

# Resources for DREAMers

Chris Williams

April 2012

Undocumented students include those students born outside of the United States, many who have lived in this country for a significant portion of their lives, and who reside here without the legal permission of the federal government. With about 65,000 undocumented students graduating from U.S. high schools each year, there must be procedures for how they can get support for their futures in America.

This fact sheet will inform not only undocumented students in search of educational opportunities, but to also teach U.S citizens how to support these students and the NY DREAM Act.

## Can Undocumented students apply to college? Where?

In New York, undocumented immigrants can pay in-state tuition for both CUNY and SUNY schools if they attend two or more years of a New York high school, and apply for a college within five years of receiving a GED or high school diploma from New York State. Additionally, that student is not required to input their social security number in the application form. The federal government does not have to know about the current status of the person.

11 other states extend in-state tuition to undocumented students under different circumstances: California, Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Nebraska, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin. Right now, only California, New Mexico, and Texas allow undocumented students to receive state financial aid. Four states—Arizona, Colorado, Georgia and Indiana—have passed legislation that specifically bars undocumented students from even enrolling at any of their public colleges.

## Are there resources to help cover the cost of applying to college?

Students who are on the free or reduced price lunch program at school, which is available to low-income students regardless of their immigration status, are eligible for numerous fee waivers for college applications. Some students can get fee waivers even if they aren't eligible for reduced price lunches. Additionally, some scholarships exist to help students cover the cost of applying to college. See page 3 for more resources.

## Can they get funding for college?

The New York DREAM bill includes a part on “Education Equity for Dreamers,” which would allow undocumented immigrants to be eligible for state and city financial aid programs, grants, loans, and scholarships. This will most likely get those students to achieve better opportunities in life. For now though, students can look at the schools they are applying to for more information. At SUNY, there are people who can help undocumented students find financial aid and scholarships. The Federal DREAM Act itself does not provide funding to states and counties to cover the costs of college or financial aid. However, undocumented students are still able to apply for certain types of financial aid. Scholarships such as the Dream Fellowships are open to those undergraduates in the City University of New York system. More than 100 students applied for the fellowships, which are coordinated by the New York Immigration Coalition, with help from the Korean American Community Foundation. There are plenty of other places to look for scholarships open to students regardless of their immigration status. Check out page 3 for some links to resources.

## Who can they talk to about their undocumented status and their future education?

Legally, K-12 school workers cannot ask about the immigration status of students or their parents. This doesn't mean that your guidance counselors aren't there to help you if you want to talk to them. School counselors can serve as advisors for students and support groups. Undocumented college students can provide pertinent information about resources at their college and serve as role models/mentors to undocumented high school students and help them find organizations that offer scholarship funds. Guidance counselors and other school workers should let all students know very early on that an undocumented status is not a legal bar to attending college in most states. They can explain funding options outside of federal financial aid and stay up to date on the changing laws in the states for college funding. As long as the school community can keep up the updates, then their approach to help undocumented immigrants will be useful.

## Are their hotlines or organizations undocumented students can look to for help?

Yes. Many are state-based, to deal with the local differences in immigration policies. The National Immigration Law Center and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) offer advice and organizations for undocumented immigrants in legal trouble. MALDEF also has a list of scholarships open to undocumented students.

# How can U.S. citizens get involved and raise awareness?

In raising awareness, you can support the NY DREAM Act whether you are a citizen or not. Though there are many organizational support groups, the average New Yorker can call and thank their state senators for supporting the NY DREAM Act. You can also send a letter to the state senator or an assembly member or meet with them face-to-face.

By using the power of the internet, you can sign the petition for the NY DREAM Act via <http://action.dreamactivist.org/nydreamact/>. You can also post any references pertaining to the NY DREAM Act on your Facebook, Twitter, or other social media websites.

Locally, you can tell your friends and family members about the cause in increase the number of helpers. Within communal areas, the endorsement of the DREAM Act can be petitioned in schools, churches, or neighborhoods. Also, you could host a New York State Youth Leadership Council anywhere, join one, or start your very own campaign.

## For More Information...

- On SUNY and CUNY regarding undocumented students:  
<http://inamerica.blogs.cnn.com/2012/01/27/new-york-state-university-officials-support-financial-aid-for-undocumented-students/>  
[http://www.suny.edu/student/paying\\_residence.cfm](http://www.suny.edu/student/paying_residence.cfm)  
<http://www.cny.cuny.edu>
- On scholarships and other financial aid resources:  
[http://www.maldef.org/assets/pdf/2011\\_2012\\_Scholarship\\_List.pdf](http://www.maldef.org/assets/pdf/2011_2012_Scholarship_List.pdf)  
<http://www.dreamactivist.org/faq/education/scholarships/>  
<http://utla.net/node/2771>  
<http://www.nysylc.org/2012/04/dream-scholarship-fund-asian-pacific-islander/>  
<http://www.cuny.edu/admissions/financial-aid/grants-scholarships/pscholarships/descriptions.html> - MFAD
- On more ways to get involved: <http://www.nydreamact.org/pass-new-york-dream-act/>
- On different state laws about college admissions:  
<http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/educ/undocumented-student-tuition-resources.aspx>  
<http://www.nilc.org/statebillsedu.html>