



# California Community Colleges Support Undocumented Students



## *Advocacy Talking Points*

### **Background on California Community Colleges**

California Community Colleges (CCC) is the largest system of public higher education in the United States. Our 115 colleges across 73 districts serve 2.2 million students, which includes two-thirds of the undergraduate students in the state of California. One in four community college students in the nation is enrolled at our colleges.

The CCC system and its individual colleges are the backbone of higher education in the state and the leading provider of career and workforce training in the country. Our students generally are over the age of 25, and they come to us from urban, suburban and rural parts of the state. Most students who attend our community colleges say they aspire to move on to a four-year college or university. CCC institutions also serve the diverse needs of mid-career professionals looking to boost their skills as they move up the career ladder, immigrants striving to improve their English language skills, entrepreneurs looking to start a small business, and retirees looking to take up a new interest to maintain their cognitive skills. Federal leadership is more important than ever to both our institutions and our students.

### **Support our Undocumented and Immigrant Students**

Faculty and campus leaders support continuing protections for undocumented and immigrant students, coupled with legislation establishing a pathway to citizenship. Of the estimated 223,000 California DACA participants (totally 800,000 nationwide), approximately 72,000 are enrolled at California Community Colleges, which is why this is a high priority for our colleges. In addition to the social and humanitarian imperatives, supporting our undocumented and immigrant students has significant economic benefits for California and the United States.

President Trump and the current Administration's continued attacks on undocumented individuals as well as Congress' failure to take action on numerous egregious proposals against this population has created deeper fear and uncertainty among our undocumented students. A recent example is the proposed change to federal Public Charge Rules. By considering the utilization of public benefit programs when determining eligibility for permanent residency, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) new interpretation has discouraged students discouraged from utilizing programs like the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF) and worry that federally funded financial aid programs, like grants or work-study, might be counted as a public benefit under the new interpretation of the rule. Ultimately, the net result of this new interpretation will be a reduction in undocumented students utilizing public benefits that can support economic and social mobility.

## **Our Ask to Members of Congress**

### **We urge Congress to:**

1. Support legislation like **H.R. 6** (the 2019 American Dream and Promise Act), which would create a pathway to citizenship for undocumented students who were brought into this country as children and permit them to be eligible for Title IV financial aid programs like Pell Grants and Work-Study.
2. Vote in support of **H.R. 3222** (No Federal Funds for Public Charge Act of 2019), which would prohibit the Department of Homeland Security from moving forward with the new interpretation of the public charge rule.
3. Provide a permanent solution to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.
4. Exempt students receiving assistance via the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, as that is primarily an educational benefit and thus is in the spirit of the new interpretation of the rule.
5. Address the humanitarian crisis at the border.

### **Talking Points**

- The anti-immigrant climate encouraged by the Trump administration has intensified the fear and uncertainty for undocumented students in this country. All Californians, regardless of immigration status, deserve a chance at obtaining a higher education.
- The proposed cancellation of policies that support undocumented students, such as the DACA program, has put the educational future of thousands of undocumented students at California Community Colleges in jeopardy.
- We must urge Congress to enact an agenda that seeks to radically change how immigration policy is conducted in this country.
- This week, California's community colleges are focused on advocacy and activities to support and build awareness of undocumented students throughout the state.

### **Undocumented Young People and their Education**

- Tell a story of an undocumented student at your campus working toward their educational goals and what it means to them.
- 92% of undocumented students point to policies like DACA as helping them obtain their educational goals.

### **Undocumented Young People and the Economy**

- Undocumented students pay for benefits for which they are ineligible. Undocumented individuals pay local, state and federal taxes and contribute to Social Security. However,

they are ineligible for federal benefits such as Pell grants, work-study, Medicaid, food stamps, and cash assistance.

- The CATO Institute found that without undocumented student policies like DACA the U.S. economy could shrink by \$215 billion over the next 10 years. The same study found that the federal government could lose \$60 billion in foregone income taxes if policies supporting undocumented students are not enacted.
- The Kauffman Foundation found that immigrants are more likely to create opportunities by starting their own businesses than native-born Americans.