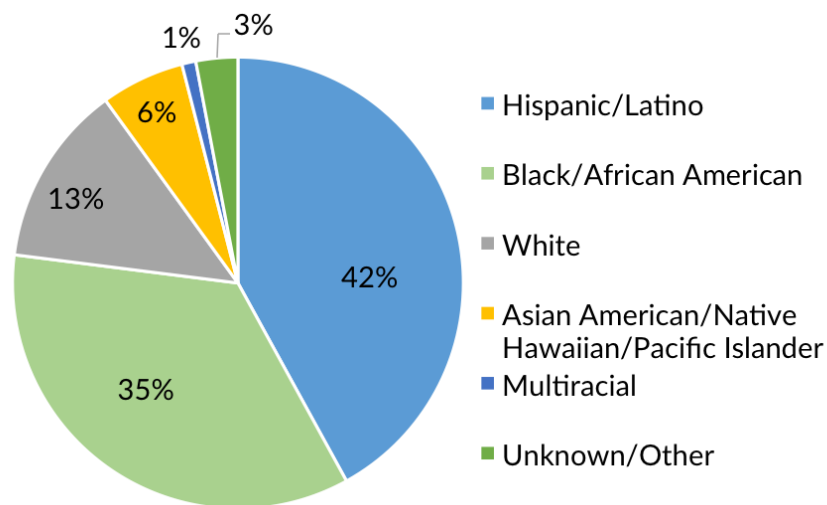
Illinois MSIs: City Colleges Of Chicago

The [City Colleges of Chicago](#) (CCC) is a system of seven community colleges and six satellite sites in the city of Chicago serving approximately 115,000 students. CCC offers adult education and GED programs, English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, certificate programs, and associate's degree programs.

The seven community colleges are:

- Richard J. Daley College (HSI)
- Kennedy-King College (PBI)
- Malcolm X College (HSI/PBI)
- Olive-Harvey College (PBI)
- Harry S. Truman College (AANAPISI/HSI)
- Harold Washington College (AANAPISI/HSI)
- Wilbur Wright College (HSI)

Figure 3: CCC Undergraduate Enrollment by Race



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2014, Undergraduate Total

Institutional Support for Undocumented Students

Under Chancellor Cheryl Hyman, CCC has been going through a very aggressive and ambitious reinvention campaign since 2010 to ensure that the system of colleges is supporting not only student access but also student success. In these efforts, CCC is being intentional about serving the undocumented student population.

Tuition and Residency Requirements

Public two-year institutions in Illinois are not directly affected by HB 60 (the tuition equality bill in the state), so CCC does not require the in-state tuition affidavit required by public four-year institutions. CCC only requires proof of in-district residency to charge its undocumented

students affordable in-district rates. In other words, tuition for undocumented students is based on where within the City of Chicago these students live. Additionally, undocumented students at CCC are often encouraged to be strategic and think of their education at CCC as an affordable stepping stone toward their bachelor's degree and further advanced education.

“As a system of minority-serving institutions, CCC is focused on providing quality education for all students and ensuring that we are constantly in tune and responding to the needs of our most vulnerable students, understanding our students’ stories. With the latest demographic shifts in Chicago with the immigrant community, it is a really exciting time to see how our network of institutions is responding, particularly with resources that create immigrant workforce pathways.”

Maureen Fitzpatrick, Associate Dean, Wilbur Wright College, City Colleges of Chicago

Financial Aid

At the federal level, undocumented students are not allowed to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Although many higher education institutions still use this federal form for internal purposes, CCC has recognized that this form is not friendly to undocumented students interested in pursuing higher education. To make its financial aid process more undocumented student friendly, CCC has created and launched its own FAFSA-alternative form, the “Financial and Household Certification Form,” to gather information on household

financial information for internal CCC Foundation Scholarships. CCC also holds workshops for its advising and recruiting staff to train them on how CCC speaks to prospective students.

Additionally, CCC recently launched its [Chicago Star Scholarship](#) as an opportunity for Chicago Public Schools (CPS) graduates, including undocumented students, to seamlessly transition into an associate's degree at City Colleges of Chicago after meeting specific academic requirements. After application of federal and state financial aid, the Chicago Star Scholarship waives all tuition and book fees for three years or until the completion of an associate's degree, whichever comes first. To qualify, students must have a 3.0 GPA, earn college-ready test scores (ACT score of 17 in English and Math), and enroll in a CCC academic pathway.

Transfer Centers

One important resource at CCC is its network of transfer resource centers, which helps undocumented students in their plans to transfer to four-year institutions post-graduation. In this effort, CCC's transfer resource centers equip their students with important information about the institutions to which they are seeking to transfer after graduation. Similarly, CCC has aligned its programs with the academic requirements of leading regional and national colleges and universities to make sure students can transfer as full college juniors. In some cases, CCC also has special agreements. For instance, qualified CCC students are guaranteed admissions at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Additionally, the Illinois Institute of Technology offers a full-ride scholarship for qualified CCC students.

Dual Enrollment Opportunities

CCC's Early College Initiative allows students to take free college classes and earn advanced college credit while still in high school, provided

they test as college-ready. This is an innovative way to allow qualified undocumented students to get a head start on college, while simultaneously boosting their confidence that they can succeed in college. During student panels hosted by CCC, one of the biggest pieces of advice given by CCC's undocumented students to their high schools peers was to take advantage of the free Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit classes during junior and senior year of high school.

Adult Education Programs

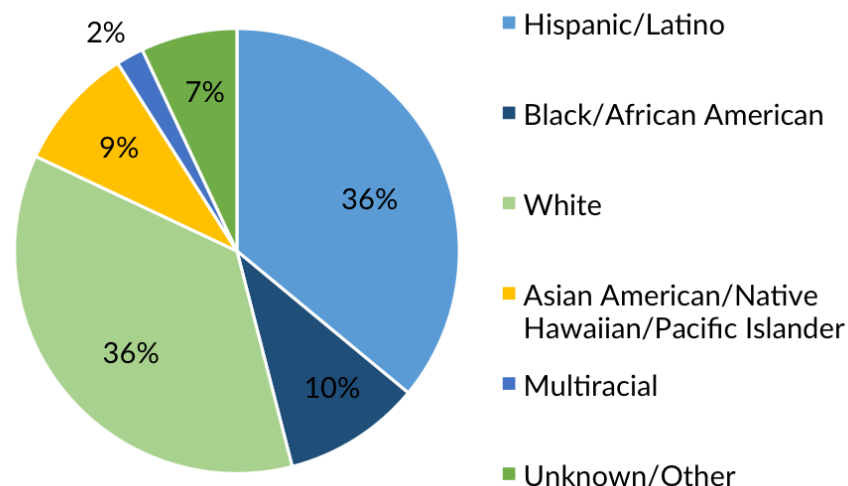
With the introduction of DACA's workforce eligibility for undocumented people, many undocumented students in Illinois have felt motivated to finish their secondary education and continue on with school. In light of this, CCC has been intentional about creating transition programs that are friendly to undocumented students. Specifically, CCC's Gateway Program helps undocumented students finishing up their adult education to successfully transition into college-level work while being part of a cohort with academic and social support.

Illinois MSIs: Northeastern Illinois University

Tracing its founding to 1867, [Northeastern Illinois University](#) (NEIU) is a four-year public postsecondary institution located in the city of Chicago. Regarded as one of the most diverse and comprehensive public universities in the Midwest, the institution enrolls more than 10,000 students. NEIU has been designated by the U.S. Department of Education as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI).

Institutional Support for Undocumented Students

In 2012, President Sharon Hahs awarded a Northeastern Innovation Grant for the development of the [NEIU Undocumented Students Project](#). Under the leadership of Associate Vice President of Student Affairs Daniel Lopez, the project developed from the collaboration of

Figure 4: NEIU Undergraduate Enrollment by Race

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2014, Undergraduate Total

many students, staff, and faculty dedicated to bringing awareness to issues affecting undocumented students and their families. In 2014, President Hahs institutionalized the project to continue supporting undocumented students and the faculty and staff who work with them.

Tuition Equality and Residency Requirements

Similar to CCC, NEIU has recognized the impact of friendly forms on undocumented students' experiences. As a result, NEIU has changed its admissions application form by adding a section where students can mark whether they are (or think they may be) eligible for tuition equality under HB 60. Similarly, NEIU has modified the state-provided and state-required affidavit for in-state tuition by adding its name and

logo to the form, making it easier for students and families to understand that the affidavit is used only for internal purposes and does not compromise their privacy.

Financial Aid

Currently, 100% of NEIU's talent and merit scholarships (\$1.35 million) do not require U.S. citizenship. In addition, after reviewing every single private scholarship available through the NEIU Foundation, the institution contacted its donors to expand its scholarships to undocumented students. As a result, 96% of NEIU Foundation scholarships (\$115,200) no longer require U.S. citizenship.

Moreover, NEIU has earmarked institutional funds specifically for undocumented students. The institution recently created the Aspire Scholarship, an endowed scholarship fund established by President Emerita Salme Harju Steinberg and other donors. NEIU has also created an Undocumented Student Fund to help with non-tuition fees and other academic and/or emergency expenses undocumented students may have.

Campus Events

In partnership with [United We Dream](#), NEIU celebrates National Coming Out of the Shadows Day by showcasing its available services for undocumented students on campus. The goal of the event is to show the campus community NEIU's commitment to supporting and advocating for undocumented students. In addition, in partnership with other community organizations, NEIU also hosts several DACA sessions each academic year for undocumented students and their families to better understand their legal status and options.

“We are a very diverse institution. However, because we are an HSI, the assumption sometimes is that our services and programs are only geared towards Latinos. That is not the case on our campus. At the end of the day, we are here to serve all students and that includes undocumented students, who are also not all Latino. Our HSI designation actually reminds us of our diversity; it reminds us that we are here to serve all our students. It is about intentionality, about being very strategic in serving specific pockets of students. What we are doing to support undocumented students is no different from what we are doing to serve our other vulnerable students. We are committed to serving our entire population of students not only because it is morally correct to do so but because we see it as our obligation.”

*Daniel Lopez, Associate Vice President of Student Affairs,
Northeastern Illinois University*

Dedicated Staff and Future UndocuCenter

In its third year after being institutionalized, the NEIU Undocumented Students Project made possible the hiring of a part-time coordinator who assisted with all logistical features of the project. In its fourth year, NEIU hired a full-time coordinator tasked with the same responsibilities in addition to assisting with the design of a new NEIU UndocuCenter, to be launched in the near future. With these resources, NEIU hopes to assist all undocumented students one-on-one with concerns regarding financial aid, undergraduate and graduate mentorship, post-graduation

work and advanced education opportunities, and more.

Staff and Faculty Education

Moreover, modeled after Safe Zone trainings from its LGBTQA Resource Center, NEIU has developed a series of trainings for staff and faculty to learn about and better serve undocumented students on campus. After each training, participants receive a sticker that denotes their allyship to undocumented students. To date, over 200 NEIU faculty and staff members have gone through the training. Valuing its internal partnerships, the Student Affairs Division at NEIU grants its faculty and staff a Social Justice Certificate after they complete four trainings on undocumented student support, LGBTQA inclusivity, Title IX, and disabled student support.

Institutional Assessment

Thanks to the recent changes to its admissions application form, NEIU can now identify who its undocumented students are for internal assessments (without compromising students' confidentiality). Namely, NEIU can now track differences between its undocumented students and the rest of its student body in terms of academic performance, including graduation rates. Additionally, prior to and after each training for staff and faculty, NEIU distributes participant surveys to inform the development of the curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutional Level

- INSTITUTIONALIZE and PUBLICIZE support for undocumented students. Support for this vulnerable population includes but is not limited to academic, financial, and counseling services.
- REVISE admissions and financial aid application processes, creating undocumented-student-friendly forms where students' confidentiality is reassured.
- EARMARK available funds to create new scholarships specifically for undocumented students. Similarly, REVIEW and EXPAND existing scholarships to capture undocumented students.
- CREATE professional development opportunities for staff and faculty to learn more about and better serve undocumented students.
- SUPPORT internal collaborations (e.g., campus-wide trainings and events) and FOSTER external partnerships (e.g., transfer agreements) to adequately support undocumented students.

Policymaker Level

- Continue to SPEARHEAD efforts to expand federal and state financial aid eligibility. At the federal level, besides DACA, no legislation exists to protect undocumented students or to address the many barriers they endure in U.S. higher education.
- EXPAND nationwide and statewide private fundraising efforts for undocumented student-specific scholarships. In Illinois, the IL DREAM Fund Commission's efforts are supporting only a fraction of eligible students given the Fund's limited resources. In other states, no private funds even exist to support each state's undocumented students.
- POSITION MSIs in Illinois as models of success. As illustrated in this report, MSIs in Illinois are pioneering initiatives pivotal to the success of their undocumented students. Other states, particularly neighboring states, can learn from the examples set by MSIs in Illinois.

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